# CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

## I. BASIC DATA

**Organization Legal Name:** Western Philippines University Puerto Princesa Campus

**Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement):** Status and Dynamics of Trade of Heosemys Leytensis

**Implementation Partners for This Project:**

**Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement):** Jan 1, 2006-June 30, 2007

**Date of Report (month/year): February 2008**

## II. OPENING REMARKS

**Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.**

Palawan, one of the major conservation biodiversity corridors of the Philippines and area of CEPF focus, cradles many known and unknown species. Some of these species are endemic to the province, and due to increasing environmental pressures from human encroachment, the survival of some of them is at high risk. The Philippine Forest Turtle *Heosemys leytensis* described by Taylor (1920) based on only two individuals is one of Palawan's endemic species whose current populations are seriously in peril. In May 2003, the Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF 2003) listed *H. leytensis* among the "World's Top 25 Most Endangered Turtles 2003". Its current IUCN (2004) status is Critically Endangered (A2d, B1+2C, ver 3.1 2001), and CITES (2003) lists it in Appendix II.

Since Timmerman and Auth's sighting of *H. leytensis* in Taytay, Palawan, in 1988 (Timmerman and Auth 1988) until the rediscovery of the species in Palawan in 2001 (Diesmos et al 2004), the existence of *H. leytensis* in the wild remained elusive and uncertain. According to Gavino and Schoppe (2004), the rediscovery of *H. leytensis* after over 80 years, the mystery of its geographic distribution, the apparent rarity and the lack of knowledge on its biology and ecology has made it in only two years one of the highest priced species on the international pet market. By early 2004, the local price for one *H. leytensis* was already US$3.50 compared to only US$1.00 paid for the SEAsian Box Turtle (Gavino and Schoppe 2004). Price quotes of *H. leytensis* in Manila shops range from Php800-1,200 (US $14-21) apiece (Diesmos et al. 2004). *H. leytensis* has already shown up in the international pet markets of Japan, Indochina, USA, SE Asian countries and in Europe (Diesmos et al. 2004b). On the European pet market, it gained already EURO 2,000.00 per individual in 2004 (Gavino and Schoppe 2004). Locally the trade of the species is poorly documented. A police report from Liminangcong, Taytay provides information on 200 *H. leytensis* that were confiscated in May 2004 before they could be shipped to Manila where a Chinese businessman was going to buy them, presumably for export to the international pet market (Lopez and Schoppe 2004). Animals are collected indiscriminately of size (Lopez and Schoppe 2004). The indiscriminate collection of *H. leytensis* might result into a serious threat to these species, especially inasmuch as their habitats are streams in lowland forests, which are considered the most threatened habitats in Palawan. Lopez and Schoppe (2004) as well as Gavino and Schoppe (2004)

strongly support the up-listing of *H. leytensis* to Appendix I of CITES as proposed by Rhodin (2003) and Diesmos et al. (2004).

The available information on the status and the trade of freshwater turtles in Palawan is still insufficient and certainly warrants further studies but it also clearly indicates a serious threat, which had not been identified nor addressed before (Gavino and Schoppe 2004). Therefore, the illegal collection of *H. leytensis* for the wildlife trade is currently perceived as the most significant threat to the species (Gavino and Schoppe 2004, Lopez and Schoppe 2004), and it is certainly the most damaging to its populations. We fear that some populations of the species may collapse in the foreseeable future due to the wanton collection of turtles to supply the wildlife trade. Given these findings, it is apparent that conservation measures are a necessity in order to preserve and sustain the current *H. leytensis* populations. Diesmos et al. (2004b) further noticed that an effective monitoring program on illegal wildlife trade entails that relevant authorities should possess the basic knowledge and skills in recognizing target species. On this end, species identification training and materials need to be made available to enforcement agencies and concerned groups. In addition, there is a need to determine the remaining population of *S. leytensis* in the wild in order to provide estimates of exploitation rate and learn more population dynamics of the species to come up with better strategies in conserving this species.

