SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

9th Request for Proposals

Implementation period: 2017 to 2018

Supporting and Strengthening the Management of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mesoamerican Reef (9th).

With the overall goal of contributing to the conservation of the ecological functions of the Mesoamerican Reef System, the specific objectives for this RfP were:

1. *To support the protection and conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems in priority areas.*
2. *To promote the participation of civil society in the best management practices and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.*
3. *To strengthen communication and exchanges for effective adoption of new practices.*

Project: 9-001 Management planning for two sites in the Southern Belize Barrier Reef Complex

Grantee	Southern Environmental Association (SEA)
Country	Belize
Objective	Improve site management within the Southern Belize Reef Complex through the revision of management plans for Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve and Laughing Bird Caye National Park

Final results:

- The Carrying Capacity Studies for Laughing Bird Caye and South Silk Caye and Management Plans for Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve and Laughing Bird Caye National Park were completed.
- The management planning consultation sessions, including data collection and validation, ensured communication and active participation during the project.

- SEA will communicate the progress on the approval of the Management Plans by the Belize Fisheries and Forest Department to the relevant stakeholders during Tour Guide Association Meetings, Managed Access Meetings and Outreach activities conducted by the SEA Education team.

Project: 9-012 Characterization and valuation of sea grass in the Protected Area of Laguna de Guaimoreto Wildlife Refuge

Grantee	Centro Universitario Regional del Atlántico (CURLA) in coordination with FUCAGUA
Country	Honduras
Objective	Contribute to the conservation and protection of marine resources in Laguna de Guaimoreto Wildlife Refuge, by strengthening and generating capacities in community leaders, non-governmental and governmental organizations

Final results:

- Three maps were created: a) maps of the seagrass beds cover; b) map of the natural limits of the seagrass beds; and c) bathymetry image of the study area.
- Characterization of seagrass species (*Thalassia testudinum* and *Halophila baillonii*) and associated species (e.g. macroalgae, anemones, sponges, sea cucumbers, snails, jellyfish and fishes), all included in a catalogue developed by the project.
- Evaluation of density of the seagrass beds (68.7%, 181,2 ha) and their biodiversity, as well as density of starfish (0.0046 ind/m^2) were assessed.
- A monitoring protocol for seagrass bed and carbon was produced.
- Estimation of carbon capture ranged from 2,342 Mg C to 88,689 Mg C.

Project: 9-016 Conservation of the Mesoamerican Reef through best practices of sustainable tourism in the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve and Arrecifes de Xcalak National Park.

Grantee	Amigos de Sian Ka'an
Country	Mexico

Objective	Contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and ecological functions of the MAR region by strengthening capacities and replicating good practices in tourism service providers in Arrecifes de Xcalak and Banco Chinchorro protected areas

Final results:

- Eleven permit holders of the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve and the Arrecifes de Xcalak National Park were evaluated through the Good Sustainable Practices of the Aquatic Activities Guide and Ecotourism Guide. The evaluation resulted in 11 case studies that were presented in the workshop “Guide of Good Sustainable Practices”.
- Thirteen community guides obtained the Guide Accreditation for Tourism Oriented towards Nature (NOM 009 TUR 2002) with specific activity in Environmental Interpretation after following the training offered in collaboration with the Latin American Center for Training and Training for Guides in Tourism S.C. (CENLATUR, in Spanish).
- The training included six modules: I. Tourism Oriented towards Nature, II. First Aid, III. Group Management 1, IV. Quality for the Tourist Guide Service, V. Environmental Interpretation and VI. Group Management 2.
- The general public was informed about the importance of the application of the measures of the Manual of Good Biosecurity Practices created by the project.

Project: 9-017 Mitigation of Climate Change and Protection of Blue Carbon Sinks in Yum Balam: Analysis Phase

Grantee	Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA)
Country	Mexico
Objective	Evaluate the blue carbon store in Yum Balam to provide incentives that strengthen the management of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems as part of a regional climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy in Mexico.

Final results:

- The geospatial analysis for the characterization of blue carbon ecosystems was concluded using the data generated by the Project Conservation of Marine Resources in Central America (MAR Fund-KfW) and confirming the information with ground truthing, determining that mangroves and seagrasses are distributed in 6,655 hectares and 24,461 hectares, respectively, within the protected natural area.

