



UPDATE REPORT

DECEMBER 2011

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

Picture by Cifrali García - COBI

Dear Friends,

We wanted to get in touch one last time before the end of the year to share with you our latest advances and successes. We are convinced that none of them would have been possible without your trust and collaboration.

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

The six projects that were approved in September 2011, for our Joint Request for Proposals have signed their respective grant agreements. Four of them (one from Honduras, one from Mexico and two from Belize) have already begun their scheduled activities. The remaining projects (one from Guatemala and one from Mexico) will begin in January 2012. We will keep you updated on their progress.

We are certain that these projects will accomplish their objectives and produce important results that will further conservation of the Mesoamerican Reef System.

We would like to express our gratitude to The Overbrook Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, the three outstanding organizations that joined efforts with us to organize and support this initiative.



Community Fisheries Management in Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge, Guatemala

As part of MAR Fund's Community Fisheries Program and thanks to the support of AVINA Foundation and the Organization of American States (OAS) through the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) of Guatemala, we continue to support a co-management project in a marine protected area in Guatemala called Punta de Manabique.

This MPA is recognized as a national treasure and is designated as a wildlife refuge by the Government of Guatemala. Within the refuge, there is a small coastal bay called La Graciosa that has a long stretch of white sand beaches lined with coconut palms and turquoise tropical water lapping the shore. La Graciosa is also an important fish spawning site.

La Graciosa, Santa Isabel and Punta Gruesa, the three fishing communities in La Graciosa Bay, have realized that the only way to preserve their fishing resources is to stand together for them. Therefore, they are working to propose a co-management area and three fisheries recovery sites (see map below) to the authorities.

All Guatemalan authorities involved— MARN, National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) and the Fisheries Administration (DIPESCA)—have been very supportive of the initiative. They recognize it as an important step for recovery and conservation of fishing resources and marine ecosystems.



Strengthening Special Enforcement for Fisheries in the Southern Belize Barrier Reef Complex (SBRC)

During 2011, the Southern Environmental Association (SEA) has been developing the third phase of this program, with strong outcomes. Some preliminary results are:

- From January to September 2011, 131 patrols were conducted, resulting in 95 incidents, 57 warnings, and 53 charges. Since there are some cases that have not yet been tried in court, the final rate of prosecution is pending.
- SEA has formalized an agreement with the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) to ensure their collaboration in enforcement activities.
- One incident was reported during three hotel and restaurant checks carried out in April, June, and September 2011.
- Two arrests have resulted from 17 reports made by engaged community rangers.



Special Enforcement Officers doing spot checks of fishing vessels during patrol



Nets confiscated from the Sarstoon River during joint patrol with SEA, Belize Fisheries Department, and TIDE

The fourth phase of the program, ***Maintaining Enforcement Presence in the Southern Belize Reef Complex***, will begin in January 2012. Its short-term objectives are:

- To reduce fishing violations in the SBRC as compared to 2011 levels,
- To obtain continued support and engagement from key stakeholder groups and community rangers, reflected by an increase in reports of illegal incidents to the SEA enforcement team, and
- To make adaptive management decisions based on sound enforcement data analysis.



The Oriental food restaurant concerned about marine ecology

Dim Sum Tea House, a restaurant located in Guatemala, is aware that some fishing methods and fishing gear used to capture many of the fish species sold in restaurants have a significant impact on marine ecosystems. The Dim Sum owner, Mr. Peter Meng, recognizes the need to contribute to the conservation of fishing resources and marine biodiversity.

We are happy to inform you that in April 2011, we established an alliance with Dim Sum to raise funds to promote sustainable use and conservation of resources, goods and services in the coastal and marine ecosystems of the MAR region. Dim Sum has agreed to donate a percentage of the sales of specific dishes to the MAR Fund. Our commitment is to distribute these funds to conservation and sustainable fisheries initiatives within the region.

New Office!

We have moved to a larger office. Our team will be growing soon, so we needed a bit more space.

You can now find and contact us at the following address and phone numbers:

13 calle 21-00, Zona 15

Vista Hermosa III, Interior 20-74

Guatemala, Guatemala, 01015

+502 2364 7288 / +502 2369 2697

MAR Fund wants to connect with you!

In an effort to improve our online presence and spread the word about who we are and what we do, MAR Fund has taken the leap into social media.



On Facebook, we've made some improvements to our page. You can now see information about some of our projects in the left-hand tabs. Here we share photos and publish updates on our activities and events, as well as occasional information on topics of interest. We would like the page's wall to become a forum for fans to share experiences, photos, and opinions.

If you use Facebook, "Like" us and join the conversation!

Find us here:

www.facebook.com/MARFund



We opened a Twitter account and are using it to connect with other conservation-minded people all over the world. Twitter helps us keep our finger on the pulse of commentary about ocean conservation and the Mesoamerican Reef, and lets us share news and interesting tidbits with our followers.

If you use Twitter, follow us here!

www.twitter.com/MAR_Fund



Our newest addition is a Scribd account, which allows us to share documents with the public. Scribd presents the documents in online reader format, so no download is necessary (although the option to download documents is available).

We have uploaded some documents in English and Spanish and will continue building our library for you.

You can find us by clicking:

www.scribd.com/MAR_Fund

On behalf of the MAR Fund team, we want to wish you Happy Holidays and all the best for 2012!