



# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 100  
Arlington, VA 22203

February 12, 2010

Dear friends and colleagues:

It is with fond memories and great affection that I write to you, now three months following our energizing gathering in Nicaragua. I, like many of you, felt the event was a momentous one, and one which, in time, has the potential to become historic. But such a lofty outcome is only possible if our gathering receives the intensive and thorough follow-up necessary to convert a broad, ambitious vision into a complex, practical reality.

As a first small step towards that end, you will find attached a number of materials including: (1) the priorities derived from each of the three break-out groups; (2) a compilation of those results into a single table; (3) comments from the evaluation forms; plus (4) other basic information related to the workshop (agenda, participants list, etc.) I welcome you to review these documents and provide back any comments or corrections to this record of the meeting.

Next on the horizon is a challenging, yet exciting stage of the process -- synthesizing the essence of the workshop recommendations into an over-arching, cohesive framework for this new training program. This will be a major goal over the next few months so that in the not too distant future we will be able to share with you for your critical comment just such a framework. As you might expect, that framework will include not just a basic outline of the training program but also the key institutional elements necessary to deliver it -- particularly the ingredients (professors, courses, institutional philosophy) required of the institution or institutions essential to successful implementation.

Just so that it is on your radar screen, following development of this framework document, the likely scenario will be to incorporate that product into a "request for proposals" (RFP). That RFP would then be broadly circulated throughout the conservation and academic communities of Latin America and the Caribbean to seek out potential institutions that might best serve to pilot this initiative.

This is a simplified version of next steps -- a view from an altitude of 30,000 feet -- but it is intended to give you a sense of future developments.

Moving to another point, I was struck at the close of the Nicaragua meeting, as well as by some of the evaluation comments, that the gathering served many participants as a unique opportunity to meet with such like-minded individuals, individuals with a primary focus on people as the essential element of whether conservation actions succeed or fail. It has made me wonder whether or not fora do not already exist -- societies or other organizations -- that meet to network and exchange ideas along the lines of the Nicaragua meeting. If such an organization does not



exist, it would seem we certainly need one. At the same time, the last thing we need to do is reinvent the wheel! So, I am very interested in feedback from you on this matter. Please let us know if you are aware of any societies or organizations focused on conservation as we embrace it. Such an entity might well serve to expand our international dialogue on many other themes beyond the very specific one we spent three days exploring in Nicaragua. Please contact Jenny Martínez ([Jenny\\_Martinez@fws.gov](mailto:Jenny_Martinez@fws.gov)) with your comments and suggestions on this matter.

Though time has relentlessly moved on since our time at Montelimar, I find no less reason to feel excited, as I did during the course of the meeting, that we are working our way through an extraordinary exercise -- crafting the profile of the next generation of conservation leaders so that those who inherit this earth-changing charge from us will be empowered in the best manner possible to succeed. I thank you for your continued enthusiasm towards addressing this challenge.

I cannot close without expressing my personal condolences, sympathies, and well wishes to Jean Vilmond and Jessie Haspil in Haiti. It was a great relief to learn that you are okay and it was heart-warming to see the concern of the vast extended family you are part of resulting from such fine camaraderie in Nicaragua. Let me offer the hope that the tribulations suffered in Haiti as a result of the recent earthquake are as short-lived as humanly possible and that the global community at long last provides the support necessary to Haiti's re-emergence as a thriving state in the diverse expanse that is the Caribbean.

To all, I wish you a most wonderful 2010 along with the hope that by year end what is presently a dream will be on the verge of becoming a reality!

The very best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Raffaele". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and a long, sweeping underline.

Herb Raffaele  
Chief, Division of International Conservation