

March 7, 2018 – OAS Department of Sustainable Development and St. Lucia National Trust support marine protected areas and sea turtle monitoring

20 Representatives met today to Under the OAS project *Supporting more effective Marine-Turtle Conservation within the Pointe Sable Environmental Protection Area (PSEPA)* in southern Saint Lucia in collaboration with St. Lucia National Trust and the Fisheries Division, US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA), Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP), the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), WIDECAST, and MPACONnect, a growing network of Caribbean marine protected area managers conducted a Marine Turtle Management Consultation Meeting to help build local capacity for effective marine protected areas (MPA) management.



Earlier community consultations in Vieux Fort indicated that there are a number of high priority needs associated with the management of the Anse de Sable and Bois Chadon beach areas of PSEPA. Concern about the status of sea turtle nesting on these beaches has peaked, and concerns raised about coastal zone management practices and patterns of recreational use that are detrimental to the successful nesting of sea turtles. The beaches of PSEPA are nesting habitat for two species of endangered sea turtle - the hawksbill sea turtle, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and the leatherback sea turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*. Three years of data indicate that there is 15% annual loss of turtle nests/year in the protected area from beach erosion linked to sand mining, 10-20% loss of nests from sargassum beach cleaning with tractors. The majority of the sea turtle nesting activity in the PSEPA is by the critically endangered hawksbill and the partners are collaborating on efforts to respond to these research findings and enhance the management of sea turtles in St. Lucia.