First fuel-handling facility in the Galapagos earns environmental certification

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The first fuel-handling facility in the Galápagos Islands—a region of great biodiversity and evolutionary importance—was given official environmental certification today, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) announced. The facility underwent extreme renovations in order to meet certification standards, which are part of a 10-year plan developed by WWF and Toyota, in conjunction with the Ecuadorian Government, to transform high pollution energy systems currently in use in the Galápagos to more sustainable and renewable energy sources. It is one of only a few facilities in Latin America to hold this certification.

"This achievement demonstrates the enormous impact public, private and conservation entities can have when they join forces for a common goal," said Lauren Spurrier, WWF's Galápagos managing director. "The completion of this project and its certification are a milestone in our effort to protect one of the world's most precious and historically significant eco-regions and preserve the livelihoods of the many people who depend on these islands for their survival."

This accomplishment is realized less than two months before the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin, a scientist well known for his species and evolution work in the Galápagos Islands. The islands have seen dramatic changes since Darwin's exploration, with a huge growth in population and an expanding tourism industry. Safe, environmentally sound handling of fuel supplies has been a major challenge brought about by this growth.

After a tanker spill released 240,000 gallons of fuel into the waters surrounding the islands in 2001, WWF and PetroEcuador, the state-owned oil company, identified fuel transportation and storage as a major environmental concern that needed to be immediately addressed. WWF and Toyota worked together to develop a technical assessment and design for renovations to the primary facility in Baltra, which included, among other items, replacing the old, leaking tanks and installing a state-of-the art computer system to monitor tank levels and facility operations. PetroEcuador allocated funds for implementation and construction was completed in December of 2004 in line with the highest environmental standards. In 2008, a final investment of $1 million refined the facilities' environmental management system allowing it to attain official certification.

Today the facility was awarded official ISO 14001 certification by the Bureau Veritas Certification, a third-party certification body, verifying that the facility is environmentally sound.

"The Galápagos now has one of the safest and most modern fuel depots in Latin America," said Bill Reinert, national manager for advanced technologies at Toyota Motor Sales. "WWF's conservation expertise and Toyota's engineering prowess are the perfect combination for real transformation in the Galápagos and we look forward to continuing to work with the Ecuadorian Government to reform the islands' energy systems and guide the region to a more sustainable future."

"Ensuring development is sustainable and environmentally sound is essential to protecting the places we treasure in the Galápagos. We hope this effort can serve as an example to the rest of the world," said Commander Brummel Vásquez, vice-president of environment for PetroEcuador.

Source: World Wildlife Fund

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