

October 7, 2009

Sra. Hannia M. Durán  
Jefa de Area Comisión Permanente Especial de Ambiente  
Asamblea Legislativa  
San José, Costa Rica



Estimada Señora Durán:

In 1995 Costa Rica recognized its unique responsibility for ensuring the continued survival of the Pacific leatherback by protecting one of the last nesting beaches in the eastern Pacific and the other delicate ecosystems of Ventanas, Grande, and Langosta Beach, through the creation of Las Baulas National Park by Law. Las Baulas National Park is critical to the survival of the Pacific leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), declared as critically endangered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Populations of Pacific leatherback sea turtles have crashed by 90 percent over the past two decades and are not recovering. Today, fewer than 1,000 female leatherbacks survive in the entire eastern Pacific. Las Baulas National Park has an exceptional global value as it provides the most important nesting site for this remaining eastern Pacific population.

On behalf of the undersigned tour operators we are writing to urge you to reject Law Project No. 17.383 pending before the Environment Commission of the Legislative Assembly, that proposes to downgrade Las Baulas National Park to a Mixed National Wildlife Refuge and open its beaches up to coastal construction projects. Such developments will have a negative impact on the nesting process of the leatherback through lighting, additional access of people, vehicles and domestic animals, and could likely lead to the elimination of this most important population of leatherbacks. The communities of Tamarindo, Flamingo, and others depend upon the more than four thousand visitors that come to witness the magic of nesting leatherbacks every year.

We, the undersigned members of the tourism industry in Costa Rica, believe this type of development is incompatible with sustainable development and protection of endangered species. Costa Rica has long been a leader in promoting ecotourism, this change in the level of protection of one of the most important turtle nesting beaches in the world would be a black mark against this reputation and would affect the country's well-earned reputation for balancing conservation and development.

We urge you to reject bill 17.383 and continue Costa Rica's commitment to protecting the critically endangered leatherback sea turtle, and preserving its national parks and the extraordinary abundance of life protected within their boundaries.

Sincerely,

SEE Turtles  
Wildland Adventures  
Holbrook  
Planeterra Foundation  
Global Vision International

EcoTeach  
Geographic Expeditions  
GAP Adventures  
Costa Rica Undiscovered  
Environmental Adventure Company

