

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MAY 14, 2008**

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**COSTA RICA'S SUPREME COURT ORDERS EXPROPRIATIONS IN LAS  
BAULAS MARINE NATIONAL PARK**

SAN JOSÉ—May 5, Costa Rica's supreme court ordered the Environmental and Energy Ministry (MINAE) to initiate steps for the expropriation of private lands within Las Baulas Marine National Park (PNMB) in Guanacaste. This resolution is in response to an appeal for legal protection submitted in March of 2005 by AIDA and its participating organizations in Costa Rica, Center for the Environmental Rights of Natural Resources (CEDARENA), and Justice for Nature, against the National Environmental Technical Secretary (SETENA), the Municipality of Santa Cruz, the Ministry of Housing, and MINEA, for the violation of constitutional rights relating to environmental and ecological health and equilibrium, derived from the lack of protection for the PNMB thereby affecting its turtle nesting site.

This is a very important precedent for Costa Rica, and for the hemisphere, now that development in tourism zones is at a climax. The Municipality of Santa Cruz and SETENA had granted construction permission to certain entities inside the park, ignoring the impacts to leatherback sea turtles that these tourism developments cause. With the court's decision, these permits will no longer be valid. "We hope that the Municipality and SETENA have received a clear message that managing national parks requires a high amount of caution in not approving projects that put in danger the park's own end", ensured Rolando Castro, an attorney for CEDARENA. "Construction and operation within the site aggravates the situation on the beach", added Castro.

Leatherback turtles are Jurassic animals that are in critical danger of extinction. This species requires certain nesting conditions which are severely affected by human presence along nesting beaches and lights from developments. The PNMB was created as a means of protecting these animals and constitutes this species most important nesting zone in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

"This order of expropriation must be immediately respected by MINAE in order to avoid what's happened at other nesting beaches such as Flamingo and Tamarindo", affirmed Gladys Martínez, attorney for AIDA. "Costa Rica, including all of its authorities, has the obligation to protect this species' legacy to humanity, in addition to it being a tourist attraction and thereby an economic resource for the country", added Martínez.

For more information, visit: [www.aida-america.org](http://www.aida-america.org)

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