

Seven MPA managers attend a Learning Exchange for Junior MPA Officers in N Belize organized by IUCN-ORMA BIOPAMA project in collaboration with UNEP-CEP/SPAW CaMPAM Program

February 20, 2014. Over the last 15 years, CaMPAM capacity building program of the UNEP-CEP SPAW Program has used the exchange visits of MPA managers as a tool for disseminating best MPA management practices in the Caribbean. The participants have stressed the importance of sharing experiences on the ground for stimulating ideas and potential solutions for their management issues. For the first time IUCN-ORMA, in cooperation with UNEP-CEP/SPAW-CaMPAM, and supported by the BIOPAMA program organized an “Exchange of Caribbean Junior MPA Officers” to assist in their professional development. Seven junior professionals from Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia spent a week in Belize to learn from the Belizean MPA managers and governmental and non-governmental organizations related to marine resources conservation and management. After one day of lectures at the Coastal Zone Management Authority by the Fisheries Dept., the World Conservation Society, the Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense fund Managed Access Initiative and others, the participants, led by the IUCN-BIOPAMA Protected Areas Officer, and CaMPAM and the Belizean National MPA coordinators visited several sites in N Belize, namely Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, and the marine reserves of Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Bacalar Chico.



The participants had the chance to exchange ideas and experiences with MPA managers, local fishers and conservation NGOs such as the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD), and Wildtracks as well as leaders of the Tourism Associations.

The selection of Belizean MPAs, and national and local organizations as a “learning center” allowed the participants to learn and be exposed to the following: 1) consolidated MPAs with solid management plans including marine reserves and other categories; 2) a strong participation of local communities in environmental management; 3) their collaborative vocation; 4) national organizations with a strong record of marine resources management and conservation; 5) the current Belize initiative of developing areas with

managed access that involve fishers and other stakeholders, and 6) the existence of community-managed nature tourism operations in association with the conservation areas.

The Exchange was very successful and will be used as a model for future activities that combine some lecturing, site visits and exchange with marine managed areas managers and stakeholders. BIOPAMA and CaMPAM are very grateful of the local support of Isaias Majil (Belize Natl. MPA Coordinator), Miguel Alamilla (Hol Chan MR manager) and Joel Verde (SACD President).

For additional information contact Hyacinth Armstrong-Vaughn, Protected Areas Officer of the BIOPAMA Programme of IUCN - Mesoamerica and Caribbean Initiative (Hyacinth.ArmstrongVaughn@iucn.org) and Dr. Georgina Bustamante (Coordinator of the UNEP-CEP/SPAW CaMPAM Network and Forum) gbustamante09@gmail.com