



MARCH 2013

Mesoamerican Reef Fund www.marfund.org / info@marfund.org

Picture by MAR Fund

Dear Friends,

We have started this year with a lot of energy and many exciting activities. The initiatives under development include the closing of most of the projects from the Fourth Request for Proposals, the beginning of the approved projects of the Fifth Request for Proposals and the beginning of the second year of the project '*Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America*', developed with funding from the Government of Germany through KfW, among others. Please, read on to learn more.



Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America

The objective of this project is to consolidate the target priority coastal and marine protected areas and to secure conservation and sustainable use of their coastal and marine resources in the mid-term.

The four target priority MPAs are:

- Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR), in Belize;
- Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge (PMWR), in Guatemala;
- Sandy Bay West End Special Marine Protection Zone (SBWESMPZ), in Honduras, and
- Yum Balam Flora and Fauna Special Protection Area (YBFFSPA), in Mexico.

The strategy of the Project focuses on implementing effective, long-term conservation mechanisms in the four areas. They will be based on planning, monitoring, updated management plans, control and surveillance systems, infrastructure and equipment, among other processes, in order to optimise the work performed by the administrators of the areas, in accordance to the highest standards.

Support will also be given, following agreement with the various users of the MPAs, for a series of activities to be defined by each protected area, with the aim of achieving sustainable use of the areas' resources, assets and services. These may, for example, include the following: codes of conduct for various extractive activities, programmes of incentives to involve communities in conservation, co-management of conservation zones together with users, strategies for the recycling of solid waste, mangrove reforestation and environmental education campaigns, good fisheries practices and responsible tourism.

Our local counterparts for the project, and the implementers on the ground, are the MPA administrators, as follows:

Belize:	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)
Guatemala:	National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP, Spanish acronym)
Honduras:	The NGO Bay Islands Conservation Association-Roatan (BICA) and Roatan Marine Park (RMP),
México:	National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP, Spanish acronym) by means of a legally established NGO which will be selected yearly and which is currently Pronatura Peninsula de Yucatán (PPY).

From September – October 2012, the four areas initiated field activities after obtaining approval to their work plans. To date, these activities include, among others:

- PHMR, Belize:
 - The repair of the infrastructure of the Abalone Caye Ranger Station, the field station located in the core of the Marine Reserve and headquarters for every patrol and surveillance activity.
 - Monitoring activities for conch, coral reef health, sea cucumber, among others.
 - Training in Law enforcement, boat navigation and engine maintenance were carried out simultaneously with PHMR rangers.
 - Surveillance equipment was purchased to strengthen rangers and includes boat engine, dive servicing kit, demarcation kits and first aid kits.
 - TIDE has revamped their webpage and once internal reviews are completed it will be launched in accordance with their communication strategy, also funded by the project.
- PMWR:
 - The purchase of an engine and a boat for their monitoring and surveillance program.
 - Patrolling activities within the MPA.
 - A diagnosis of key actors and institutions that are working within the protected area in coastal and marine issues related to biodiversity and sustainable conservation.
 - Socialization of the agreement signed between fishing communities and authorities for the co-management of a fishing ground and three fisheries recovery sites within Loa Graciosa Bay.
- SBWESMPZ:
 - The purchase of an engine and a boat for their patrolling program.
 - The purchase of monitoring and diving equipment, office supplies.
 - Training in Law enforcement to tour operators, park rangers and fishermen.
 - The purchase and installation of demarcation buoys to protect the coral reef.
- YBFFSPA:
 - The repair of the building where the field office is located and the purchase of the main functioning equipment.
 - The purchase of a communication system (radios) for all of the MPA staff.
 - The purchase of the park rangers' field kits (flash lights, rain coats, GPS, tools, caps, binoculars, backpack, first aid kits, etc.).
 - A beach cleaning campaign was developed.

The short work plans for 2012 were a good exercise to put the project procedures in practice and learn, hands-on, how to operate the different aspects of the project. Between late November and early December, 2012, a second visit was made to each protected area to support the development of the annual work plans for 2013. The four MPAs have been developing their detailed work plans very carefully, and will begin the new activities in April, 2013.

As part of the project, MAR Fund hired two consultancies. The first one was to design and develop the project's monitoring and supervision system. The consultant, Charles Dixon, an experienced consultant for the European Union, visited the four areas and as a result, recommended improvements to the logical framework, delivered reporting and planning formats and set a procedure to monitor the project's process during its five years of duration.