## III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

The initial objectives of this project are the following:
Primary:

1) To identify trade routes, shipment and trans-shipment points, traders, suppliers and numbers and origin of traded *Heosemys leytensis*.
2) To gather primary data on absolute numbers of wild populations and their composition. The information will provide an estimate of the remaining wild populations and serves as the same time in the analysis of the relative number of traded animals.

Secondary:

3) To identify conservation measures needed to preserve and sustain the remaining populations of *H. leytensis*.
4) To evaluate the existing wildlife trade monitoring schemes.
5) To come up with an effective monitoring scheme on wildlife trade part of which is to provide relevant authorities with the basic knowledge and skills in recognizing target species such as *H. leytensis*.
6) To analyze populations of *H. leytensis* in terms of the relative composition of life history stages.
7) To distribute species identification materials to wildlife monitoring authorities and appropriate groups.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

There was a minor change in the objectives of the project in a way that we did not do some of the programmed activities particularly the two secondary objectives # 5.

Activities leading towards the realization of this objective were not fully conducted during the course of the project since two local conservation organizations conducted the same activities on the same target clientele (i.e. Conservation International Palawan Corridor Program and PCSD conducted parataxonomy training, and Katala Foundation and Traffic Asia conducted training on wildlife law enforcement and identification of commonly traded wildlife species focusing to those coming from Palawan). Hence, we believe it is not necessary to do the same activities targeting the same clientele. We however still distributed IEC materials to further familiarize the above clientele in identifying at least our target species (*i.e S. leytensis*).

Although it was not part of the objectives, we decided to involve biology students of Western Philippines University during the conduct of population surveys (in the form of field survey immersion ranging between two days to one week of fieldwork). Such field exposure trainings have provided relevant knowledge and skills for at least 20 students during the course of project implementation. At least two of the students involved during these field immersions are now doing the follow up surveys for S. leytensis population assessment and monitoring of the tree out of five sites we initially had population assessments.

Lastly, the original plan to conduct the study province wide was not fully realized since a similar project was also being implemented by Mr. Fidenci, a French National who was also working on the Philippine Forest Turtle. After a discussion with Mr. Fidenci through the internet, it was agreed that the two projects will divide the province into two key areas, with Mr. Fidenci covering the southern Palawan area (From Narra to Balabac) and the Western Philippines University concentrating on the Northern and Central Palawan Area (Northern Island Municipalities and mainland municipalities from El Nido to Puerto Princesa and Aborlan). However, before such agreement was arrived at, we have already conducted our preliminary surveys in the southern parts of the province, specifically focusing on the trade aspect. Hence we were still able to cover the southern part of the province significantly.

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

Primary Objectives:

1) To identify trade routes, shipment and trans-shipment points, traders, suppliers and numbers and origin of traded *Heosemys leytensis*.

We had achieved this objective in a way that the shipment and transshipment points, and trade routes of those involved in illegal wildlife trade have been exposed to wildlife enforcement officers. Further we have identified a number of traders which are involved in trading of the species. We have also determined who the major suppliers are and to where the animals are shipped and sold. Through our field interviews and Key Informant Interviews, we have also identified sites within the province where viable populations of the species exist, which also aided us in better pinpointing of origin of the animals for sale on the illegal trade.

Our results showed that turtle trade is present in all municipalities of Palawan. Trading involves all the four species (*Siebenrockiella leytensis, Dogania subplana, Cuora amboinensis,* and *Cyclemys dentata*). Generally, in Northern Palawan, adult individuals of hard-shelled turtles are preferred by traders. However in the south, the soft-shell turtle *D. subplana* are traded regardless of size. Rampant local trading of the soft shell turtle

was encountered in the municipalities of Bataraza and Rizal, similar condition reported by Regodos and Schoppe (2006).

