



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

Picture by Oceanus

Dear Friends,

More than half of 2014 has passed and once again we would like to let you know about our initiatives during the year. Please, read on and share!



KFW

Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America Project, Phases I and II

The four protected areas that participate in Phase I of the Project continue to develop activities of management, monitoring, control and surveillance, community development and institutional strengthening. We acknowledge and thank the commitment of the administrators and their staff to the Project, but most importantly to their protected areas, their communities and their resources.

Technical and administrative follow up from our member funds and also our staff has been a key ingredient in the development of the field activities. You may find more detailed information on advances in each protected area in the MAR Fund website:

<http://www.marfund.org/en/learnmore/wheregrants/marinecostaldocumentos.html>

As you may remember, in 2013 we signed the financial contract and the Separate Agreement with KfW for the implementation of Phase II of the Project.

The target coastal and marine protected areas for this Phase are:

- South Water Caye Marine Reserve, Belize,
- Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize,
- Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area, Guatemala,
- Turtle Harbour / Rock Harbour Special Marine Protection Zone, Honduras, and
- Manatee Sanctuary State Reserve, Mexico.

The managers of the protected areas in each country, who are also the local partners and implementers of the project in the field, are, respectively:

- Belize Fisheries Department, in Belize;
- Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD), in Belize;
- Fundación para el Eco Desarrollo y la Conservación (FUNDAECO), in Guatemala;
- Bay Islands Conservation Association – Utila (BICA – Utila), in Honduras, and
- Ministry of Ecology and Environment (SEMA), in Mexico.

The initial workshops for these areas were held during the month of March and beginning of April, 2014. The objective of the workshops was to discuss the project operation and procedures. It was also a space for the project implementers to discuss about their respective annual work plans.



The attendants to the workshops by country were representatives from:

- Belize: Fisheries Department and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT, MAR Fund member fund)
- Belize: Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD) and PACT
- Guatemala: Fundación para el Eco Desarrollo y la Conservación (FUNDAECO) and Fundación para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales y Ambiente en Guatemala (FCG, MAR Fund member fund)
- Honduras: Bay Islands Conservation Association - Utila and Fundación Biosfera (MAR Fund member fund)
- Mexico: Ministry of Ecology and Environment (SEMA) and Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (FMCN, MAR Fund member fund)

As a result of these workshops, the five annual work plans have been approved by the MAR Fund Board of Directors and we are ready to begin field activities.

German Cooperation Mission to the MAR Region

From August 18 - 22, a delegation from the German Cooperation, the KfW, governmental entities and the MAR Fund visited three different protected areas within the Gulf of Honduras that have been or will be supported by the Project “Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America” and the MAR Fund Small Grants Program.

The delegation that took off from Guatemala City was integrated by Hans Wollny, Chief of Cooperation (BMZ) El Salvador – SICA; Thomas Cieslik, Chief of Cooperation (BMZ) Guatemala – Belize; Manuel Lorenzana, KfW – Guatemala; Benedicto Lucas, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Protected Areas in Guatemala; Lorenzo Rosenzweig, Chair of MAR Fund; María José González, Executive Director of MAR Fund, and Claudio Gonzalez, Technical Coordinator of MAR Fund.

The journey began in Port Honduras Marine Reserve, in Belize, one of the target areas of Phase I of the Project. A very rich and informative meeting with Ms. Celia Mahung, TIDE’s Executive Director and most of the staff was held in TIDE’s office. The delegation also had the opportunity to meet with Minister Lisel Alamilla and Chief Executive Officer Adele Catzim-Sanchez, both from the Ministry of Forest, Fisheries and Sustainable Development, and Ms. Natalie Rosado, Executive Director of the Protected Areas Conservation Trust.



Minister Alamilla, Hans Wollny and Thomas Cieslik



A wonderful field trip through the marine reserve was conducted. The visit included the marine ranger station, conservation zones, and the Monkey River and Punta Negra communities.

Port Honduras Marine Reserve ranger station



The second protected area visited was the Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area, in Guatemala, an area that will benefit from Phase II of the Project. The host was FUNDAECO, the protected area co-administrator. Marco Cerezo, the Executive Director of FUNDAECO, and his staff, had prepared a very busy and interesting visit to several sites within the area, including a meeting with local fishermen and a delicious local meal prepared by a group of women that run the visitor center within the protected area.



Lorenzo Rosenzweig and Mr. Fredy Bances, Río Sarstún community leader

The final area that the delegation visited was the Cuyamel-Omoa National Park, in Honduras, that has received support from the Small Grants Program. Daniel Kempken, Chief of Cooperation (BMZ), Honduras and Nico Schüetzhofer, KfW Regional Agency Director for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and BCIE, joined the delegation at this point. Also present were Angel Matute, Sub Director of the Forest and Protected Areas Conservation Institute of Honduras (ICF), Ana Velásquez and Alejandro Vallejo, also from the same organization.

