



**OCTOBER 2012**

# UPDATE REPORT

Mesoamerican Reef Fund [www.marfund.org](http://www.marfund.org) / [info@marfund.org](mailto:info@marfund.org)

Picture by MAR Fund

Dear Friends,

Besides the amazing news about the endowment fund granted to us by the Government of Germany through KfW, we have not shared with you additional advances and the progress of our programs/projects this year. Please take a moment to read this update and find out what's new in the MAR Fund and the MAR region.

## Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America



Phase I of the regional project supported by the German Government through the KfW, *Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America*, has officially kicked-off in the four target priority protected areas:

- Port Honduras Marine Reserve, Belize
- Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, Guatemala
- Sandy Bay West End Special Marine Protection Zone, Honduras
- Yum Balam Flora and Fauna Special Protection Area, Mexico

During the month of July and beginning of August 2012, with the support of Mr. Enrico Gasparri, the external expert for the project, the initial workshops for the project were organized in each of the four countries.

The attendants to the workshops by country were representatives from:

- Honduras: Roatan Marine Park (RMP), the Bay Islands Conservation Association (BICA) and Fundacion Biosfera (MAR Fund member fund)
- Belize: Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT, MAR Fund member fund)
- Guatemala: National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) and Fundación para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales y Ambiente en Guatemala (FCG, Mar Fund member fund)
- Mexico: National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), Pronatura Península de Yucatan (PPY, NGO that will administrate the project) and Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (FMCN, MAR Fund member fund)

The objective of the workshops was to discuss the project operation and procedures. It was also a space for the project's implementers to start their respective annual work plans.

As a result of these workshops, the four work plans have been approved by the MAR Fund's Board of Directors and activities are ready to take off!

## Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, first fisheries co-management agreement signed!

After eighteen months of hard work, long meetings and many sacrifices, the fishermen from La Graciosa, Santa Isabel and Punta Gruesa communities, and from the Fishermen Association of Puerto Barrios, have accomplished what no other fishers in Guatemala had accomplished before: a co-management agreement. Now they are officially co-managers of a portion of their fishing grounds and three fisheries recovery sites.

Authorities from the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), the Fisheries Administration (DIPESCA) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) made an official delivery ceremony in recognition of the importance of this event as a first step towards conservation of fishing resources and marine ecosystems.

This agreement is a legal tool that gives fishermen shared rights and responsibilities that include: establishment of a base-line on the fisheries resources status, development and implementation of an action plan and capacity building, among others.

The co-management will take place in Bahía La Graciosa, within the Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, a protected area also known as a commercial fish reproduction site.



*Authorities and fishers during the official signing ceremony*

## Maintaining Enforcement Presence in the Southern Barrier Reef Complex

In 2012, the Southern Environmental Association (SEA) continued with the fourth phase of the Enforcement Program. Some preliminary results are:

- 112 patrols carried out – 98 day patrols and 14 night patrols –
- 20 incidents reported: Eight charges and 13 written warnings
- 40% rate of prosecution: three convictions out of eight charges
- Four hotel and restaurant checks executed resulting in one written warning issued for possession of lobster during closed season and confiscation of illegal product.
- Alternative or supplemental livelihoods: SEA started working closely with the Placencia Cooperative supporting their seaweed mari-culture initiative

- A training session held in Belize City with the Fisheries Department focused on new evidence handling and court procedures.

*Fisherman arrested and charged for "Possession of undersized conch in shell"*



*Consultation held with the Sarteneja fishermen on January 24, 2012, at the SEA Ranger station, Little Water Caye*

## **The French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) visit**

MAR Fund submitted a proposal to the FFEM for an Endowment Fund to support the conservation, management and sustainable use of natural resources in the network of Priority Coastal and Marine Protected Areas through small grants to be carried out by civil society.

After completing several of the stages required by the agency, during the second half of June 2012 we received a visit from Mr. Julien Calas, FFEM Biodiversity Program Officer, and Ms. Irene Alvarez, the consultant in charge of developing the feasibility study.

During the visit they met with protected area administrators, national and international NGOs, and protected area authorities involved in managing protected areas.