Meanwhile, in Puerto Princesa City and municipality of Roxas, the locals refuse to admit that trade of *S. leytensis* exist in their respective areas. Apparently, the turtle does not caught much of their interest compared to other more charismatic or palatable species such as birds (e.g. Hill mynah, jungle foul, blue-naped parrot etc.) and wild boars, all of which are readily sold or consumed.

In municipalities with confirmed presence of *S. leytensis*, collection for trade of the turtle was only recorded in Taytay, Dumaran, and El Nido. In addition, Diesmos et al. (2004) identified some traders from San Vicente. Local trade of S. leytensis is the northern municipalities of Palawan were run by influential locals (many of whom are Barangay officials) themselves. Several local buyers were identified in Taytay that supply large volume of *S. leytensis* to a Taiwanese trader. As the locals reckoned it, at least 300 individuals were transported to Puerto Princesa City and successfully shipped to Manila. On the other hand, informants from the catchment area of Lake Manguao, Taytay disclosed that a number of foreigners (Japanese and Americans) were involved in the collection of the species albeit they added it was for pet interest and not for commercial purposes.

In the municipality of Dumaran, the trade of *S. leytensis* was interestingly run by local residents of Taytay. Furthermore, a Chinese national and a certain local trader were named by some respondents in the municipality of El Nido. The turtles are usually transported unnoticed using local public transportation. Most often than not, S. leytensis was traded along with other wildlife species.

All activities relating to trade were admittedly occurring before 2006. During the conduct of field survey, though, a number of locals (from Talog, Taytay) were enthusiastic in showing their interest to catch the turtles for us. Apparently, they perceived us as traders and were asking how much do we pay for a piece of turtle. It thus become evident that if there are buyers, the locals are ready and willing to supply the demand, displaying their lack of concern notwithstanding their awareness on the plight of the turtle. These activities were however done off the watch of some village officials that we observed keen on implementing the prohibition of illegal collection of wildlife species. According to these officials, the trade was rampant before but since the Republic Act 9147, otherwise known as “Wildlife Act”, has been implemented in 2004, their buyers refuse to buy any further because of the subsequent massive apprehensions of trafficked wildlife. This has virtually stopped the trade in the following years at least in their area.

Shipment points for all traded wildlife species in Palawan, including *S. leytensis*, are the ports of Puerto Princesa, El Nido, Liminangcong in Taytay, Cuyo, Rio Tuba, and Brooke’s Point. For *S. leytensis* though, based on the confiscation accounts, the turtle is trafficked through the ports of Central and Northern Palawan, particularly in Puerto Princesa, Liminangcong in Taytay, Taytay seaport, Ports of Araceli, and Dumaran. Traded animals are then delivered to Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, and Zamboanga. These cities serve as trans-shipment points where wildlife traffickers transport the animals to several destinations—United States (Diesmos et al 2004), Europe (van Djik), Malaysia (Schoppe personal interview), Japan, Taiwan, and China.

Correspondence with Dr. Sabine Schoppe of Traffic Asia based in Malaysia confirmed the presence of *S. leytensis* in Malaysian markets. Specimens are made available on an order basis, which usually takes two days to deliver. It was still unknown whether the specimens sold in Malaysia are directly shipped from Palawan via Balabac or via

Zamboanga. Interviews from locals in Balabac suggests that *S. leytensis* is absent in this municipality.

National market monitoring suggest that *S. leytensis* no longer exist at least in Manila, the main trans-shipment point of trafficked wildlife. Visits in Manila pet markets (i.e. Cartimar and Arangque Markets, pet shops in malls, and other commercial pet tradings) and Manila Zoo found no presence *of S. leytensis*. The turtle was described to pet shop owners but they seem unknowledgeable even with the most distinct morphological appearance. They, however, let us search through their hidden animals for us to find exactly what we looked for. This allowed us to discover that a variety of species of turtles and other wildlife, both local and imported, are marketed in their shops but remain hidden and shown only to unsuspecting buyers.