Roger Flores and Gustavo Cabrera, Executive Director and Research Coordinator, of Cuerpos de Conservación de Omoa (CCO), arranged the meeting and the field visit, and presented their project, which involves the creation of a 900 ha fish recovery area within the national park.



Guardhouse in Cuyamel Omoa National Park



Joint Requests for Proposals Fifth Request for Proposals



KFW



The
Overbrook
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Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use of Marine Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Reef

The approved projects of the 5th Request for Proposals have completed their activities, with very interesting results. A few examples include:

1. Enhancing enforcement and compliance within the South Water Caye Marine Reserve, Belize (Fisheries Department)

- The demarcation buoys for the marine reserve and the solar system equipment for the ranger station were purchased and installed.
- The Fisheries Department completed a total of 395 enforcement patrols which led to six arrests.
- As a result of a negotiating strategy of the Fisheries Department, fishermen from Riversdale Village requested the shifting of the replenishment zone in the southern portion of the marine reserve.
- The request was accepted and the shape of the zone was strategically modified by the shifting of the boundaries in order to include a nursery ground identified by the fishermen.



2. Participatory design of fisheries recovery sites and fisheries co-management areas in Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area and adjacent zones, Guatemala (FUNDAECO)

- The organized groups of fishermen from Cocolí, Barra Sarstún and Laguna Grande were fully involved in the participatory design of two fisheries recovery sites identified in the Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area: one in Cocolí and one in Barra Sarstún/Laguna Grande.
- The two sites were geo-referenced with the support of scientists from San Carlos University, who provided the necessary equipment.
- With the collaboration of Water Quest, a dive shop that selflessly wants to support Guatemalan Caribbean fishermen, nine fishers (7 fishermen and 2 fisherwomen) were trained and certified in scuba diving. They were also trained in biological survey techniques.



First generation of fishers certified as Open Water divers

3. Conserving fishery resources through their rational use in the Marine Area of the Cuyamel-Omoa National Park, Honduras (Cuerpos de Conservación de Omoa - CCO)

- CCO and fishers from Cuyamel-Omoa National Park developed a diagnostic on the diversity and abundance of fish in three ecosystems: Chachaguala Lagoon, Chahaguala River and five sites within the coral reef ecosystem of Omoa. They jointly defined approximately 900 Ha for a fisheries recovery site and proposed it to the authorities.
- They made and installed artisanal demarcation buoys for the recovery site.
- CCO designed and implemented a patrol and surveillance plan and carried out 40 patrols within the marine protected area. A guardhouse was built to ensure the presence of the authority in the area.
- The process was undertaken with the full support and involvement of the ICF (protected areas authority) and DIGEPESCA (fisheries authority).



Fishers and CCO staff sampling for the diagnostic on the diversity and abundance of fish in Chachaguala River.



4. Strengthening inspection, surveillance and environmental education in the Santuario del Manatí State Reserve, Chetumal Bay, México (Amigos de Sian Ka'an)

- Eight informative signs were designed and installed around the Chetumal Bay to raise environmental awareness on the following topics: Waste management, Mangroves, Manatees and Flora-Fauna.
- A map for patrolling and surveillance routes was generated covering strategic points near fishing communities.
- Amigos de Sian Ka'an developed five environmental education workshops addressed to fishermen, students and the Navy.

5. Status of fishery resources in Quintana Roo: A socioeconomic approach to fishing activities (Comunidad y Biodiversidad - COBI)

- A socioeconomic diagnostic of the artisanal fishing communities of Quintana Roo was developed generating the following conclusions and recommendations, among others:
 - The largest concentration of fishing effort is located in the north part of the State, so it is suggested to gradually lead towards the establishment of fish refuges projects.
 - Holbox and Chiquila area has a strong pressure on fishing, so it can be considered a priority area for sustainable management programs.
 - There is a lack of comprehensive training approaches in most existing cooperative projects.
 - It is recommended to lead efforts to increase awareness about the role of women in artisanal fisheries of the State.
- A total of 401 socioeconomic questionnaires were completed (352 men and 49 women) in 22 of the 25 fishing cooperatives targeted, and a total of 45 audio interviews were developed. An approximate 30% of the registered fishermen of Quintana Roo were interviewed.
- An agreement between COBI and the Quintana Roo University – Unidad Cozumel was established to have students available to support field activities in fisheries projects.

6. Signaling the Protected Natural Area Arrecifes de Xcalak National Park, Mexico. (Amigos de Sian Ka'an)

- Six demarcation buoys were installed in the northern and southern boundaries of the protected area.
- Six mooring buoys were also installed. These buoys will avoid anchoring incidents in the coral reefs.
- A map to identify diving sites within the Protected Area was created to guide tourists and tour operators.
- A total of five workshops to strengthen environmental awareness were developed for fishermen, school children and authorities.



