

Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF format**. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full Name	Michael Farid Zavala Armenta
Project Title	Local Heroes: Building a multi-community network for Hawksbill sea turtle conservation in the Coast of Jalisco, Mexico
Application ID	43169-2
Date of this Report	January 27, 2026

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Workshops with fishers and constant training				We carried out 4 workshops and follow-up meetings (one every 3 months), with the participation of 31 active fishers from the network, as well as accompanying them during their diving/fishing activities for follow-up training on proper turtle handling techniques. In total, including those trained during the first Rufford grant, 60+ fishers have now been trained.
Create a Hawksbill sea turtle conservation network including multiple communities and organizations from the Costa Alegre region				Although we created a solid network as well as an Environmental Vigilance Committee including multiple communities and organizations, we were not able to include all of the communities we originally meant to. Due to conflict with communities' agenda and logistics, we decided to focus our efforts in the communities that had a better response and where closer to each other. However, we plan on including these communities in further grants, but with a different strategy (monthly monitoring).
Carry out and Participate in Environmental Education Activities with fishers, locals,				During this activities we reached approximately 2,660 people in total through public turtle releases and our information stand in the town square (1,600),

students and tourists				Earth Day Rally (60), Environment Fairs (200) and the Fishermen Day Festival (800).
Collect video and photographic material to create outreach material				We will keep documenting the activities and carry out interviews to elaborate a mini-documentary which will be used for project dissemination.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). The creation of an environmental vigilance committee with the fishers from the participating communities. This committee is endorsed by The Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA), and grants the members with a credential which allows them to carry out field work, without risk of being detained by authorities, but at the same time commits them to safeguarding the environment and species where they carry out their work, report any illegal activities and inform of any special case. The involvement of the local fishers as well as their families has been such, that it has resulted in doubling the amount of captures registered during previous grant stages.

b). Since the beginning of the hawksbill turtle research and conservation activities carried out in the coast of Jalisco, collaboration and links were formed with different stakeholders in and out of the study area, from authorities at all three levels of government, to private businesses, Non-Governmental organizations (NGO), organized groups, community members, as well as research groups with whom the Jalisco-Nayarit Hawksbill Network collaborates.

The Hawksbill sea turtle is listed as an endangered (EN) species in Mexico, under the NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010, hence, a special permit is required for its research and handling. Therefore, the Jalisco-Nayarit Hawksbill Network is included in the regional scientific collection permit issued by the Californias Sea Turtle Group, with file number SPARN/DGVS/07190-24; EXTENSION No SBRA/DGVS/02262/25, with which we can carry out research and monitoring work in this project

Furthermore, there is collaboration with regional research and conservation groups (UELLA SA de CV, Majahuas Sea Turtle Camp, ECO MAYTO A.C., Mayto Sea Turtle Camp, Teopa Sea Turtle Camp, GICOFF A.C. Careyes Foundation). Whom strengthen joint actions as well as sharing experiences, information and collaboration on Hawksbill turtles. Having said this, we have participated with the previously mentioned groups during in-water monitoring sessions organized by GICOFF A.C., taking place in Los Arcos de Mismaloya National Marine Park, during which we were able to capture 13 hawksbill turtles, helping generate more information about the species in the area and strengthening management and action plans for the species in the area.

At the same time, we have generated informative and participation links with the federal (SEMARNAT, PROFEPA, CONAPESCA, SEMAR, GN), state (SADER) and

municipal (La Huerta County City Council) authorities, about project's operation. Particularly, we have worked jointly with CONANP, since the Chamela Bay Islands Sanctuary, where the hawksbill turtle distributes, is located within the monitoring zone, reason why this federal agency participates directly with the network.

Similarly, a link was generated with the La Huerta City Council, who showed interest in the participation of the county's coastal communities in benefit of nature and the generation of environmental awareness that is transmitted among the actors who operate the network into the society of the fishing villages of said county, reason why, the local government committed to provide support, by subsidizing fuel for the project's operability.

Moreover, little by little, different actor from the town of Punta Pérula, have shown interest in participating in the network, creating informative and support links with the private initiative (Casa Tilmacalli Hotel - Alegre Scuba Republic – CompArte Community Center) and merchants, who participate, provide support for the project's operability, as well as participating in monitoring or providing information on events or organisms observed in the area.

