



2nd Regional WORKSHOP: *MPA Capacity Building and Mesoamerican Reef Connectivity*

Summary of the Results

As planned, this 2nd Regional Workshop took place on March 13 and 14, 2012, in the installations of ECOSUR, in Chetumal, with the second day dedicated to field activities in Xcalak National Park.

This workshop was intended to provide a practical, hands-on approach to connectivity research and data acquisition that would allow participants to plan, coordinate and execute a simultaneous collection to evaluate fish recruitment. In consequence, the third goal established for the workshop was:

To obtain comparable baseline information on a regional basis, by carrying out at least one simultaneous network-wide activity (at least one MPA per country) utilizing the training acquired during the workshop and combining biological and oceanographic components.

During the workshop, sessions were organized to inform on the use of several types of traps for larvae (of different size and age) as well as equipment to measure different oceanographic variables. The traps as well as the oceanographic gear were demonstrated during the field exercise. They had been deployed the previous day, and were collected with the workshop participants.

One of the types of traps used was settlement traps. These provide information on fish recruitment. Dr. Lourdes Vásquez, of ECOSUR, is finalizing easy-to-use catalogs to determine the species caught in these types of traps. Although this has been a years-long effort, the result is a practical tool to identify the fish species caught in settlement traps.

After the field exercises, a settlement trap was offered to the protected areas willing to participate in the simultaneous regional collection exercise. Results surpassed our expectations, when participants from seven MPAs from the four countries committed to the experiment:

Cancún National Park – México
Port Honduras Marine Reserve – Belize
Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary – Belize
Río Sarstún Multiple Use Area – Guatemala
Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge – Guatemala

Rock Harbour-Turtle Harbour Marine Reserve – Honduras
Sandy Bay West End Marine Reserve – Honduras

In addition to the traps, a data logger to measure sea temperature was donated to each country. A representative of a protected area in each country took responsibility for this equipment.

The participants involved in this regional exercise committed to the following:

- To replicate the settlement trap and prepare at least 9 additional traps for a total of 10.
- To deploy them as per the experiment protocol that will be shared in the coming weeks with the participants.
- To collect the samples as indicated in the protocol and to identify the larvae.
- To load the information on the on-line database that is being prepared by the ECOSUR team.

The workshop organizers are currently working on the finalization of the protocols for the simultaneous settlement trap exercise, which will include, among others, information on:

- How to build the settlement trap and the “bag”
- How to deploy adequately
- Instructions on: type of habitat to be sampled, number of sample nights, dates (probably August 2012)
- Identification catalog
- Data base

All the information on the region-wide exercise will be shared with the network members through the established list-serve.