

MAR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM:
BUILDING A NEW GENERATION FOR CONSERVATION

Quarterly newsletter
January-March 2015

Dear friends,

The first quarter of the year has been hectic and productive. We are happy to report the progress of the 2014 MAR Fellows in the development of their projects and their professional careers. **Joanna** and **Mario** from Guatemala, with the project entitled "Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) along the Motagua River basin and starting with the Municipality of Livingston ", attended a workshop on Greenhouse Gases (GHG) Inventories organized by USAID, WWF, GIZ and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, MARN. Guatemala has recently approved the Framework Law on Climate Change, which promotes initiatives that reduce emissions of GHG. Landfills, especially those with high load of organic matter, are important sources of GHG, therefore a project that reduces the amount of organic waste disposal through composting for example, will be considered as a change climate mitigation tool and therefore have greater legal and financial support. For this reason, many of the 2014 cohort fellows like Joanna and Mario are increasing their interest in this type of training to monitor the impact of conservation in their projects. Also, and as part of their project, Joanna and Mario have continued socializing the concept of SMM by training teachers, giving interviews at national media and organizing strategic meetings with key stakeholders such as municipal authorities.



Melissa from Guatemala finalized the process of reformation and adaptation of the National Policy for the Integrated Management of Solid Waste. Regarding her project "Guide to Develop Plans for Municipal Solid Waste Management for the town of Livingston" Melissa has incorporated the guide in the Annual Work Plan of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) and has achieved technical and financial support from the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and has achieved validation through the Coordinating Committee for the Integrated Solid Waste Management.

Tzahyri from Mexico is recycling glass by creating fine arts and crafts. She learned the technique of vitromosaic with discarded bottles, glass fusing and cut glass from Mexican artisans Carlos Mendieta and Miriam Palacios. Tzahyri's objective is to develop a sustainable alternative for the glass used in Holbox Island. Through these techniques the used glass becomes souvenirs for tourism. Tzahyri's MAR Leadership project seeks to establish a plan for integrated management of materials in the natural protected area of Yum Balam, where Holbox is located, reducing the amount of waste reaching the landfill (glass in this case), but also, supporting the conservation of Holbox's biodiversity by giving tourists a sustainable alternative to traditional handicrafts made from corals, sponges and starfish.



What are MAR Fellows up to?

The nonprofit organization, Ocean Conservancy (OC), through its Programme Trash Free Seas (Trash Free Seas), has worked hard over the past year in an exercise to identify the most important sources of plastic pollution in the ocean with which outlined a set of solutions that match the scope and scale of the problem. OC has considered Belize as the perfect location to conduct a study because it allows them to assess the driver and barriers to success through various stages of the development of waste management. This work is being conducted by Ted S., director of DSM Environmental Services, Inc. and **Emerson, 2014 Belize MAR Fellow**, is helping him as the focal point of fieldwork in Belize, organizing meetings and showing Ted the waste management system of various districts of Belize. We are very excited about this new partnership with Ocean Conservancy.

Pablo, 2010 Mexico MAR Fellow, through Oceanus International, is working on a project to clean the FONATUR marina in Cozumel, considering all the environmental conditions. This will help FONATUR avoid dispersion of sediment plumes that may damage the reef, among other negative effects that have impacted in previous projects the reef of Cozumel Marine Park. Oceanus International is also constantly working on the Hard Rock Hotel Riviera Maya, where Pablo works in the project "Better Than A Beach" conditioning the hotel beach carefully following all environmental standards.

Maria del Carmen, 2010 MAR Fellow, reports to us from the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas of Mexico where she works, about the territorial expansion of the queen conch fishing ban until November 2017 and ranging from Punta Herrero to Xcalak, Quintana Roo. "Little by little we are increasing the ban area"- Maricarmen said. We want to congratulate her and the Fishermen Cooperatives from Banco Chinchorro, Langosteros del Caribe and Xcalak Reef National Park, Maricarmen has recently been appointed as Director of the Whale Shark Biosphere Reserve and Isla Contoy National Park, on the northern tip of the MAR region.

Angela, from Guatemala and **Carlos**, from Mexico, both **2012 MAR Fellows**, received a scholarship to participate in the environmental economics for coastal ecosystems online course "Coastal Conservation Economics", which is being developed through a partnership between Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) and Duke University - Nicholas Institute. The course began in January and will last until May, with students from around the world. This course is more advanced than the first course both Angela and Carlos took, also with CSF, in 2012 and 2014 respectively. Angela says: "all examples and exercises are about issues on coastal marine services, many on fisheries; the system is very flexible, and the materials are very good. I'm enjoying it." This course will significantly extend the capabilities of Angela and Carlos as to understand how institutional and market failures lead to the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems. They will discuss political and economic tools to remedy these faults, and even they will have a focus on how the valuation of environmental services is influencing decision makers in developing conservation policies.

"La Garza" the researching vessel from the Foundation for Eco-development and Conservation (FUNDAECO), a Guatemalan nonprofit organization, celebrated its second anniversary. Transforming "La Garza" into a floating marine researching center

that seeks to mobilize the collective interest on the environmental problems of the Gulf of Honduras, was the MAR Leadership project of **Karen, 2010 MAR Fellow Guatemala** and Director of Institutional Development at FUNDAECO.



In response to the regional need to monitor and balance the fishing of sharks and rays in Guatemala, an Advisory Committee for Sharks and Rays was established. The organization is run by the Directorate for Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulations of Guatemala (DIPESCA) and the non-profit Fundación Mundo Azul, with the participation of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), the diving school Water Quest and organizations like Healthy Reefs Initiative (represented in Guatemala by **Ana 2011 MAR Fellow**), the Center for the Marine studies and Aquaculture (CEMA) at the University of San Carlos of Guatemala, "MarAlliance" and "Shark Legacy Project" coordinated by **Giacomo, 2012 MAR Fellow Honduras**. In January this committee held a meeting to support the implementation of international conventions and laws by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). "We need to educate and raise awareness on the importance of sharks and rays for the balance of coastal marine ecosystems, on how to promote sustainable fisheries for the economy of fishing communities and on the need to diversify fishermen's economic activities," said Giacomo.



We have the 2015 cohort theme!

In the first quarter of the year we finished shaping the 2015 cohort theme, which will focus on the valuation and conservation of mangroves along the SAM region. In January, the MAR Leadership team traveled through the four countries gathering information and identifying key stakeholders, and met in Mexico City with the Executive Committee of the program to define the regional vision of the 2015 cohort. The regional vision for 2015 is to achieve zero deforestation of mangroves in the SAM within the next 10 years, with middle-term targets (5 years) including the protection of at least 40,000 hectares of mangroves (equivalent to 20% of the current coverage) and the valuation of ecosystem services as a reality in at least 5 locations in the region.

The 2015 MAR Fellows cohort call for applications will be published in May. Follow the process in our website and social networks!

IX Symposium on Natural Resource Management in Belmopan, Belize

On March 25th the MAR Leadership Program participated in a symposium entitled "Balancing ecological and social systems for sustainable trans-boundary resource management" organized by the Belizean chapter of the Mesoamerican Society of Biology and Conservation (MSBC). The event was an interesting balance between terrestrial and marine issues, government speakers and civil society, with the common goal of demonstrating the progress that Belizean institutions are undertaking towards the conservation of natural resources through the proper management of their use. Our participation in the event allowed us to meet the organizing team of the MSBC Belize and other young researchers in the region, deepening our understanding of the institutional framework of the country and the mosaic of new initiatives that are coming strong in the field of conservation. Undoubtedly, these contacts will be of great help to the Program when choosing future cohorts of fellows.