



## MESOAMERICAN REEF LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Building the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders in the Mesoamerican Reef System

### 2018 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

**Deadline: June 24, 2018**

The [Mesoamerican Reef Leadership Program \(MAR-L\)](#) is looking for 24 motivated individuals based in the MAR ecoregion shared by Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (*state of Quintana Roo only*) who are committed to conservation of the region's coastal and marine ecosystems and wish to develop leadership skills to advance their careers.

The MAR Leadership Program offers training and project incubation opportunities to emerging leaders from all relevant sectors (non-profit, government, private, academic institutions, and local communities) as long as their professional activities and interests have a direct connection with the health and environmental sustainability of the region.

#### About the MAR Leadership Program

The Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) ecoregion encompasses the largest coral reef in the Atlantic Ocean and is part of the interconnected system of coastal habitats and currents that extends throughout the wider Caribbean. Its coastline stretches for 1,000 kilometers from the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico to the Bay Islands in Honduras, passing through Belize and Guatemala. The MAR region's natural resources are constantly threatened by unsustainable coastal development, discharge of effluents and contaminants, overfishing, and climate change despite decades of work by civil society organizations, government, academia and recently private sector to reverse these trends.

In order to contribute to the long term conservation of the MAR ecoregion and guarantee the environmental services that it provides, in 2010, the [Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature](#) and the [Summit Foundation](#) launched the Mesoamerican Reef Leadership Program. MAR-L develops the capacities and potential of young conservationists in the region to design and implement high impact conservation projects, providing them with mentoring opportunities, leadership tools and the chance to connect through networks and become agents of change in the region.



FONDO MEXICANO  
PARA LA CONSERVACIÓN  
DE LA NATURALEZA, A.C.  
INSTITUCIÓN PRIVADA



MAR LEADERSHIP  
Mesoamerican Reef Leadership Program

MAR-L operates on the basis of “cohorts” of practitioners (Fellows) that unite to address the most pressing environmental threats facing the MAR. Each year, the program selects a theme in order to maximize synergies among Fellows, facilitate group networking and encourage project design around a common goal. Past themes and projects that Fellows continue to advance throughout the region include the following:

- 2010 – Sustainable Coastal Development and Tourism
- 2011 – Promotion of Sustainable Fisheries and Establishment of Marine Protected Areas
- 2012 – Establishment of a Network of Multi-functional Marine Reserves
- 2014 – Solid Waste Management
- 2015 – Conservation and Valuation of Mangroves
- 2016 – Promotion of a Blue Economy Approach

MAR-L recognizes the importance of fostering a range of creative and innovative solutions to environmental threats facing the MAR. For this reason, the program recruits fellows from a variety of backgrounds (lawyers, architects, communication experts, environmental engineers, biologists, tourism entrepreneurs, and local community leaders) and different sectors (academia, local and federal governments, civil society organizations, and businesses) and others whose professional or community-led endeavors bear a direct connection to the health and sustainability of the coastal/marine environment. The program also promotes interaction and cooperation among members of each cohort as well as between distinct cohorts. Such interaction fosters a network of supportive professionals and provides Fellows a holistic perspective on how to resolve complicated environmental conservation issues.

For the past seven years, MAR-L has developed the strategic capacities and leadership skills of 71 Fellows. 50 marine conservation projects are being implemented; 15 Fellows have undertaken important public policy advocacy campaigns geared towards conservation; 40 Fellows have advanced to positions of more responsibility in the conservation field; 25 multinational synergies have emerged from the relationships developed in the program, and 25 Fellows have received funding from MAR Fund to implement their projects and undertake consultancies.

## **Thematic Approach for the 2018 Cohort: Sustainable Fisheries**

### ***Rationale***

A healthy Mesoamerican Reef is essential to both protect biodiversity and secure the livelihoods of the local people that depend on an abundant marine life. In response to the dramatic decline of fish populations throughout the Caribbean Basin, MAR-L seeks to contribute to the recovery of fish populations by protecting their habitats and promoting sustainable fishing practices.

MAR-L has heavily invested in supporting leaders committed to improving fisheries in the region and who are creating a network of Fish Replenishment Zones or FRZs (also known as “no-take zones”) that will serve to naturally restore the biomass, abundance, size and diversity of fish and restore the benthic community including corals reefs. Therefore, and with the understanding that the less ecologically degraded a reef ecosystem is, the more resilient and productive it is, we strive to scale up and launch successful sustainable fisheries projects along the MAR that contribute to a sustainable community development.

