

UPDATE REPORT

SEPTEMBER, 2011

Mesoamerican Reef Fund www.marfund.org / info@marfund.org / facebook.com/mesoamerican.reeffund

Dear friends,

Once again we would like to share with you what we have been up to and the advances we have had during these efforts. None of this would have been possible without your confidence and support.

Joint Request for Proposals



Last year, we entered an alliance with the Overbrook Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's –NOAA– Coral Reef Conservation Program, to launch a joint request for proposals in March, 2011.

The objective of this request for proposals was to support conservation, effective management, and sustainable use of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Mesoamerican Reef System, through grants to managers and other eligible actors that are operating in the region.

Six projects were approved. Below you will find a brief description of each project:

Improving fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, Belize

Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE). The project's objective is to implement 'managed access' as a first step to an economically viable fisheries for the benefit of traditional fishers of Port Honduras Marine Reserve.

Enforcement enhancement at the South Water Caye Marine Reserve (SWCMR), Belize

Belize Fisheries Department, Ministry of Agriculture. Their goal is to decrease illegal activities occurring in the marine reserve by 25% by the end of the life span of the project (12 months).

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

Fundación Mario Dary Rivera (FUNDARY). They want to resolve fishing issues through the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of a fisheries recovery area within La Graciosa Bay.

Developing management tools and capacity building to provide the foundation for rights based fisheries and enhanced efficacy of MPA management in Honduras

Utila Centre for Marine Ecology (UCME). This project will build on existing expertise from within Utila Center for Marine Ecology –UCME-, Roatan Marine Park –RMP- and Bay Islands Conservation Association –BICA, Roatan- to collect and analyze datasets that can be used as the foundation to develop rights-based fisheries management in and around the protected areas of Utila and Roatan (Bay Islands) and provide the tools with which to measure the efficacy of the marine management strategies in these areas.

Community based marine reserves in the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve, México

Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBI). Through this project, four marine reserves (fisheries recovery areas) will be implemented in Banco Chinchorro co-working with the fishing communities and authorities to make it successful.

Reef restoration network and integration of a rapid response team for events that impact the Mesoamerican Reef, Mexico

Oceanus A. C. They will develop a workshop to gather together the people and organizations involved in coral reef restoration within the MAR region and take this opportunity to establish the MAR reef restoration network.

These projects will begin field activities very soon. We are confident that interesting results will come from every single one of them.

Fisheries co-management and enforcement initiatives

To MAR Fund, fishermen are part of the solution to overfishing, one of the main threats to the MAR region. Inspired in this belief, we established our Community Fisheries Program. This program has had great results and is now expanding through the region.

Monitoring results used by authorities in Mexico



Meetings in Puerto Morelos for the Modification of the Management Program for the National Park

The Protected Natural Areas National Commission (CONANP), organized two cross-sectoral meetings for the “Modification of the Management Program for the Puerto Morelos Reef National Park” The Puerto Morelos Fishing Cooperative actively participated in both meetings. Based on their monitoring results, they proposed to close off a site in the southern zone of the PNAPM. In exchange, they proposed to open two areas to fishing that are currently defined as Scientific Use Zones. The proposal was approved unanimously by the participants at the meeting and has been approved by CONANP.



Fishermen continue monitoring the Puerto Morelos coral reef inside and outside the no-take zones

The fishermen have completed the last monitoring exercise, which includes data collection in 70 transects in 14 sites.

CONAPESCA is extending its patrol activities (with fuel, boats, personnel) to include the no-take zones.

Moving forward in Honduras!

APROCUS, the fishers association, and FUCSA, the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge (RVSBSCS, Spanish acronym) co-administrator, prepared a co-management Action Plan for the three fishing territories granted to the fishermen for co-management. They were supported technically by World Wildlife Fund (WWF), who contributed with scientific criteria and experience obtained during the elaboration of the Management Plan for the RVSBSCS.

The action plan includes issues such as the precautionary fishing approach according to the standards of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, implementation of minimum sizes, control and surveillance in no-fishing zones, bans and abolition of prohibited fishing gear.

A training program for the members of APROCUS was implemented including the following topics:

- Environmental education,
- Economic alternative activities,
- Fishing regulations

FUCSA has awarded APROCUS the administration of an ecological camping site, and is also looking to support the implementation of the action plan.



Garbage recycling workshop for the members of APROCUS

Community Fisheries Management in Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, Guatemala

At the beginning of 2011, and thanks to the generous contribution of AVINA Foundation, we started supporting a third pilot project for fishing co-management in the region. This initiative also has the support of the Organization of American States (OAS) through the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) of Guatemala.

La Graciosa, Punta Guesa and Santa Isabel fishing communities of La Graciosa Bay, within the Punta de Manabique Refuge, are participating in the project.

A co-management area and three no-take zones have already been proposed by the three fishing communities and discussed with and approved by the fishermen of Puerto Barrios, another fishing community that fishes within La Graciosa Bay. Authorities are evaluating the proposal.

Neighbouring fishing communities are very interested in the co-management initiative and they want to learn more about the benefits this type of action can bring them.



Fisheries and Protected Areas local authorities discussing the initiative



Fishermen and NGOs studying a map of the area for the proposal of the co-management and no-take zones

Improving Fisheries Enforcement in the Southern Barrier Reef Complex in Belize.

During 2010, the Southern Environmental Association (SEA), concluded the second phase of this project with amazing results. Some of the most relevant are:

- SEA's overall rate of prosecution (convictions/charges) for 2010 is 42%
- Fisheries violations in southern Belize declined 33% over 2009 levels
- Thirteen local community members were trained and are actively engaged in support of enforcement activities.

SEA had savings that were used for a storage facility and support equipment (freezer, copier, printer, etc.) for them to adequately package, label and store all their confiscated product until cases are heard, ensuring that cases are not thrown out due to evidence mishandling.



Storage facility with equipment



Freezer used for the storage of confiscated products

Up to April 2011, after 44 patrols that included personnel from the Police Department, the Belize Coast Guard and the Belize Defense Force, SEA reported a 46% rate of prosecution. This means that six out of 13 illegal fishing charges pressed, resulted in convictions.



Preparation of confiscated product as evidence



SEA officer and the offenders (on the deck)

NEW INITIATIVE THROUGH GLOBALGIVING!



The exotic lionfish has invaded the Mesoamerican Reef, and has become a serious threat to the marine ecosystem.

Picture by Antonio Busiello

We are happy to inform that we launched a new project through Global Giving: *Control of Lionfish in the Mesoamerican Reef*.

The lionfish is a predatory venomous fish which has been accidentally introduced in the Caribbean Basin. As a carnivore with no natural predators in the Caribbean, it can significantly reduce biodiversity of a local habitat and can drive important fish species to extinction, negatively affecting coral reef ecosystems.

Our objective is to raise funds to support fishers' organizations, NGO's and authorities within the four MAR countries that are involved in lionfish control activities.

Please visit and support our two GG initiatives through the following links: <http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/control-of-invasive-lionfish-in-the-mar-reef/updates/> , for the Lionfish project or <http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/mesoamerican-reef-conservation/updates/>, for the Fisheries project.