

Press Release for Immediate Release:

September 16, 2013

**Whales of Potosi Research Project Surpasses Its Initial Project Launch
Funding Goals Two Weeks Early
*Project Launches, First Meetings Set to Begin Building the Project***

Katherina Audley, Founder and Director of the Whales of Potosi Research Project is pleased to announce that the project has met and surpassed its funding objectives and is officially able to launch.

Members of the beach community in Playa Blanca, the beach along which the study will be run, along with over 65 individuals and small businesses around the world came together to pledge over \$18,000 to the project's launch.

Next steps, Katherina Audley will meet with Founder, Keith May, and Chief Scientific Officer, Oscar Frey, of Deep Blue Conservancy in Puerto Vallarta to establish the parameters for a 10-week study of the estimated 2500 humpback whales which visit and travel between Banderas Bay and Bahia de Potosi each winter. Deep Blue Conservancy will travel to Bahia de Potosi to assist with the study and teach safe, responsible whale watching guidelines to community members in the region who wish to work together to develop a whale watch guide service in the area.

Following this visit, Katherina Audley will meet with members of the business, ecotourism and fishing communities in Barra de Potosi, outlying villages, Zihuatanejo and Ixtapa to present the project's objectives and begin building a team which will support the humpback whale fluke identification matching project, a whale watch guide service and create the infrastructure to support the increase in opportunities and presence of marine ecotourism opportunities in the region.

On September 13, 2013, Katherina Audley met with Wayne Sentman, Director of International Eco-tour Programs at the Oceanic Society and they have begun working together to set up opportunities for tourists to participate in the Whales of Potosi Research Project's scientific programs as early as 2015. Given the aligned missions of both the Oceanic Society and the Whales of Potosi Research Project to deepen the connections between people and nature through research, community engagement, and firsthand experience, the Oceanic Society has also chosen to collaborate with the Whales of Potosi Research Project by serving as their non-profit fiscal sponsor, to lend the expertise of their Chief Scientific Officer, Bryan Wallace to the project's panel of advisors and to promote and support the Project's research and programs through their own website and encourage their marine mammal experts to engage with the project as it evolves.

The Whales of Potosi Research Project has been designed to be a five-year program, which will include five seasons of humpback whale study and data collection, continued assistance with supporting a sustainable, responsibly run whale watch guide service and ongoing study and promotion of the Bahia de Potosi, Playa Blanca and the surrounding terrestrial habitat as a unique ecological hot spot worthy of visiting and protecting.

Having accomplished the initial objective of fundraising \$17,020 by October 1, 2013 in pledges to support the project, the Whales of Potosi Research Project is now able to launch. Any and all funds donated to the project beyond this original goal will be dedicated entirely to the continued success of the project.

Please visit the project website, <http://www.whalesinmexico.com> to find out how to support and get involved in the project.

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