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*For Immediate Release*

**DOMINICA INTRODUCES NEW SEA TURTLE PROGRAM**

**\*Protection Initiative Incorporates Turtle Watching Tours and Participation of Citizens as Part of the Internationally Recognized WIDECAST\***

**Roseau, Dominica – (June 23, 2008)** – While *Dominica* offers many things to see and do for nature enthusiasts, sea turtle watching is rapidly becoming a major attraction. Growing out of a successful sea turtle program operating on Rosalie Beach, visitors to “The Nature Island” of *Dominica* will soon be able to observe these magnificent creatures at many more locations across the island with a trained tour guide from neighboring villages.

The recently established Dominica Sea Turtle Conservation Organization (DomSeTCO) is formally launching a coordinated, community-based eco-tourism and management program in 2009 that will operate at Londonderry Beach, Bout Sable Beach, and the beaches at Rosalie and Riviere Cyrique. However, nightly beach patrolling has already begun, with trained citizen patrollers conducting turtle tagging, data collection and, when necessary, nest and egg relocation. Turtles tagged on *Dominica* can be tracked throughout the Caribbean due to collaboration with the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation (WIDECAST). Limited tours are available on an appointment basis. Local snacks and drinks such as roast bread fruit, codfish, and coffee will be sold along with souvenirs including souvenir T-shirts available at select beaches. Turtle watching tours for visitors will be \$10USD per person in season, which lasts approximately from March through August each year.

“DomSeTCO’s sea turtle conservation, research, education and tour program in concert with WIDECAST will be an excellent addition to the growing roster of nature-based attractions that *Dominica* can offer to visitors,” said Steve Bornn, Director of Tourism for the *Discover Dominica Tourism Authority*. “It brings to bear the island’s authenticity and overall principles of environmental sustainability and incorporates an important element of our marketing plan - getting the local villagers actively involved in tourism programs.”

***More...***

The sandy beaches along *Dominica*'s southeast coast provide the perfect nesting ground for various species of internationally endangered sea turtles such as the leatherback, hawksbill and green turtles. Each year upon maturation, these giant turtles come ashore to lay their eggs on the beach. The female uses her flippers to dig a hole in the sand, then lays approximately 150-200 eggs and covers the nest before returning to the water. Inside the nest, the eggs develop and hatch in approximately 60 days. Once the tiny hatchlings dig out of the nest, they must find and make their way to the ocean. Due to predators, the heat of the sun and other factors, it is believed that only 1 in every 1,000 hatchlings survives to adulthood.

DomSeTCO is implementing the Sea Turtle Conservation program in collaboration with the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation (WIDECAST), continuing the work of the Rosalie Sea Turtle Initiative Inc. (RoSTI) with the goal of providing concrete data on *Dominica*'s nesting sea turtle populations by utilizing sound scientific methodologies and by enlisting the assistance and support of local communities.

Known as "The Nature Island" and located between the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Eastern Caribbean, the independent nation of *Dominica* (pronounced "Dom-in-eek-a") is the largest and most mountainous of the Windward Islands, encompassing an area of nearly 290 square miles. Of volcanic origins with mountains reaching heights of nearly 5,000 feet, rainforests that are considered among the last true oceanic rainforests in the world, more than 365 rivers, waterfalls, boiling lakes and pristine coral reefs, *Dominica*'s natural diversity is truly unique. *Dominica* is also home to the last remaining settlement of the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean – The Carib Indians. A place where man and nature live in harmony, adventurers and nature lovers alike will revel in the Island's eco-tourism options which include scuba diving, snorkeling, mountain biking, kayaking, horseback riding, nature tours, hiking/trekking, whale, dolphin and bird watching, sailing and fishing.

*Dominica* continues to be recognized for its attributes and responsible tourism efforts, including being the first country in the world to receive Benchmarking designation from the prestigious eco-tourism organization Green Globe 21. National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destination ranked the island as the top sustainable island in the Caribbean and among the top ten in the world. Most recently, *Dominica* was recognized by Islands Magazine and was included in its 2007 Blue List for being a leader in responsible tourism and ensuring an environmentally and culturally sound island for future generations.

For more information on *Dominica*, contact the *Discover Dominica Tourism Authority* at 866-522-4057. Or, visit *Dominica*'s official website: [www.discoverdominica.com](http://www.discoverdominica.com).

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