

# MAR FUND UPDATE



Mesoamerican Reef Fund [info@marfund.org](mailto:info@marfund.org) / [www.marfund.org](http://www.marfund.org) / [facebook.com/mesoamerican.reeffund](https://facebook.com/mesoamerican.reeffund)

Dear Friends and Reef Lovers,

A few months have passed since our last communication, and we didn't want to extend the period any longer before sharing some of our latest activities with you.

## Supporting one step at a time

Our Small Grants Program continues to reach and support important initiatives in the four countries through NGO's, universities and other institutions. In our second request for proposals, the projects focus on innovative management practices in the initial network of coastal and marine protected areas in the Mesoamerican Reef. They have accomplished very interesting results to date, such as:

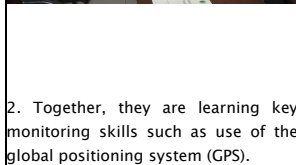
### BELIZE

#### Community Stewards Program in Protected Areas

The relations between TIDE personnel and coastal community leaders chosen from Payne's Creek National Park and Port Honduras Marine Reserve have been strengthened through educational sessions and meetings. Leaders have learned new skills, such as basic computer use and effective communications, which makes them important multipliers of conservation information.



1. Community leaders from both Payne's Creek National Park and Port Honduras Marine Reserve Protected Areas that have joined the training program.



2. Together, they are learning key monitoring skills such as use of the global positioning system (GPS).

#### Tobacco Caye Marine Station

Located in South Water Caye Marine Reserve, this station is a training center where educational activities will be conducted and information will be produced.

3. Tobacco Caye Marine Station



4. Matthew Jasinski, in charge of the project and a representative from PACT.

### GUATEMALA

#### "No-trawling zone" in the Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area.

Fishermen have proposed to declare a "no trawling zone" within the Río Sarstún Protected Area. The fishermen from different associations, all members of the Fishermen's Network of the Guatemalan Caribbean, participate in the discussions.

5. Discussion meetings have taken place in San Juan Village, Buena Vista Village and Livingston



## HONDURAS

### Integrated management of the Utila Marine Area.

The Environmental Education Plan is under implementation in Utila Island. It includes providing information on local ecosystems and the impact that human activities have on the environment. One of the activities involves children from the elementary school at Pigeon Caye. As part of the program on management of natural resources, they are developing a dramatization called "Save the babies", in reference to the protection of immature Queen Conch.



6. Kids from the elementary school participating in "Save the babies"

## MEXICO

### Sustainable fishing and commercialization of the Queen Conch in Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve.

Enforcement of Queen Conch fishing regulations has improved thanks to the work done by the Environmental Crime Committee created through this project. A data base on the reports of illegal fishers has been created for Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserves.

### Pilot experience for the use of the collective brand label: "Banco Chinchorro and Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserves lobster".

The Quintana Roo Fishers Integrator Enterprise has created and registered the lobster collective brand "Chakay". Lobster is captured under specific conservation and sustainable use measures. The enterprise is monitoring the health of the lobster population and the ecosystem.

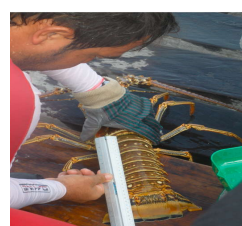
Some of the key factors required by the collective brand "Chakay" include:



7. Lobster captured under specific conservation and sustainable use measures



8. Minimum Legal weight



9. Minimum legal length



10. Healthy mature lobsters.

## Fishermen taking care of business

Our two pilot projects on community-managed fisheries in Mexico and Honduras have kicked off.

### Mexico

The Puerto Morelos Fishing Cooperative has completed one full reef monitoring phase with the support of the National Park Administration and the NGO Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBI).

They selected 13 strategic monitoring sites within the protected area. In each monitoring site they set up transects to measure the following indicators: number of fish and fish species, number of reefs and reef species, number of invertebrates and invertebrate species, type of sediments, and bottom structure.

After concluding the analysis of the first monitoring phase, they will have a base line and will be able to compare the differences between fishing zones and no-take zones.

11. Fishers organizing themselves in working teams before monitoring the reef.



12. Fisherman monitoring the reef.



Honduras



The three communities within the Wildlife Refuge of Cuero y Salado have initiated activities with the administrative support of the Cayos Cochinos Foundation. They have formed an association that integrates the three communities and are negotiating an exclusive fishing ground for them to co-manage with the protected area administrator.

13. Taking oath during the creation of the new association.

We are very excited about the results that these two projects will obtain for their fishing communities as well as for the conservation and sustainable use of their fisheries resources.

## Innovate funding alternative: GlobalGiving

GlobalGiving is an on-line market place that connects people with social-related projects that are being developed throughout the world. Through this organization, we have been able to raise funds for our Community Fisheries Program.

This funding strategy has inspired us to continue working with fishing communities that are interested in involving themselves in the co-management of their natural resources.



On July 30th and 31st, we received a visit from GlobalGiving volunteer, Mark Skeith. He visited Guatemalan fishing communities and fishing grounds where fishers are very interested in becoming a part of the co-management processes.

14. Mark Skeith during his visit to the Guatemalan Caribbean

We thank GlobalGiving for letting us be a part of their innovative strategy. We want to encourage you to become involved and invite you to visit [www.globalgiving.com/projects/mesoamerican-reef-conservation/](http://www.globalgiving.com/projects/mesoamerican-reef-conservation/) to find an easy and practical way to support community fisheries projects. Click on the link at end of the page to access the project.

## Expected Expedition

The expedition to the MAR Region was postponed until mid-2010. We want you to experience the reef and its amazing inhabitants up close and personal next year, and invite you to come with us to Yum Balam, at the top of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, and Hol Chan, in Ambergris Caye in Belize.

We are planning the expedition for June of next year because the remarkable Whale sharks begin to arrive in Yum Balam during this month. You will also be able to snorkel in the unique coral channel and colorful reefs of Belize's Hol Chan. The managers of the reserves and experts from each site will join us and provide detailed information on each protected area, its threats and the on-going conservation activities.

You will not want to miss this opportunity. So join us in our facebook link ([facebook.com/mesoamerican.reeffund](https://facebook.com/mesoamerican.reeffund)) as we will post the itinerary early next year.

***On behalf of the MAR Fund Board of Directors and the staff, we would like to thank you for your support and enthusiasm.***