

PROJECT ECUADOR FINAL REPORT  
By: Paul Dunning, Founder

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To LBLGA members, alumni and friends:

One month after the Long Beach Lifeguard Centennial celebration in 2006, John Pearce and I traveled to Playas, Ecuador to enjoy the great surf, warm weather and friendly culture. Shortly thereafter, our international lifeguard program known as Project Ecuador began and transformed into a 5 year mission to help all coastal regions as we expanded from 1 beach to 20 beaches. Volunteer American ocean lifeguards traveled to Ecuador at their own cost to take part in training academies and on the job training during Carnival. Rescues were made and government officials watched and learned that public safety in the aquatic environment is a necessity. I am very pleased to report that a national lifeguard agency has been created and lifeguards will soon be paid in all regions.

On October 25, 2011, the Secretaría Nacional de Gestión de Riesgos (SNGR) announced a new program called **Project Safe Beaches** to institutionalize lifeguards in all coastal Provinces. Rescate Acuático will oversee the project and has a 2 year, \$400,000 budget for rescue equipment, rescue boats, training and infrastructure development. Rescate Acuático will certify the lifeguards to be eligible to be hired by the local municipalities. Only certified lifeguards can work on the beach. Municipalities are now required to create a budget for lifeguards and will oversee wage administration.

I am very proud to see our hard work transform into public policy. I am also excited to see the lifeguards we trained receive certification from a government entity (vs. Americans) to validate their ability to meet international standards. Lastly, our grass roots effort to persuade Cities to pay for lifeguards is already in effect in Playas, Montanita, Manta and Esmeraldas allowing for an easy transition to follow the new law. Sustained professional lifeguard operations have been created and the long term outlook is very promising.

We are respectful of Ecuador's sovereign abilities and we have ended the annual Carnival training missions. Future developments may include an EC-USA exchange program. We will remain in close contact with our friends and will be ready to respond if additional help is requested. Product donations continue to flow via the "Long Beach - Manta (Ecuador) Sister Cities" sponsorship as an established diplomatic channel. Currently, tensions are high between USA and Ecuador leaders which caused interruptions in our project. The shifting political agenda has been very challenging to predict or manage, however the results are conclusive.

Project Ecuador recruited 75 American ocean lifeguards from 14 agencies in California, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina to take part in the largest ever international outreach program. Six other volunteers also traveled to Ecuador to help for a grand total of 111 individual missions. The volunteers were the key to success and Long Beach Lifeguards represented 23 individual missions, the greatest number by any agency. I am truly thankful for the many donors who made this possible, including the LBLGA and alumni. The \$20,000 in cash donations and \$13,000 in product donations provided the seed capital to save lives and will continue to save lives for years to come. This has been an adventure of a lifetime for me and everyone involved.

Rescate Acuático is Ecuador's national lifeguard agency and lifeguards are public safety professionals. Mission Accomplished!

For a complete story line, please visit our blog at <http://www.ecuadorlifeguards.org> or follow Project Ecuador on Facebook.