### *Community-led conservation models*

Cabo Pulmo, in the state of Baja California Sur, is an outstanding example of a community-led conservation success. It serves as a proof of concept that can be replicated in the MAR region. It clearly represents an innovative, non-extractive model for the Blue Economy<sup>1</sup>. This success is attributed, among other things, to the policy adopted 20 years ago by the federal government and the Cabo Pulmo community to conserve its marine resources under a Natural Protected Area in the category of National Park<sup>2</sup>. The community collectively put its fishing gear down and was able to build an alternative livelihood<sup>3</sup>. Its inhabitants found in sustainable tourism a very rewarding livelihood alternative. Cabo Pulmo National Park is nationally and internationally recognized for the biomass increase of wildlife in relation to that existing before its decree<sup>4</sup>. “It is clear that the people of Cabo Pulmo’s desire for sustainability and conservation spawned a thriving ecosystem and economy, instilling a deeply rooted sense of pride and responsibility for the marine world in the community”<sup>5</sup>.

Cabo Pulmo’s experience is exceptional as it holds several keys to its success, among these are:

1. Strong community leadership and the will of different stakeholders such as scientists, researchers and civil society organizations to implement public policy objectives<sup>6</sup>.
2. Solid scientific baseline of the ecosystem and the socio-economic conditions of the community.
3. A clear understanding of fisheries before and after the creation of the reserve.

For further information watch the following videos

Cabo Pulmo una historia de éxito (available with English subtitles)

<http://maresmexicanos.com/2016/06/13/cabo-pulmo-una-historia-de-exito/>

Pies en la tierra - Grecia en Cabo Pulmo, Baja California (Spanish)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=In\\_OZre0Mo0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=In_OZre0Mo0)

To contribute towards our goal of enhancing sustainable fisheries in the MAR and leverage the success of Cabo Pulmo Marine Reserve or other similar models, we invite teams of maximum six early to mid-career people based in the MAR region to apply.

Team members should work together to pursue a collective impact at the local, state, national or regional level and should apply with a project related to sustainable fisheries that will also promote community development. Ideally, each team will include MAR alumni, several of which are already part of partner institutions, and new Fellows who can contribute fresh ideas and energy to current efforts. Multisector groups including relevant government agencies (municipal, state or national), partner civil society organizations, academia and local communities (fishermen) are encouraged to apply as a team. Only four teams will be selected.

Prospective applicants must demonstrate their interest in developing their leadership skills and contributing to our goal of enhancing sustainable fisheries by scaling up existing efforts and/or adapting successful community-led sustainable initiatives that may include, but are not limited to:

- Establishment of Fish Replenishment Zones or community-based reserves as important tools for biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management.
- Advocacy for policy and governance reform at local, state, national, and regional levels that promote and favor FRZs and other types of MPAs.
- Harmonization, improvement and enforcement of fisheries regulations in and among the four MAR countries, including but not limited to key species such as queen conch, groupers, sharks, parrot fish, sea turtles and lobster.
- Improvement of fishing gear and techniques to minimize by-catch and fishing impact on the marine ecosystem.
- Market-based incentives to sustainable fisheries, including work on managed access, fisheries eco-certification, alternative sources of local income, and markets for payment for ecosystem services to

offset some of the costs associated with fishing restrictions that might be incurred by local communities.

- Stakeholder participation and education, including community-based management regimes that take into account territorial use rights and community-led enforcement.

## **Fellow Applicant Profile**

MAR Leadership is looking for bold, forward thinking leaders! Individuals interested in becoming Fellows should meet the following eligibility requirements, possess some or all of the following personal, professional, and demonstrate potential to develop the leadership skills listed below.

### *Eligibility Requirements*

- Be a resident of the Mesoamerican Reef ecoregion, which includes locations within Belize, the Caribbean basin of Guatemala and Honduras, and the State of Quintana Roo in Mexico;
- Preferably be at the early to mid-career level;
- Minimum three years of experience working on environmental (ideally coastal and marine resource related conservation) issues through community work, school, university or work experience;
- Experience working with local community groups and/or initiatives;
- Be passionate and capable of generating change;
- Have regular access to the internet in order to participate in exchanging data, email, activities, and experiences from a remote location;
- References from colleagues and supervisors.

