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UVI's Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Program Receives \$60,000 Donation to Expand Research of Endangered Hawksbill Sea Turtles, Create Action Plan of Recovery

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Dr. Paul Jobsis, director of the Center for Marine and Environmental Studies with a Hawksbill sea turtle. By. THE UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The University of the Virgin Islands Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Program has received a generous donation in the amount of \$60,000 from the National Save the Sea Turtle Foundation, UVI made known via release Monday. The purpose of the donation is to continue supporting research efforts surrounding the critically endangered Hawksbill sea turtles and lead to the creation of an action plan for the recovery of hawksbills in the U.S. Virgin Islands, said the

institution of higher learning.

Additionally, the donation will support tuition cost for four graduate students in the UVI Master of Marine and Environmental Science program who wish to dedicate their research and career to sea turtle conservation.

“It is quite an honor to be supported by this eminent foundation,” said Dr. Paul Jobsis, director of the Center for Marine and Environmental Studies (CMES). “This is great news for my students and myself.”

Dr. Lawrence Wood, who currently serves as research coordinator for the foundation and head of the Florida Hawksbill Project, helped to coordinate this donation, according to the release. The foundation and the Florida Hawksbill Project have performed several studies and research on the endangered species, which include satellite tagging, genetics, and stable isotope analysis.

“While conducting this research, we were also looking around at other hawksbill projects in the U.S. to support. Through mutual research partners, I met Dr. Jobsis and was introduced to the UVI Sea Turtle Research Conservation program,” said Dr. Wood.

Before receiving this donation, the UVI Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Program focused their research primarily on the space use and habitat needs of juvenile hawksbill sea turtles in and around John Brewers Bay and Hawksbill Cove. Hawksbill Cove is a body of water located just south of the Cyril E. King International Airport, UVI said.

“With limited locations to study and protect the hawksbill in the U.S., we presented the National Save the Turtle Foundation with an opportunity to expand their work for the good of the species,” said Dr. Jobsis. “We have been learning about the juvenile turtle’s habitat needs by studying the ones that dwelled along the airport runway. With this donation, we can now expand our research and learn more about how the beaches in St. Thomas and St. John are being used as nesting habitats, so we are grateful and thankful.”

For more information on UVI’s Sea Turtle Research and Conservation efforts, contact the Public Relations Office at pr@uvi.edu or the Office of Institutional Advancement at (340) 693-1040.