Among the turtles that occur in Palawan, only *Coura amboinensis* and *Dogania subplana* were seen in Manila pet markets and Manila Zoo. The latter was observed only in one of the petshops in Cartimar Market mixed up with the former in one tray. Conversely, *C. amboinensis* was sold at large number in virtually all shops in Cartimar and Arangque markets. Prices of both turtle ranged from 200 to 400 pesos. Around 70 individuals of *C. amboinensis* were also seen in Manila Zoo.

According to pet shop owners, *C. amboinensis* and *D. subplana* are almost always stacked up due to low demand compared to Red-eared Sliders and Chinese green turtle. The owners (in Cartimar) however added that if they can avail the turtle we described (S. leytensis) they will inform us and arrange a business for it. In mall-based pet shops, aside from Chinese green turtle, no other species are found.

In Palawan, *S. leytensis* is modestly priced at Php 30.00 to Php 55.00 per kilo or Php 10.00 to Php 30.00 apiece from local traders. The turtle can get Php 800-1,000 apiece in Manila shops. On the other hand, in international market, business multiplies the local price to as high as $ 1,360.00 apiece in the US and an incredible € 2,000.00 in Europe (Diesmos et al. 2004).

Based on the collective report of Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), both from the city office (CENRO) and provincial level (PENRO), and Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), there were seven incidence of confiscation of freshwater turtle since 1993 to present. Only two of the reported confiscations have stipulated the species of turtle apprehended, unfortunately *S. leytensis*. The rest of the record merely stated “freshwater turtle”.

From 2001, when freshwater turtles first appear on wildlife confiscation records, to 2002, apprehending officers had seized a total of four individuals in three separate incidences of confiscations. Ironically, on the first two years (2004-2005) since the implementation of Wildlife Act, apprehended turtles summed up to 220 individuals in four confiscation records. Two of which, one in 2004 (156 in El Nido) and another in 2005 (62 in Puerto Princesa), were ready for delivery in large volume to some unknown Chinese in Manila and Batangas. Captured turtles in El Nido were released back in the wild within the municipality while the ones seized in Puerto Princesa were turned over to Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center (PWRCC).

Records of wildlife confiscation suggests that a quantity of underground cases still exists although local informants claim that wildlife trade has largely been trimmed down since the implementation of Wildlife Act. Significant improvement was however observed in 2006 having no documented confiscation records. Whether this can speak for the status of trade of S. leytensis remains a question as underground cases is not impossible.

Considering the respondents' information is true regarding the discontinued demand for local supply, then, there should have a decline in the trend of turtle trade both in national and international extent.

A key problem in monitoring wildlife trade in Palawan is the fact that there were numerous ports and transshipment points within the province where wildlife species are smuggled through. In some cases, informants even provided us with information that big time wildlife traders would even hire large fishing boats to transport wildlife from any point on the eastern coast of Palawan to mainland Luzon, often landing in Batangas.

2) To gather primary data on absolute numbers of wild populations and their composition. The information will provide an estimate of the remaining wild populations and serve at the same time in the analysis of the relative number of traded animals.

For this objective, we are also successful in conducting actual population assessment of *S. leytensis* in at least five sites within Palawan.

Since the species has very high demand in illegal wildlife trade, we do not present here the name of study sites where we conducted our surveys to safeguard the turtle populations (all information will be presented on the publication currently being written). Based on our field surveys, we have found out that *S. leytensis* seems to have adapted well in areas near human habitation. In one of the study sites, we caught specimens in a small stream adjacent to a local resident's house in a degraded lowland forest. The stream is bordered by farmlands on both sides. Hatchling and adults were caught in the area, suggesting population recruitment. In another site, a one hectare degraded forest patch harbour at least 23 individuals of *S. leytensis* despite the nearby area is already a ricefield and kaingin farm. In other areas where we have encountered the species, habitats are in varying degrees of degradation, majority of which is due to conversion to agricultural land.