The second consultancy is to establish the financial gap of the four areas using MARFin, a statistical software tool designed specifically to measure and project financial gaps in protected areas. The four target areas were visited to obtain the required information, which is being revised to establish the gaps and project financial scenarios for the coming years.

Between late November and early December, 2012, a second visit was made to each protected area to support the development of the annual work plans (AWP) for 2013. The four MPAs will begin the new activities on April, 2013.

Maintaining Enforcement Presence in the Southern Barrier Reef Complex

This project aims to reduce illegal fishing activities within the broader Southern Barrier Reef Complex (SBRC) by the year 2013 to a level comparable with the well managed Gladden Spit Silk Cayes Marine Reserve 2008 level of 26 illegal incidents. The Southern Environmental Association (SEA) has been very successful in addressing this general goal, reducing from 170 illegal incidents in 2009 to 32 in 2012.

SEA finished the fourth phase of its Enforcement Program in December 2012 and began the fifth phase in 2013. In 2012, they achieved the following results:

- 168 patrols carried out;
- 32 incidents reported: 14 charges and 18 written warnings;
- 70% rate of prosecution: 14 convictions out of 20 charges, and
- Nine hotel and restaurant checks executed covering over 70 establishments, resulting in one written warning issued for possession of lobster during closed season and confiscation of illegal product.



SEA Special Enforcement Officers, Fisheries Officers and Coast Guard personnel preparing for patrolling

SEA officer issuing written warning to a fisherman for "Possession of undersized conch" on April 6, 2012



Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use of Marine Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Reef Joint Requests for Proposals

Fourth Request for Proposals



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The approved projects of the fourth request for proposals are progressing as planned and have demonstrated very good results to date. Some of their new advances include:

1. Improving fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, Belize (TIDE)

- The Managed Access Program now has a Coordinator for Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR) who is working directly with fishers to increase their participation and to conduct trainings, as needed, by fishers and reserve staff.
- Fifteen new Managed Access fishers joined the program after a visit to Glover's Reef Marine Reserve where they saw the benefits that this mechanism provides to the resource and to the fishing communities.
- The rock wall constructed to protect the Abalone Caye Marine Station was strengthened. Thanks to this, erosion has decreased considerably and TIDE looks forward to continued use of their strategically located station.



2. Enforcement enhancement at the South Water Caye Marine Reserve (SWCMR), Belize (Fisheries Department)



- The Reserve now has engines, boats and the equipment required to conduct proper patrol and surveillance actions and the five members of the core staff have been trained in engine maintenance and enforcement and have improved their results.
- They have increased the number of patrols and have much more presence in the area, leading to a total of 23 arrests and 14 warnings. The SWCMR accomplished an acceptable conviction rate of 83%.

3. Negotiation between stakeholders for the design and implementation of a fish restocking area in Bahia La Graciosa, Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, Guatemala (FUNDARY)

The first fisheries co-management agreement for Guatemala was signed between the fishermen and the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) on July 10, 2012.

- Needs and action lines for the co-management of the fish recovery sites and the co-management area have been identified with the fishers and a draft co-management action plan has been developed.
- Some of the action lines identified are:
 - Community participation
 - Promoting sustainable use of Natural Resources.



- The fishers involved in the co-management initiative have been trained in topics such as:
 - Management of coastal and marine protected areas
 - Communication and participatory planning techniques
- A multi institutional working Committee is being established to implement the co management action plan.

4. Developing management tools and capacity building to provide the foundation for rights-based fisheries and enhanced efficacy of MPA management in Honduras (UCME)



- Fishers from Punta Gorda have started engaging alternative fishing strategies such as the lobster shades and lionfish fishery.
- Under municipal law fin-fish fishing and the extraction of conch and lobster are prohibited from within the Turtle Harbour-Rock Harbour MPA, Utila, and its extension out to Southwest Cay.
- The park managers trained in usage and interpretation of results of the database and GIS interface for the park enforcement information

5. Community based marine reserves in the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve, México (COBI)

- Biological indicators were selected to monitor marine biodiversity. They were evaluated inside the fisheries recovery areas that were defined.
- A 'no-fishing inside the fisheries recovery areas' pre-agreement has been reached between the three Fishing Cooperatives involved in the project (Banco Chinchorro, Langosteros del Caribe and Andrés Quintana Roo), until the recovery areas are officially and legally established.



