



ICRAN MAR Project Update



Mesoamerican Reef Alliance
September 2005

The ICRAN Mesoamerican Reef Alliance (**ICRAN-MAR**) was established to promote economically and environmentally sound management of the Mesoamerican Reef by building strategic alliances with other partners in the region and engaging the private sector. Over the past 14 months of implementation, project partners have been proactively engaged in the activities of their competence in three key components: *Watershed Management*, *Sustainable Fisheries*, and *Sustainable Tourism*. The project's primary objectives seek to minimize impacts to the MAR by improving sustainable business practices in these three areas primarily through capacity building, development of better practices and building partnerships with the private sector. The project is now entering its second year of activities accomplishing tangible results in the region at the site level.

To date, in addition to coordinating and supervising the implementation of the technical activities, efforts have been made to ensure that duplication of actions is avoided or minimized at best, and that the use of the available financial resources is optimized. This has been made possible through meetings and discussions with representatives of organizations and institutions in the region to identify opportunities for collaboration. The spirit of building alliances and leveraging partnerships in benefit of the coral reefs in the Mesoamerican region remains a primary objective for the ICRAN-MAR project. A brief overview and update of actions achieved under each management component is provided below:



Watershed Management

- The Watershed Management component has, in close consultation with different agricultural industries, identified the most pressing threats derived from agricultural pollution, and partners are working towards developing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for the implementation of Better Practices (BMPs) with the leading companies involved (Dole and Chiquita among these).
- Measurable soil and water standards were developed and an Eco-toxicology workshop organized by WWF together with industry to assist with development and implementation of monitoring programs. A protocol for pesticide monitoring in reef organisms was developed and an updated manual Better Practices Manual for the agro industry is being refined.
- The agrochemical manufacturers association, CropLife – Latin America has made a pledge to contribute with funds to enhance the scientific base to demonstrate the persistence of agrochemicals in the MAR environment and their impacts.
- A comprehensive set of watershed boundaries through the acquisition of improved satellite images and technology was identified and working in close coordination, WRI and UNEP-WCMC will be using the information to generate prediction models of future land cover changes. Arrangements are being made between the partners and the MBRS project to develop and run the appropriate models in a coordinated manner.
- WRI produced the Belize Coastal Atlas, a data rich product that includes GIS data, metadata, reports, and maps of threats to coral reefs in Belize and for all of the Mesoamerican Reef. It includes a preliminary analysis of watershed-based threats to coral reefs along the MAR based on the Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean project results.



Sustainable Fisheries

- The project has helped establish the Mesoamerican Fishers Alliance in collaboration with the MBRS and WWF, a result of the first Mesoamerican Fishers Congress held in Chetumal, Mexico in November 2004.
- WWF released the “Best Management Practices on Lobster Fishery Manual”. In this manual, fishermen from the Mesoamerican Reef, as well as scientists from WWF and other institutions address the problems related to lobster fishery in the region to contribute with their experience looking for feasible solutions.
- Reef Check has been deeply involved in conducting workshops training fishermen in monitoring protocols so that they become active participants in the conservation-related activities.
- Partners have also been involved in identifying alternative livelihood activities for the fishermen and have formed strong working relationships with NGOs and government partners in Mexico, Belize and Honduras (Guatemala is taking up speed on this component) who are implementing the local component of the Sustainable Fisheries element.



Sustainable Tourism

- Three national learning workshops were recently conducted in Mexico, Belize and Honduras (Guatemala is expected to be engaged in the coming months), with the attendance of nearly 250 individuals, businesses, and organizations in the marine tourism industry. Participants at each workshop identified voluntary standards as a key tool for improving education, increasing the marketability of Mesoamerica, and involving communities in an industry-led process of standards development.
- More than one hundred and fifty stakeholders from the region -including tourism industry associations, cruiselines, park managers and government officials, marine recreation suppliers, outbound tour operators, academics, concerned tourists and divers, local community cooperatives- are participating in the Standards and Code Taskforce, developing standards with the use of collaborative software specifically designed for consensus-based standards development.
- A pre-survey of current industry practices in Mesoamerica has been conducted in coordination with Conservation International’s Centre for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB) to collect baseline data reflecting current environmental practices of marine recreation providers in 7 sites in Mexico, Belize and Honduras. The collected data will provide a critical early benchmark to the larger objective of developing voluntary standards and a code of conduct for marine recreation providers in the Mesoamerican region.



Additional Information



For more information on the Mesoamerican Reef Alliance or on how you can join this effort, please contact

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