

Mesoamerican Reef Restoration Network (MAR-RRN)

Huitrón-Baca 2021



INTEGRATED RIDGE TO REEF MANAGEMENT OF THE MESOAMERICAN REEF ECOREGION PROJECT (MAR2R)



MEDIO AMBIENTE



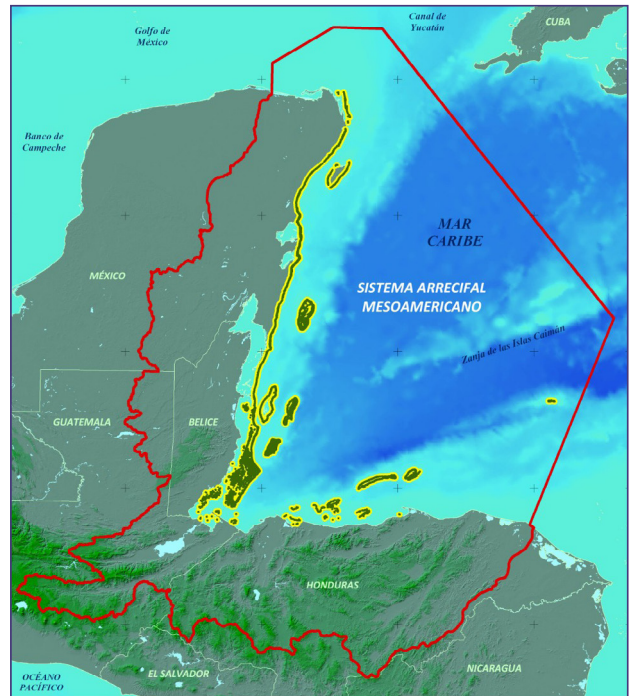
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The MAR-RRN is the meeting point for organizations and experts dedicated to restoring, conserving, and protecting coral reefs in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. The network aims to be the main source of updated information on restoration in the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion (MAR), and a regional platform to coordinate and share resources to promote the scientific and technical capacities of organizations that conduct science-based reef restoration, rehabilitation, and replenishment in the region.

The MAR-RNN was created in 2012 at the initiative of Oceanus A. C.¹ The Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund), through the Mesoamerican Reef Rescue Initiative (RRI), has supported the MAR-RRN since its inception. MAR Fund is an active member of the MAR-RRN, and, thanks to its support, the technical and scientific capacities of the MAR-RRN have been strengthened through biennial and national meetings, as well as the development and implementation of its governance instruments, and the integration and exchange of information and decision-making with the support of regional coordination and a functional website (www.coralmar.org), among others.

Currently, MAR-RRN has 52 member institutions in the MAR and an Executive Committee composed of one expert from each country and one donor representative (which rotates every two years to maintain full and effective participation across the ecoregion).



The MAR-RRN is part of the Coral Restoration Consortium (CRC),² as well as other groups that support reef restoration and conservation, such as The International Coral Reef Society (ICRS),³ promoting collaborations not only at a regional but also at an international level. Members of the network are also part of important regional and local platforms such as the post-storm reef response governance groups, the Regional Dialogue Group, and the Regional Advisory Group for the attention of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD).



1 www.oceanus.org.mx

2 www.crc.world

3 <https://coralreefs.org/>

THE MAR-RRN AND THE MAR2R PROJECT

The project "Engaging local communities in the conservation and restoration of mangroves and coral reefs and promoting good practices in sustainable fisheries in the MAR" was developed as part of the "Integrated Ridge to Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion" (MAR2R) Project, implemented by the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), in coordination with the Ministries of Environment of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras, with funding from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), through the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). This initiative aimed to attract regional partners and platforms working on issues related to conserving, restoring, and monitoring mangroves and coral reefs in the MAR.

In this context, the MAR2R Project, in coordination with MAR Fund, through RRI, strengthened the MAR-RRN with a strategic and sustainability approach. This strengthening will allow MAR-RRN to continue implementing actions in the MAR for the conservation and management of coral reefs.



Doland McLaughlin

RESULTS

1. Governance instruments of the MAR-RRN

In 2021, MAR Fund and the MAR2R Project drove the participatory development of governance instruments for the MAR-RRN, including the 1) Strategic Plan and Action Plan for 2021-2026, 2) Biennial Operating Plan 2021-2023, 3) Financial Sustainability Plan, 4) Information Exchange Protocol, and 5) Code of Ethics.

The 2021-2026 Strategic Plan was validated through a virtual participatory workshop with MAR-RRN members. A total of 36 MAR-RRN members participated in the workshop representing government, academia, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society, who validated the strategies and specific activities for implementation in the coming years.

2. Case studies in MAR reef restoration

To strengthen and promote practices associated with reef restoration in the MAR, the MAR-RRN, with the support of MAR Fund-RRI and the MAR2R Project, conducted four (4) case studies of successful reef restoration projects in the region.

The projects were selected by the MAR-RRN Executive Committee based on previously established criteria. The selected projects were:

- 1) Restoration Project in Placencia, Belize, coordinated by Fragments of Hope.
- 2) Reef Restoration Program of the Gulf of Mexico and the Mexican Caribbean by Oceanus A. C., Mexico.
- 3) Coral Restoration in the Akumal Reef Habitat (ARPEA) by Centro Ecológico Akumal (CEA), Mexico.
- 4) Laboratory of Comprehensive Research for Reef Conservation by CORALIUM-UNAM, Mexico.

The case studies were presented in a webinar with the participation of 34 MAR-RRN members. In addition, the effective criteria of each project were shared through short videos, one for each project. The highlighted results of the analysis included the successful coral restoration due to the scientific rigor of each project. Coral degradation occurs faster than restoration; therefore, it is critical to continue to support coral restoration projects and introduce a more holistic approach.

The videos and reports of the studies are available on the network's website, www.coralmar.org



LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ The governance instruments created for the MAR-RRN allow the Network to consolidate itself as a solid regional platform. In addition, they provide a clear path for the network to move towards significant objectives and goals with a regional scope, thus enhancing sustainability actions.
- ▶ It is critical that MAR-RRN coordinates a systematic analysis of its budgets in order to operate in such a way that solutions and potential funding sources can be found.
- ▶ Reef restoration in the region will be more effective, provided that MAR-RRN facilitates the exchange of knowledge, experiences, best practices, methodologies, and lessons learned in reef restoration among its members.
- ▶ The MAR-RRN continues working to strengthen the protection and restoration of coral reefs in the short and long term to address the local, regional, and global threats and pressures these ecosystems face.

IMPACTS

- ▶ The governance instruments have provided the MAR-RRN with a solid structure and a clear direction of goals, activities, and results, in addition to facilitating coordination with the Executive Committee and its members while reflecting financial and institutional sustainability actions.
- ▶ MAR-RRN members actively participated in the validation of the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan and Action Plan, building a practical and inclusive framework to strengthen the MAR-RRN.
- ▶ Other governance instruments, such as the code of ethics and the financial sustainability strategy, contribute to the long-term decision-making and performance of the network.
- ▶ We have been able to share reef restoration knowledge, experiences, best practices, and methodologies through case studies from various sites in the MAR region.
- ▶ The 2021-2023 Executive Committee of the MAR-RRN held its first in-person meeting, where agreements were reached to strengthen the MAR-RRN and implement governance instruments to enhance its work as a regional platform for the exchange of knowledge and information on reef restoration. Among the agreements are to establish terms of reference as a governance tool for the Executive Committee and to implement a membership application process for the MAR-RRN, as well as to support the management of country permits for coral reef restoration projects.