All encounters of the species were made in or close to stream or river systems in forested areas with sandy to muddy substratum. We never encountered the species in rice fields and open areas. This observation is similar to local information provided by locals, who claims that the species is strictly found in lotic ecosystems bordered by substantial forest cover. Except for a specimen (caught using hook and line) collected from a marsh with a small stream inflow, all other specimens were found associated with running water habitats.

Results of interviews and active search surveys confirmed the presence of *S. leytensis* from central to Northern Palawan Regions. These findings significantly extended the known distribution of *S. leytensis* as previous report (Diesmos et al. 2004) delimits its distribution from West Central to Northern Palawan regions only because of the general absence of convincing reports provided by local respondents in East Central Region and their failure to encounter or capture the turtle in the area. Local informants in other villages (barangay) in mainland Northern Palawan strongly claimed that viable population of *S. leytensis* occurs in their localities.

On the other hand, field surveys did not yield any positive results in the island municipalities off Northern Palawan including Coron, Culion, and Busuanga. The same case was true in all mainland and island municipalities in Southern Palawan Region from Aborlan to Balabac. Nevertheless, three other species of turtle (*Coura amboinensis,*

*Cyclemys dentata,* and *Dogania subplana* (in the south only)) were commonly observed in these areas. Some locals were able to identify *S. leytensis* in the south, albeit, they can not provide compelling information to verify its existence unlike the other turtle species. Most often, they also confuse C. dentata for S. leytensis, shich is also reported by Diesmos et al. (2004).

It is expected that *S. leytensis* occurs in all areas of Central and Northern Palawan Regions where suitable habitats exist. The turtle is normally found in streams particularly in slow moving portions and quite side pools. We were able to gather information regarding the ecology of the species which are very characteristics of all capture points during the survey.

In the driest months of the year, typically on summer, there were turtles found hiding under large rocks and boulders some distance away from the streams or rivers. Also, several instances did local informants observed the turtle moving about the forest or on rice paddies, possibly migrating or in search for non-aquatic food. The same behavior was tracked down in one of the study sites where at least 22 individuals were captured by pitfall traps set up on secondary growth forest. This shows that *S. leytensis* distribution both in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems is influenced largely by the time of the year.

Aside from our project, two other projects about the Philippine Forest Turtle *S. leytensis* are currently conducted in Palawan. These include 1) Inventory, distribution, and conservation action of the critically endangered Philippine Forest Turtle, Palawan, Philippines led by Mr. Pierre Fidenci and funded by BP Conservation Programme (Aug. 06-Aug. 07), and 2) freshwater turtle conservation in Palawan of Katala Foundation Inc. (KFI) led by Dr. Sabine Schoppe. Since we are using the same methodology as Dr. Schoppe's future survey, we have agreed to collaboratively conduct the fieldwork needed for population studies. Surveys to collect and mark turtles were conducted daily for four to six consecutive weeks. We use three methods in catching the individuals i.e. through visual encounters, pitfall traps, and water-based funnel traps. All *S. leytensis* captured were measured and weighed. In addition, we also included *C. amboinensis* and *C. dentata* if they are c*aught.* Each individual was measured in terms of median carapace length (MeCL), max. carapace length (MaCL), max. carapace width (MaCW), median plastral length (MePL), max. plastron length (MaPL), plastral width (PW), body height (BH), tail length (TL), which are taken using calipers. Individuals were also marked by notching the carapace and given unique id both for each individual and population.

Data from these five short-term population surveys that were conducted in collaboration with the Shell Shock funded project of Dr. Sabine Schoppe of Katala Foundation were compared in terms of habitat conditions, threats, population structure, and population size. Results of these surveys will be presented in the forthcoming 17$^{th}$ Annual Convention of the Wildlife Conservation Society of the Philippines. Of the five sites, specimens are being collected by locals extensively for consumption in one site while in another site, juveniles have been collected for international pet trade. In all of this sites, information education campaign were conducted both during the conduct of population assessment as well as after the population survey, the latter of which was implemented mainly by KFI.

