

## **WCS and CMS – as at September 2012**

### **Our Mission**

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) saves wildlife and wild places worldwide. We do so through science, global conservation, education and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together these activities change attitudes towards nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in harmony. WCS is committed to this mission because it is essential to the integrity of life on Earth.

### **Who We Are**

WCS was founded in 1895 as the New York Zoological Society, one of the first wildlife and nature conservation organizations in the USA. The Society began with a clear mandate: to advance wildlife conservation; promote the study of zoology; and create a first-class zoo. Our earliest conservation project was preventing the extinction of the American bison, an initiative that, over 100 years later, is working to restore this species and its natural habitats over major portions of its former range.

In fulfilling our aim to protect 25 percent of the world's biodiversity, we operate over 500 field programs and projects in over 65 countries around the world and support them through integrative, disciplinary programs focusing on four major impediments to biodiversity conservation: climate change; natural resource exploitation; human livelihood needs; and compounding connections between wildlife and human health.

In addition to our Global Conservation Program, WCS operates the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, the Central Park Zoo and Prospect Park and Queens Zoos. These New York-based "living institutions" welcome 4 million visitors each year and help to educate them in science and conservation issues.

### **What We Do**

In fulfilling our mission of saving wild species and wild places, WCS's Global Conservation Program has helped to create more than 100 protected areas around the world, in landscapes and seascapes ranging from the coastal forests of Gabon to the coral reefs of Belize.

We operate marine "Seascape" Programs in over eight countries around the world (including Belize, Gabon, Madagascar, Fiji, and Indonesia) and additional projects focusing on iconic marine species, deemed "ocean giants," including cetaceans and sharks and rays.

### **Our work on chondrichthyan fishes**

WCS undertakes shark conservation activities in countries around the globe. These include ecological research, including documenting shark fisheries, management planning, capacity-building, outreach and awareness, and national and international shark policy. We are one of few non-governmental organizations that have worked or are working with several CMS-listed species, notably the great white shark, whale shark, basking shark, and manta rays, and we are now planning work with mako sharks. Much of this is undertaken through our Gulf and Caribbean Sharks and Rays Program directed by Dr. Rachel Graham in Belize and, to a lesser degree, through our New York Seascape Program and the New York Aquarium, based in New

York, but also involves field staff in Indonesia, Fiji, Gabon, and elsewhere. Recognizing the global distribution of many shark species and the ubiquitous threat of excessive fishing pressure for international trade, we have recently expanded our shark policy efforts at both national and international levels.

We expect all of our current work to expand over the coming years – and are keen to find synergies with the work of the CMS to maximize these efforts towards the greatest impact.