6. Reef restoration network and integration of a rapid response team for events that impact the Mesoamerican Reef, Mexico. (Oceanus)

As mentioned in the last Update Report, this project has completed its activities, with the following results:

- The MAR Reef Restoration Network was established.
- The strategic lines of action for the Network were defined.
- An on-line platform for the Network was developed: www.red-rac.org

Fifth Request for Proposals



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Our Grants Review Committee held a meeting on November 16, 2012, in Guatemala city, to evaluate the proposals submitted for our 5th RfP. As a result of the evaluation process, six proposals were recommended. These proposals were approved by our Board of Directors in February, 2013.

The proposals are:

- **Enhancing enforcement and compliance within the South Water Caye Marine Reserve, Belize, to be developed by the Fisheries Department.**

Their goal is to continue to increase the effectiveness of enforcement and educational outreach, the compliance and the competence of the reserve staff within South Water Caye Marine Reserve by providing necessary electrical power demand, dissemination of educational material and enforcement training.

- **Participatory design of fisheries recovery sites and fisheries co-management areas in Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area and adjacent zones, Guatemala, to be developed by FUNDAECO.**

Through this project, FUNDAECO will design at least one fisheries recovery site and a co-management zone within the protected area

The Summit Foundation, an organization that has supported the implementation of fisheries recovery sites within the MAR region, will co-fund this project as they are interested in supporting this process in Guatemala, where fisheries recovery sites are still at a very early stage. The long-term regional vision is to support the creation and management of a network of fish refuges along the Mesoamerican Reef. This proposal is to begin the process of establishing these sites and co-management areas within the Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area (AUMRS) of Guatemala, on the western end of the country's Caribbean coast, and thus contribute to the regional vision and the unofficial goal of protecting 20% of the region's waters.

- **Conserving fisheries resources through their sustainable use in the Marine Area of the Cuyamel-Omoa National Park, Honduras, to be developed by Cuerpos de Conservación de Omoa (CCO).**

Their objective is to contribute to the conservation and sustainable management of fisheries resources in the Marine Area of the Cuyamel Omoa National Park, in Honduras. CCO, jointly with the local fishermen, look forward to establishing at least one fisheries recovery site. They will also visit Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge to meet with the APROCUS fisher association that has already established fisheries recovery sites, to exchange ideas and experiences.

- **Strengthen inspection, surveillance and environmental education in the Santuario del Manatí State Reserve, Chetumal Bay (RESM), Mexico, to be developed by Amigos de Sian Ka'an (ASK).**

The objective of this project is to strengthen the components of biodiversity conservation, effective management, environmental education, inspection and monitoring for sustainable development of coastal and terrestrial areas of the Manatee Sanctuary State Reserve in the Bay of Chetumal. ASK will conduct five workshops for the efficient use and operation of the MPA management plan, four workshops on environmental education, will strengthen its communication system and will install information signs and demarcation bouys within the Reserve.

- **Status of fisheries resources in Quintana Roo: A socioeconomic approach to fishing activities, to be developed by Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBI).**

The overall objective of this study is to determine the social importance of the economic structure provided by the Quintana Roo fisheries, and to document the activities of fishing cooperatives from the perspective of the fishermen. To attain this objective, they will carry out a bibliographic compilation as well as interviews with fishers, boat captains and authorities.

- **Signaling the Protected Natural Area Arrecifes de Xcalak National Park (PNAX), Mexico, to be developed by ASK.**

The objective of ASK is to install information buoys and signs in the Arrecifes de Xcalak National Park, both on the mainland and in the water, and strengthen environmental awareness of users, developing environmental education workshops.

We are very happy that with at least three of these six projects, we will continue to support the Community Fisheries Program within the MAR region. This will contribute to the recovery of marine natural resources and ecosystems, their goods and services, through ecosystem-based management.

MAR Fund's new staff

We would like to introduce you to our new staff.

At the end of last year, Dámaris Eguizabal, an administrative assistant that had worked previously in Guatemalan and international environmental NGOs, joined our team to support the project *Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America*.

This year, Ana Beatriz Rivas, an experienced biologist, became MAR Fund's Project Officer. She will follow up on the annual work plans and reports of the *Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America* Project, and maintain close contact with the member funds and project implementers.

Talk to us

Please visit our website (www.marfund.org and www.fondosam.org) and our facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/MARFund>) to learn more about our activities. You can now obtain more details about the *Conservation of Marine resources in Central America* Project at the following link:

(http://www.marfund.org/en/new_projects/lanzamientokfw.html).

Let us know your comments and questions. Write to us at the following address:
info@marfund.org.