



# NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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## **NOAA Honors U.S.-Mexico Program for Restoring Sea Turtles**

NOAA's Fisheries Service is giving the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Population Restoration Program a national award for its 30 years of work to protect and restore an endangered sea turtle that was on the brink of extinction.

The restoration program based at the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas, will receive the Conservation Partnership Award at the third annual Sustainable Fisheries Leadership Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C. on June 2.

"The health and sustainability of the planet's ocean resources is of paramount importance for the world's environmental, economic and human wellbeing," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The contributions of our honorees inspire others and enhance NOAA's work to conserve and manage our nation's marine resources."

"For the last 30 years, Mexicans and Americans have worked together in this remarkable partnership to bring the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles back from the brink of extinction," said Jim Balsiger, acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "The partnership is a model of international cooperation to restore endangered species."

A total of 26 partners from the U.S. and Mexico that represent federal, state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, businesses and volunteers have worked together since 1978 to protect and recover Kemp's Ridley sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. When the project began, an estimated 924 turtle nests were identified and protected that first year. More than 15,000 nests were protected in 2007 and more than one million baby turtles were released into the Gulf of Mexico.

Public education has been vital to the success of the program as have efforts to provide local residents living near the beaches where the turtles nest with alternative sources of income, rather than the illegal harvest and sale of turtle eggs. More than 90 percent of all Kemp's Ridley sea turtles nest in the state of Tamaulipas in Mexico.

In addition to the Gladys Port Zoo, which is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, other partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, NOAA's Fisheries Service, the Comision Nacional de Areas Naturales Protegidas, Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Camara Nacional de la Industria Pesquera, and the government of the state of Tamaulipas.

For the full list of Sustainable Fisheries Leadership award winners go to: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the

European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>