Secondary Objectives:

3) To identify conservation measures needed to preserve and sustain the remaining populations of *H. leytensis*.

We strongly believe that after this study, several areas in Palawan, particularly one of the areas where we have conducted our population study should be prioritized as conservation areas for the Philippine forest turtle.

Our results suggests that there is still ongoing underground trading of the species and this can only be addressed by continuous IEC initiatives in areas most affected. In addition to the threats of illegal wildlife trade, an even bigger threat to the remaining population of this species is the destruction of its habitat. Though our study suggests that *S. leytensis* seems to have adapted living even in degraded areas near human habitation, we still need to assure that healthy wild populations will continually thrive in the wild. An assurance captive population has already been established through the project of KFI in Narra however, we still suggest the following additional actions:

- Declaration of at least one or two whole catchment areas where *S. leytensis* is currently occurring
- Continue monitoring of the populations that we have studied in the past to detect changes in population structure and learn more about other aspects of the biology and ecology of this species.
- Soft release of captive bred individuals (once they have been successfully bred in captivity) in areas where suitable habitat exist
- Since several populations are found within protected areas (Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park), we recommend delineation of these areas as Philippine forest turtle sanctuaries

At present, these identified strategies are gradually being addressed by KFI project which has collaborative works with WPU. We believe that this study's results have provided very important information that are and will be useful for present and future conservation works for the species and the fact that these information are now utilized to implement strategies in conserving the species, we are confident that we have achieved this particular objective.

4) To evaluate the existing wildlife trade monitoring schemes.

The level of wildlife trade monitoring in Palawan varies between localities. Records of wildlife confiscation in airport and seaport of Puerto Princesa City suggests strict implementation of RA 9147. However, records from other localities suggest the opposite. This is aggravated by lack of skills in identifying traded wildlife. A number of law enforcers we interviewed still get confused in identifying the different turtle species found within the province. However, they also mentioned that since the distribution of the Field Guide Booklet for Law Enforcers, a publication made by Conservation International, it has significantly improved their skills in identification of the most commonly traded wildlife in the province.

We found out that there are still animals kept in captivity that were unregistered, a good example of which is the captive population of turtles in Balinsasayaw restaurant in the town proper of Puerto Princesa. In August 2006, there were at least 17 specimens of *S. leytensis* in the restaurant's concrete pond. However in late September, we visited the same restaurant and found out that this number has decreased to 12. The restaurant

staff told us that they don't sell the turtles to customers. When we tried to ask more questions about the turtles, the staff avoided answering and immediately left our table.

We strongly suggest that wildlife trade monitoring in Palawan should go beyond what it is today, where law enforcers are mainly located in areas in specific areas in the province where there is likelihood that wildlife will be smuggled i.e. in airports and sea ports and selected check points in the highways. Our experience during the conduct of this research shows that generally, wildlife law enforcement in the province still has a long way to go. Our recommendations are forwarded to concerned offices regarding this matter, which we hope will be used as a tool in advancing the fight against illegal wildlife trading in Palawan.

5) To come up with an effective monitoring scheme on wildlife trade part of which is to provide relevant authorities with the basic knowledge and skills in recognizing target species such as *H. leytensis*.

Since CIP and KFI conducted similar activities on the same target clientele, our activities aiming to attain this objective were not implemented anymore. We however provided support to both agencies during the conduct of these activities.

6) To analyze populations of *H. leytensis* in terms of the relative composition of life history stages.

A publication on this aspect is currently being written and will be presented in the 17th Annual convention of Wildlife Conservation Society of the Philippines this coming April 2008.