- The study reported four mangrove species (*Conocarpus erectus*, *Rhizophora mangle*, *Avicennia germinans* and *Laguncularia racemosa*), and three main species of seagrass (*Thalassia testudinum*, *Syringodium filiforme* and *Halodule wrightii*).
- The estimation of the blue carbon stores in the mangroves and seagrass beds resulted in a contribution in avoided emissions of approximately 38.4 million tons of CO2 equivalent (750.6 ± 150.8 Mg C ha-1).
- Results were socialized with local stakeholders and authorities as an opportunity to implement regional strategies for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Project: 9-018 Conservation of Fish Spawning Aggregations in Cozumel Islands

Grantee	Comunidad y Biodiversidad A.C. (COBI)
Country	Mexico
Objective	Protect the fish spawning aggregation sites of Quintana Roo through a fish replenishment zones network in close collaboration with fishing communities

Final results:

- The characterization of five potential fish spawning aggregation sites at Cozumel Island was finalized and 3-D maps were generated.
- 10 fishermen from the Fishing Cooperatives of Cozumel and two persons from the staff of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP, in Spanish) in Cozumel were trained on: bathymetry and fish spawning aggregation site monitoring, among others.
- Information was presented in public forums as well as in meetings with two fishing cooperatives (with 72% of their partners) and through infographics and triptychs. With the data generated in this project, protection in potential fish aggregation sites will be promoted in the north of Quintana Roo in the coming years.

Project: 9-020 Diploma in Participatory Management of Marine Protected Areas of the Mexican Caribbean and Community of Learning between generations

Grantee	Moxviquil
Country	Mexico

Objective	Strengthen the conceptual and methodological capabilities for participatory management of 8 MPAs of Quintana Roo that contribute to the creation of social participation strategies that favor the conservation of natural resources

Final results:

- The diploma was finalized with a total of 21 people trained: 14 from federal protected areas (11 from Quintana Roo, 2 from Yucatan and 1 from Campeche), 4 from state protected areas (Quintana Roo) and 3 from civil society organizations.
- The modules of the diploma were: 1. The wellbeing and labor of a worker for conservation, 2. Governance, 3. Participatory management in marine protected areas, 4. Conflict management in marine protected areas.
- A social participation strategy for conservation was generated for each protected area participating in the diploma.
- A network of graduates of the Diploma is being proposed to continue activities and share the knowledge acquired (e.g.: training of federal, state and CSO staff).

Project: 9-023 Monitoring of critical marine habitats for feeding and inter-nesting of sea turtles in Yum Balam

Grantee	Pronatura Península de Yucatán (PPY)
Country	Mexico
Objective	Conserve critical habitats for marine turtles while providing solid and robust criteria to contain and reduce pressures on their populations in the northern Mesoamerican Reef System

Final results:

- The aquatic censuses for the observation and capture of juveniles in the 3 sampling areas (Punta Caracol, Los Cuevones and Punta Mosquito) were completed, providing condition index of individuals within the range recorded in the literature.
- The values of relative density obtained in this study were relatively constant in the three areas in the different sampling periods, ranging between 0.068 and 0.404 ind/km, except in Punta Mosquito during the last monitoring, where 11 turtles were observed, reaching 2.071 ind/km.
- The basic data collected (bathymetric measurements of beach profiles, sea levels and waves) allowed the development of various scenarios to determine the influence of climate change in coastal areas and on nesting beaches.

- The results show: i) the importance of beach conservation as support for sea turtle nesting, protection of the coast and recreational activities related to tourism; and ii) the feasibility of using stilt houses along the coastline as blinds in turtle research projects even during storm events.

Project: 9-021 Program for rescue and restoration of corals with community participation in the Reefs of Cozumel

Grantee	OCEANUS
Country	Mexico
Objective	Implement a coral rescue and restoration program in the Arrecifes de Cozumel National Park (PNAC) with the participation of the local community, to increase the number of healthy and resilient sites in the Mesoamerican reef

Final results:

- The new site “La Atlantida” is suitable for coral restoration. Five-hundred colonies were transplanted to this site with a high survival rate (>80%).
- The training for a local restoration group (10 participants from NGOs and local people) was completed (practicing maintenance and monitoring techniques). A new group of tourist guides (18 people) is being trained by Xplora – private sector.
- Results of the project were presented during the World Environmental Day and other conferences.
- Dissemination materials (brochures and signs placed at the entrance of the restoration sites for tourists) were developed.