

## **`Hombre y Territorio´ and Fundación Cepsa, united by the project ‘SOS Caretta: Fishermen for Biodiversity’**

- **The project will operate in western Andalusia to promote a closer relationship between actors involved in the conservation and rescue of sea turtles, especially fishermen**
- **‘SOS Caretta’ takes its name from the most common species of sea turtle in the region: the loggerhead sea turtle (‘Caretta caretta’)**

The ‘Hombre y Territorio’ (HyT) association, together with Fundación Cepsa, is launching *S.O.S. Caretta: Fishermen for Biodiversity* on the coasts of Cádiz and Huelva. It aims to promote the rescue of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and other species such as the leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), while also working to obtain data on the location of specimens and other aspects such as the interaction of turtles with marine litter. All data obtained will be made available to the competent administrations and incorporated into Spanish Marine Strategies.

Fundación Cepsa underscores that the Regional Government of Andalusia already has alert protocols in place via 112 Emergency Services in case a fisherman or sailor finds a sea turtle in need of rescue. *SOS Caretta* will work to improve collaboration within the fishing sector to conserve these species, which are classified as Vulnerable to Extinction according to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) red list. The *Caretta caretta* is also included on the List of Wildlife Species under Special Protection and is listed as Vulnerable in the Spanish Catalog of Endangered Species. In addition to actions aimed at training and raising awareness in the fishing sector, initiatives will be carried out with schoolchildren and the general public in the aforementioned locations.

This project has the institutional support of the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITERD) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development of the Regional Government of Andalusia. So far, the following entities have joined the *S.O.S. Caretta* project: the Virgen del Carmen Fishermen's Guild of Isla Cristina, the Island Association of Fishing Vessels, the Santo Cristo del Mar Fishermen's Guild of Punta Umbría, the Northwest Coast Fishing Local Action Group, the Fishermen's Guild of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and the Fishermen's Guild of Tarifa. Both Hombre y Territorio and Fundación Cepsa continue to seek new institutional and academic partnerships in the provinces of Cádiz and Huelva.

Sea turtles use the Andalusian coasts for feeding and refuge on their way in and out of the Mediterranean. The most frequent species is the loggerhead turtle. Andalusia also has one of the largest fishing fleets in Europe, meaning its participation is key to the conservation of sea turtles in this region.

“The fishing sector in Andalusia must be committed to biodiversity. This is key for making sustainability a reality in the fishing sector,” acknowledges Manuel Fernández, Chairman of the Andalusian Federation of Fishermen's Guilds (FACOPE), which together with the Andalusian Federation of Fishing Associations (FAAPE), provides institutional representation to the sector by supporting the project. “We are a key sector in the region, and it is our obligation to move towards greater collaboration in line with the demands of society, as we have been doing for years,” says José María Gallart, Chairman of FAAPE.

For Cristina Ortiz, Director of Fundación Cepsa, “this new activity strengthens our relationship with Andalusia and its efforts to protect biodiversity, and it joins other pioneering projects focused on awareness and conservation, like the ones we have in the Laguna Primera de Palos lake and the Madre Vieja Environmental Station.” *SOS Caretta* enjoys guidance from leaders of other similar initiatives operating in Andalusia and other regions of Spain, and “the philosophy of this project is to seek the participation of any actors who might be involved in rescuing sea turtles, always prioritizing the collaboration of the fishing sector and coordination with the competent administrations,” says Patricio Peñalver, coordinator of the project at HyT.

**HyT** is an association with extensive experience in the conservation of marine species and environments. A collaborating entity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development of the Regional Government of Andalusia, it has participated in sea turtle conservation projects in this region. Furthermore, it has international experience as regards sea turtles and their relationship with the fishing sector.

**Fundación Cepsa** is a general interest, nonprofit entity whose aim is to carry out initiatives that serve the needs and priorities of the local communities where its founder, Compañía Española de Petróleos S.A. (Cepsa), conducts its activities. The areas of action for Fundación Cepsa are social, environmental and scientific-educational.

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