

Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project Information Update — 26 November 2002

Look for an update in your mailbox every other month

Every other month we plan to give you an update on what is happening in the Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project via these brief information sheets. Feel free to contact the project for more details. This issue includes upcoming fieldwork, project outputs, and exciting partnership initiatives.

Belize Fisheries Advisory Board is certainly not bored!

Recent fieldwork focused on the very long-lived Fisheries Advisory Board (FAB) of Belize. Colonial fisheries advisors recommended a local board, and one was formed in the mid-1960s. The FAB has persisted since then without being legally institutionalised.

Some may say that lacking a legal basis is not good, but the FAB has continued to operate while the legally mandatory fisheries advisory committees in the eastern Caribbean generally have either not started or been sustained. New draft legislation in Belize proposes to formalise the FAB with clearly spelt out terms of reference and responsibilities under a very much revised fisheries management structure.

Over the years in excess of 60 people from a wide array of backgrounds have been members of the FAB. The chairperson (only one was a woman to date) has often been from the non-fisheries private sector. In examining over 100 minutes of FAB meetings it is clear that this body has always taken its work very seriously.

Meetings, typically called every month or two, have considered a diverse set of fisheries management (combining both conservation and development) issues. A few agenda items such as illegal fishing by non-nationals, and screening the often ill-advisedly innovative schemes of overseas entrepreneurs, have been recurrent.

The interaction of ministers with their advisory board has been varied. The current minister is said to be very close to the board, using its advice regularly and providing it with the status of a genuinely participatory policy formulation mechanism. Some other ministers have perhaps been less close and positive in their interactions. Since the board is a creature of the minister a lot boils down to inter-personal and professional dynamics, with a liberal dose of politics.

Without doubt, however, fisheries cooperatives in Belize exercise considerable power on the FAB. Many of the thornier deliberations have revolved around cooperatives. Examples include screening joint venture initiatives, the allocation of rights in the shrimp fishery and enforcement.

The Belize FAB is a very dynamic example of national level co-management that could provide valuable lessons for other territories. A focus group of present and former FAB members was instrumental in the analysis of the board. Research was done primarily in collaboration with Belize Fishermen Cooperative Association (BFCA) and Fisheries Department partners.

Crisis of non-compliance ... is the sea egg season over yet?

In the last update we reported on the Barbados sea egg (urchin) fishery. The season closed at the end of October, and this project facilitated a post-season evaluation in collaboration with the Fisheries Division and Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations. Participants were fisheries officers, fishers, coast guard, Barbados Marine Trust members, university students and others. Recommendations for 2003 were made.

Foremost was the persistent issue of various forms of illegal harvest during and outside of the season by both regular fishers and opportunistic divers. Enforcement of current management regulations is essential, and it was felt that government does little to fulfil its obligations in this regard. Under these circumstances of free-

for-all and uncertainty (governance and resource dynamics) it was felt that conditions did not favour fishers investing (e.g. time and deferred rewards) in compliance and co-management except to offer advice based on observations of urchin populations at sea through joint surveys.

In early January there may be the opportunity to compare and contrast the Barbados situation with that in St. Lucia where another DFID-NRSP project (R7559) also concerns a sea egg fishery.

Co-management of MPAs in Belize gets much attention

A striking feature about doing research in Belize is the large number of BINGOs, IGOs, NGOs and CBOs (your challenge to decipher!) involved in protected areas, including co-management. In the near future this project will turn its attention to the last case study ... the co-management of the Laughing Bird Caye and Gladden Spit MPAs by Friends of Nature (a local NGO) in Placencia.

Organisations with an interest in this area include the Fisheries Department, Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, Placencia Producers Cooperative and a host of tourism, research, conservation and other bodies. While not all are involved directly in co-management, a CCA workshop in 2001 identified over 20 different stakeholders in similar circumstances nearby. Contacts have been made with most of these agencies and major projects such as the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System programme.

As a MPA manager in the area pointed out, it is only out of the "goodness of their hearts" that the people in the surrounding communities tolerate yet another set of researchers asking questions that have become familiar with repetition. We try to be sensitive to the situations of these people who really require tangible benefits rather than more studies. Sometimes the promise that more information means better implementation is hard to keep unless there are direct follow-on projects designed for learning. We are working on it!

More co-management in GCFI

Papers on co-management, from this project, were recently presented at the 55th annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in Mexico (visit www.gcfi.org). Interest in co-management ran so high that the usual

session on socio-economics next year will have co-management as a focus theme.

This session at the 56th GCFI to be held November 2003, most likely in the British Virgin Islands, will showcase outputs from this project scheduled to conclude in June. It should assist in the uptake of the guidelines for co-management and allow further discussion of the subject. The University of the West Indies and Caribbean Conservation Association are co-organisers of this special session.

The papers presented at this year's GCFI were:

"A co-management pilot project for the lobster fishery at Sauteurs, Grenada" authored by Roland Baldeo, Patrick McConney, Paul Phillip, Paul Williams, Sandra Ferguson, Johnson St. Louis and Moran Mitchell. E-mail Roland at rolandbaldeo@hotmail.com to request a copy.

"Caribbean coastal resources co-management — Part 1" by Patrick McConney, Bob Pomeroy and Robin Mahon. E-mail Patrick at patrickm@caribsurf.com to request a copy.

The one-day workshop, at the recent GCFI, on institutional arrangements for Caribbean MPAs was well attended. This was a collaborative event with another DFID-NRSP project (R7976). A summary report should soon be available on the GCFI web site and circulated through the usual Caribbean mailing lists. Look out for it.

New partnerships and initiatives

The World Commission on Protected Areas – Marine (WCPA-Marine) has entered into a number of partnerships via the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to initiate projects closely connected to next year's conference in Durban and beyond.

With the University of the West Indies (UWI) Natural Resource Management Programme (NRM) there is a Project on Socio-economic Monitoring for Caribbean Coastal Management.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is coordinating a Regional Coordination Plan (RCP) to Advance Marine Reserves in the Wider Caribbean Region. Take advantage of these new projects to support your own co-management initiatives.

This document is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