However, the core part of this project are the participative fishing communities of Punta Pérula, La Fortuna, San Mateo, Careyes, Emiliano Zapata and Agua Caliente Nueva, whom in their day to day diving/fishing activities for the capture of their target species (octopus, lobster and rock oyster) in the coral and rocky reefs of the coast of Jalisco, the same sites where the hawksbill turtles inhabits. Involving fishing communities in the network, increases the success rate of capturing organisms for the study, covering more space in less time, requiring less investment with less effort, as well as fostering an environmentally friendly conscience in their communities.

c). We have identified hawksbill turtle distribution areas and habitat use along the southern coast of Jalisco known as Costa Alegre, as well as the interaction the species has with the local fisheries. The data gathered during this period, will allow us to calculate growth rates, residence time, site affinity, body condition index. Blood and tissue samples collected will be used in the future in health, genetics and biochemistry studies.

This information will be shared with stakeholders for better decision making, to consider avoiding certain areas or fishing gear which will potentially reduce bycatch and turtle drowning, especially considering part of the study area is listed as a natural protected area.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Although we are happy and proud of the work and results obtained during the study period, there are always difficulties and last minute changes on the plan, however we adapted to the best scenario to make the most out of time, money and staff available.

One of the main problems we had was the lack of staff or volunteers, as we do not have the facilities to accommodate them in the different sites we originally intended to work. The sites further from our base town are about a 45-60 minutes driving distance away, so being understaffed, we would frequently have to drive to the area whenever a capture report was made. If there were multiple reports in different communities the same day, it would be impossible for us to attend to them all, in addition to the high consumption rate our vehicle has.

Considering the above, we opted to focus our resources, time and energy in the communities that were closer together, and where there was more fishing activity, and where we could be more present and constantly accompany the fishers. However, we plan to resume work on the originally considered communities, but using a different monitoring strategy.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

Fishers captured 88.4% (69/78) of the registered turtles during their fishing activities and also indirectly contributed with the rest of the captures, as they were carried out by team members, while accompanying the fishermen on their workday on their boat.

Some of the fisher's family members, especially the young ones, also participated in environmental activities, helping the team during turtle measuring as well as during public releases.

Students and other community members also got involved in environmental education activities carried out by the network, during festivals and science fairs in which we participated, as well as our weekend stand in the town square.

Fishers benefitted from the project by obtaining gasoline for every turtle captured, which helped them reduce operating expenses and have a higher profit during their fishing day. At the end of the year we also celebrated our anniversary/Christmas party, to commemorate a year of work. During which, fishers that had participated the most were awarded with equipment that would help them to continue carrying out their work, as well as raffling of other prizes among the attendees (dive lights, octopi/lobster hooks, anti-cut gloves, rash guards, storage buckets, etc.)

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, at the beginning of this project, although we are currently only working in the state of Jalisco, we ambitiously named the network Red Carey Jalisco-Nayarit, we have previously worked and collaborated with other groups and organizations in Nayarit, so we plan on expanding our work and resume efforts in that area. As well as acting as advisors for the community of Punta Pérula as they wish to resume nest protection activities in the Chamela Bay area, which could potentially result in discovering unregistered Hawksbill turtle nesting areas.

We are currently collaborating with Careyes Foundation (Careyes, Jalisco), Campamento Tortuguero Mayto (Mayto and Tehuamixtle, Jalisco) and GICOFF A.C. (Banderas Bay in Jalisco and Nayarit).

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

We have shared our results through various media:

Through our social media accounts on Instagram (@carey_jalnay) and facebook (www.facebook.com/carey.jalnay/), with over joint 40,000 views since their creation (November 2024)



Regional meetings such as The California Sea Turtle Group Annual Reunion (120 attendees), the 5th Marine Biology Symposium (200 attendees)



As well as lower scale events, such as a herpetology workshop with students (14 attendees) and a meeting with potential new network members during the Inauguration of the 1st fishing sanctuary in Jalisco "Chamela Bay Islands (50 attendees).



Team members have also been interviewed by regional media (Autlán y sus regiones and Radio UDG), as well as online media (MongaBay Latam and Otra Marea), leading to the project being featured in social media posts and articles, TV and radio spots.