Workshop developed for children to create environmental awareness in them



Sixth Request for Proposals



Reducing Threats and Improving Management in Key Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Reef

For the 6th RfP, six proposals were approved, as follows:

- Increasing the cost-effectiveness of the marine protected area enforcement in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, Belize. Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)
- Strengthening the Network of fish refuges in the Gulf of Honduras. Tri National Alliance for the Conservation of the Gulf of Honduras (TRIGOH)
- Support for the protection and conservation of sharks and rays in the Guatemalan Caribbean. Sea and Aquaculture Study Center (CEMA)
- Consolidation of the proposed fish recovery site in the Cuyamel-Omoa National Park, Honduras. Cuerpos de Conservación de Omoa (CCO)
- First evaluation of the megafauna in the Mexican Caribbean: a key indicator of the recovery of biodiversity in fishing shelters. Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBI)
- Banco Chinchorro: Knowledge and elasmobranch conservation through community participation and exchange of experiences, Mexico. RAZONATURA

The six projects have started field activities. We have great expectations in each of them. We will keep you posted!



Seventh Request for Proposals



Paul M. Angell
Family



On August 14, 2014, the 7th request for proposals entitled *Development of Initiatives for better management of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Reef* was launched to contribute to the conservation of the ecological functions of the Mesoamerican Reef System.

For this RfP, a special invitation to submit proposals was made to established community groups, inside or within the area of influence of the priority protected areas.

We are expecting to receive proposals by October 17, 2014 at the latest. We will keep you informed of how many proposals we get!

Towards the Creation of a Strategy for the Control of Lion Fish in the Mesoamerican Reef



On May 22 – 23, with the combined financial support of the German Cooperation, CAR-SPAW-RAC and the United Nations Environment Programme, the initial workshop to develop a regional strategy to control lionfish in the Mesoamerican Reef was carried out in Guatemala City.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To begin the development of a Mesoamerican Reef Strategy for the control of lionfish based on the Caribbean Strategy.
- To have an exchange of experiences between the Caribbean and the MAR regions
- To define concrete management and control actions for this invasive exotic species

During these two days, a total of 42 people, including managers of protected areas, fisheries and environment authorities, and experts from the countries of the MAR region gathered to learn from the strategy that Caribbean countries have adopted in response to this threat and to plan for a “sister” strategy for the Mesoamerican Reef.



Group picture of the workshop participants

Among the most important results of the workshop are: a) the integration of the Regional Committee and contact persons in each country for the elaboration and follow-up of the Strategy; b) the definition of strategic lines and actions addressing five key issues: Collaboration, Research and Monitoring, Legislation, Control Methods, and Education and Communication; and c) a list of next steps to continue the work and to finalize the strategy involving all the participants in the workshop.

After the workshop, the organizers offered a tasting of lionfish and distributed a recipe notebook with delicious dishes to promote the consumption of lionfish. The objective of this type of events is to control the population of this invasive species and learn more about its handling and control, thus contributing to the conservation of coral reefs.

Connectivity Exercises



After the integration of the MAR Connectivity Network on 2010, three regional and simultaneous exercises have been done to obtain comparable baseline information on juvenile/larval fish recruitment along coastal and marine protected areas of the MAR.

The first two exercises were developed on September 1 – 9, 2013 and the second on February 27 – March 6, 2014.

Technical support from NOAA and ECOSUR staff was provided to implement these exercises. In addition, all participating areas were granted of the necessary material - labels, nets, plastic bags, among others - to carry out the exercise.



The main results of these two exercises were:

- Nine protected areas participated: Isla Contoy National Park, Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve and Arrecifes de Xcalak National Park, in Mexico; Turneffe Atoll and Port Honduras Marine Reserve, in Belize; Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area and Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, in Guatemala; and Sandy bay West End Special marine Protection Zone (Roatan) and Turtle Harbour / Rock Harbour (Utila), in Honduras.
- Sixty seven persons involved among the nine areas.
- A total of 603 larvae and juvenile fish were collected during both exercises belonging to 20 families, 27 gender and 34 species.
- The Labridae family was the most represented with five species. *Halichoeres socialis* was the most abundant species collected, representing 40% of the total catch. The report of this species in Guatemala, considered endemic in Belize, is a very important result for the region because it represents an expansion of geographic range of this species.

The third exercise was developed on August 22 – 28. We will let you know of the results the protected areas get.

New staff in MAR Fund!

In March of this year, Carlos Rodriguez became the new Chief Operating Officer of MAR Fund. Carlos has a lot of experience working in conservation. He was the Vice President for Mexico and Central America of Conservation International and most recently he was an Advisor at the National Council of Protected Areas of Guatemala.

We are very happy to have Carlos in our team. He has provided a lot of support to the technical and operational activities of our office.

How can you contact us

To learn more about MAR Fund and our activities; please feel free to visit our website (www.marfund.org and www.fondosam.org). You can also check us up at our facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MARFund>).

If you wish to share or have any comments and/or questions, please do not hesitate to write to us at the following address: info@marfund.org.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT UPDATE IN DECEMBER