The protected areas visited by the FFEM commission were:

- Arrecife de Xcalak National Park
- Manatee Sanctuary Conservation Area
- Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
- South Water Caye Marine Reserve
- Port Honduras Marine Reserve
- Turtle Harbour / Rock Harbour marine Reserve

We want to thank all the PA administrators, NGOs and fishers who collaborated with us during the field visit to the areas. Thanks to them, FFEM obtained the information required to develop the feasibility study, which will be submitted to the FFEM Council in November, 2012.



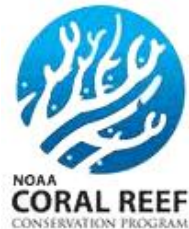
*Irene Alvarez, FFEM consultant, with Celia Mahung, Executive Director of the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and members of her staff, at the Abalone Caye Marine Station, Port Honduras Marine Reserve.*



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



The  
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The approved projects of the fourth request for proposals have demonstrated very good results to date. Some of these are:

1. **Improving fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, Belize (TIDE)**
  - TIDE and other organizations organized the first Managed Access Forum, in which over 50 fishers participated.
  - TIDE's rangers, as well as over 90% of the Managed Access Fishers, are currently collecting catch data within the Port Honduras Marine Reserve.
2. **Enforcement enhancement at the South Water Caye Marine Reserve (SWCMR), Belize (Fisheries Department)**
  - A mechanic and enforcement workshops were held in June. The five members of the core South Water Caye Marine Reserve staff attended both trainings
  - The enforcement patrols began in May and over 219 patrols have been done to date, exceeding the programmed calendar
  - A total of 9 arrests have been made, 2 verbal warnings and 1 written warning
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 was signed between the fishermen and the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) on July 10, 2012
  - FUNDARY and the fishing communities have held two meetings for the designing of the action plan for the co-management area.
  - The training process began with the participation of the fishing communities of Santa Isabel, Punta Gruesa and La Graciosa
4. **Developing management tools and capacity building to provide the foundation for rights-based fisheries and enhanced efficacy of MPA management in Honduras (UCME)**
  - The benthic and fish monitoring databases were designed and they are now available on-line in their raw form. The output screens have yet to be finalized.
  - A full socioeconomic census of the 30 full time fishers in Punta Gorda was completed.
  - A total of six meetings have been held with fishers on both islands

5. **Community based marine reserves in the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve, México (COBI)**
  - The four proposed marine reserves have been marked inside the Reserve.
  - A total of twelve fishermen from the three Cooperatives were selected to be trained in open water scuba diving, reef monitoring and restoration skills.
  - In June, with the support of CONANP and Oceanus, the training course was conducted with the cooperatives in the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve. The workshop was divided in three parts: dive training, reef monitoring training and data collection
6. **Reef restoration network and integration of a rapid response team for events that impact the Mesoamerican Reef, Mexico. (Oceanus)**
  - The first MAR Reef Restoration Network workshop was organized in April 2012, and the Network was created, with the participation of 40 people.
  - A document on the strategic lines of action for the network was prepared, including: a) capacity building, communications, sharing and exchange of information and experiences, b) research, c) response to an event, d) monitoring and evaluation, e) legal framework and f) fundraising
  - An on-line platform was developed for the Reef Restoration Network: [www.red-rac.org](http://www.red-rac.org). This is a space where people can share documents and links regarding reef restoration.

### Fifth Request for Proposals



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In July of this year, with the support of the Overbrook Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, and the German Government through the KfW, we launched our fifth request for proposals.

The objective of the proposal is to support the conservation, effective management and sustainable use of coastal and marine protected areas (CMPAs) within the Mesoamerican Reef system, through grants to eligible managers and stakeholders operating in the region. This RfP is focusing on activities to benefit the 14 coastal and marine protected areas designated for the initial network.

We received a total of 19 proposals distributed as follows: 3 from Belize, 4 from Guatemala, 2 from Honduras and 10 from Mexico.

We look forward to bringing you great results from these projects in our next Update.

### Get involved!

Do you want to become involved in any of these initiatives? Let us know and we will be happy to connect you with the actors on the ground.

Please send us your questions and let us know what you think. Visit us in Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/MARFund> and on our website [www.marfund.org](http://www.marfund.org)