7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Strengthening the network by having more communities and more people join, getting more funds and working on a way to be self-sufficient for long term funding, having a place for volunteers and students to stay so we can have more staff help out and not limit our work, starting a volunteering/internship program.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, RF's logo was displayed in outreach material (banners), t-shirts, posters, reports, presentations and social media posts.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

- Michael Farid Zavala Armenta: Team leader, on-site representative with fishers, carrying out constant in-water monitoring and training, he coordinated meetings with fishers and other stakeholders, responded to turtle capture and stranding reports, turtle data and sample collection, tagging and release, carried out environmental education activities, and project dissemination, as well as writing updates and reports.
- Luis Ángel Tello Sahagun: Assisted in turtle data and sample collection and tagging, as well as in environmental education activities and meetings, carried out permit management and procedures with government agencies.
- Catherine E. Hart: Field assistant and scientific consultant, as well as assisting during environmental education activities
- David Enrique Sima Pantí: CONANP's on-site representative for the Chamela Bay Islands Sanctuary, also assisted during data and sample collection.
- Alejandro Peña De Niz and Caitlin Chew: Careyes Foundation Representatives, helped coordinate meetings in the Careyes community as well as assisting with data collection and organizing environmental education activities.
- Israel Llamas Gonzalez: Campamento Tortuguero Mayto/Eco Mayto director, in charge of the Mayto-Tehuamixtle hawksbill Project, as well as assisting during in water monitoring.
- Mitzi C. Nuñez Solano: GICOFF director, in charge of the Banderas Bay Hawksbill project, organized in-water monitoring in her study area and is the person of processing tissue and blood samples.
- Marcelino Aguilar Mendoza: Chamela Bay fisher's representative, capturing and safe keeping hawksbill turtles
- Rigoberto Juarez Mendoza: Costa Careyes fisher's representative, capturing and safe keeping hawksbill turtles

Balentin Aguilar, Carlos Aguilar, Emmanuel García, Jaime Vargas, José Gómez, José Luis Gómez, Germán Gómez, Tito Gómez, Juan Aguilar, Lionel Gómez, Luis Ramos, Pedro López, Samuel Aguilar, Ulises González, Victorino Salgado, Carlos Mendoza, Cesar Juárez, Felipe Barbosa, Heriberto Granados, Javier Méndez, Joel Barbosa, Luis Jorge Barbosa, Manuel Álvaro Sánchez, Marcos Juárez, Ricardo Mendoza, Víctor Daniel Sánchez: Fishers in charge of capturing and safe keeping turtles

10. Any other comments?

This project has had a positive and satisfactory reach, as the community and various local stakeholders in the area have embraced it and are eager to join the conservation, research and environmental education activities that the Jalisco-Nayarit Hawksbill Network is undertaking. Furthermore, a solid synergy is maintained with the authorities of the three levels of government and with the commitment to continue providing support to this project.

It's important to mention that without the participation of the fishing communities, which are members of this network, the scope and results would be significantly insufficient to sustain and continue the work. Therefore, said communities now play a role in disseminating information about the importance of sea turtles and the environment in their communities, giving more value to their daily activities and fostering a sense of ownership over this project. Currently, other community members and new fishing groups are interested in joining the activities carried out by the network, making the development and implementation of this project, not only environmentally, but also socially important.

At the same time, sustaining the project involves operating expenses, for this reason, it is of utter importance to obtain funds to continue carrying out in-water monitoring, conduct citizen science with community participation and to promote environmental awareness in the community. For this reason, work is underway on alternative fund raising methods and the inclusion of new collaborators to support the project.

It's worth mentioning that on December 19, 2025, we celebrated the first anniversary of this network, created for the knowledge and conservation of the hawksbill turtle. During this event, we recognized the members' effort, as well as giving special recognition and awards to those who had an outstanding participation, such as the highest number of captured, biggest turtle and most recaptures during the year

Lastly, among children and teenagers of the community, there has been an interest in studying careers related to the environment and sea turtles, reinforcing the idea that the network, besides generating information about the hawksbill turtle and its habitat, is a social promoter that motivates younger generations to improve themselves and to take care of their natural heritage.

We are grateful to have been giving the opportunity once again. This second grant has been full of learning, achievements, satisfactions, adventures, laughter and joy, but also challenges, tears, mistakes, frustration. All this experiences will help to develop and improve abilities that will be helpful in our professional development.

For more information, please read the extended final report.

ANNEX – Financial Report
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