7) To distribute species identification materials to wildlife monitoring authorities and appropriate groups.

In collaboration with other conservation organizations in Palawan, particularly KFI and CIP Palawan Corridor Program, Information education campaign materials regarding wildlife trade have been distributed to wildlife monitoring authorities and appropriate groups in the form of pamphlets, brochures and calendars.

We could say that we are successful in achieving the expected objectives by focusing on the targeted outcomes. We were able to do this by carefully planning each activity before commencement, part of which is establishing linkages and good professional working relationships with our project partners and consulting with the local communities that became involved during the project implementation.

We have managed to accomplish these objectives through collaboration with several individuals and institutions in tracing those who were involved in these activities. We collaborated with Katala Foundation, particularly Dr. Sabine Schoppe during her tenure with Traffic Asia, as well as with numerous institutions within the province including Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), Conservation International Palawan Corridor Program, the City Environment and Natural Resources Office of Puerto Princesa, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) and CENRO, and the office of Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary. Of course we are very much indebted as well to the local government units of different municipalities within the province which supported us during surveys on trade related aspects.

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

We did experienced some disappointments and failures during the course of implementation of this project, however, most of this are related to time frames and scheduling of some of the surveys particularly during the population assessment. It so happened that the project was affected by political volatility in the province that we were sometimes unable to meet with local leaders due to conflicts in schedules. However, this was resolved by fitting in our schedules to theirs and making appointments in advance.

Another source of disappointment for us is the security concerns in some of the areas where we were supposed to conduct population surveys of the species. Due to security reasons, we were not able to survey some populations which we think should be prioritized for surveys. As a response to this, in every target site for population assessment, we always select at least three candidate sites so that in case of security concerns, we have sites A, B, and C to choose from.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

Positive lessons learned are the following:

- Partnerships with local communities should be prioritized and they should always be informed of the progress of the project. The more they learn about the project, the more support we got from them.
- In getting information particularly on the aspect of illegal trade dynamics, it is best to do undercover works rather than doing open interviews or focus group discussions. Although the latter two also provided valuable information on this aspect, it is with undercover surveys that we really got the most important and critical information.
- It is always better to work together with other conservation professionals in your locality than to brush shoulders against them. For once it is it will be a lot easier to implement your project and consequently, it will also be easier as well to attain your objectives. Sharing experiences have provided valuable insights in the implementation of this project. We also learned a lot from their advancements and mistakes in implementing their own projects, making it easier for us to fine tune our study.
- Never underestimate local knowledge, particularly indigenous knowledge on biology and ecology of the species you are studying. Our experiences proved that we have a lot to learn from indigenous tribes of Palawan (particularly from members of Batak and Tagbanua Tribes) when it comes to ecology and biology of *S. leytensis*.
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6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

Follow up activities related to this project include collaborative research with Katala Foundation Inc. Since we already had established the study sites for population structure of *S. leytensis*, three of the five sites became the permanent monitoring areas for population dynamics of the species. The populations that we have studied will be continuously monitored for the next three years in terms of sizes and number of

individuals of the populace. In addition, we are currently working on the publication of the results of this study.

In addition, we are also looking forward to the declaration of at least one of our study sites as local conservation area for the Philippine forest turtle since the LGU concerned signified their interest already of doing so. Though the project has officially ended already, WPU has committed itself to still pursue initiatives that will result to conservation of the Philippine forest turtle in their natural habitat.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

Additional information on this project will be available on the publication that is currently being written (co-authored) by WPU and KFI, which will be presented on the 17th Annual Symposium of WCSP.

## IV. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

***Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.***

| Donor | Type of Funding* | Amount | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| Katala Foundation Inc. | B | Php. 40,000.00 | KFI provided one additional research staff and contributed materials for population survey and Information education campaign |
| | | | |
| | | | |

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:***

- ***A*** *Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- ***B*** *Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project*
- ***C*** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*
- ***D*** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

## V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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