### *Existing Leadership Skills –Before applying ask yourself the following questions:*

- Are you self-motivated with a positive and proactive attitude?
- Are you determined to grow professionally and personally?
- Are you interested to work as a member of a team and as part of a collaborative conservation effort?
- Are you interested to develop and implement new ideas for solutions to environmental problems?
- Are you interested to create change in social behaviors that are harmful to natural ecosystems?
- Are you interested in finding creative and innovative solutions to challenging environmental and community development problems?
- Are you focused and determined to achieve results?

## **What will Fellows get from the MAR Leadership Program?**

The MAR Leadership Program will provide Fellows an opportunity to gain real world, hands-on experience and develop personal, professional, and environmental conservation leadership skills. These skills will enable Fellows to become frontrunners in protecting the Mesoamerican Reef and associated marine ecosystems, and lead efforts to conserve, protect and restore marine ecosystems in their communities, countries and across the region.

### *Personal Leadership Skills – To develop personal and professional leadership skills, Fellows will:*

- Communicate effectively through various forms of media and to various audiences;
- Improve his/her ability to collaborate with people from different sectors and cultures;
- Have more self-knowledge and identify his/her strengths, weaknesses and leadership styles;
- Build a foundation of tools and resources that can be used beyond this program.
- Become strong opinion leaders and advocates with solid positions and great ideas/solutions.

*Professional Leadership Skills – To advance career development, Fellows will learn to:*

- Think in a systemic way; see the general panorama and understand the social, legal and political landscape to achieve conservation success and long-term impact;
- Scale up existing successful projects and conceptualize new projects to promote coastal and marine conservation, social welfare and equity;
- Use capacities, abilities, tools, and knowledge of coastal ecosystems to achieve future higher level positions;
- Build relationships, negotiate, and develop funding opportunities;
- Learn the state of the art on sustainable fisheries, community development, marketing, financial literacy and fisheries finance;
- Receive mentoring support and work side-by-side with experts in their field to scale up projects which would result in positive impacts of the MAR;
- Collaborate with government agencies, non-profits, local communities and other stakeholders to build long-term collective capacity for marine conservation.
- Become an active member of the MAR Leadership Program network and sub networks (Regional Network for Sustainable Fisheries in the MAR).

### **Time Commitment and Fellow Responsibilities**

Each cohort cycle lasts 12 months. During this period, Fellows carry out normal work responsibilities, however, they are committed to implement a team project and dedicate approximately 80 days over the course of a year to MAR Leadership Program activities.

The 2018 cohort cycle includes a two-week workshop (15 days total, including travel time), up to three online webinars (two hours each) and a 4-day trip to Cabo Pulmo by the end of 2018 (dates to be confirmed). The two-week workshop will take place in Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico, tentatively on August 4-19.

### **Sponsorship**

MAR –L will sponsor training fees, travel, food and accommodation costs to attend the workshop in Cancun and all other program activities for 12 fellows (up to 3 people from each team).

Three spots in each team (12) will be available for candidates that are sponsored by their organization. The sponsorship cost is \$3,500 USD per fellow. Should you need further information please contact María Eugenia Arreola at [maria.arreola@fmcn.org](mailto:maria.arreola@fmcn.org)

Travel expenses to visit Cabo Pulmo will be covered by MAR-L for 2 members from each team.

The MAR Leadership Program does not offer any type of individual remuneration or salary for Fellow participation. It is hoped that selected Fellows have full time jobs at the time of acceptance in the program and that participation in the program will enhance capacity for improved job performance and professional development.

### **References**

<sup>1</sup> FAO (2014) defines "Blue Growth" or "Blue Economy" as a rational approach to sustainable, comprehensive and socioeconomic management of the oceans and coasts. It is focused on fisheries, aquaculture, ecosystem services, and social protection of the coastal communities. Under a Blue Growth framework, responsible, sustainable and inclusive economic practices are promoted.

<sup>2</sup> Bobadilla Jiménez, Mariana et al. Percepción de los prestadores de servicios dentro de Áreas Naturales Protegidas sobre la eficacia de las políticas ambientales ahí implementadas y su impacto sobre el bienestar de la comunidad. Caso: Cabo Pulmo, B. C. S. México. El Periplo Sustentable, [S.l.], n. 33, p. 760-797, nov. 2017. ISSN 1870-9036. Available at: <<https://rperiplo.uaemex.mx/article/view/9036>>. Date accessed: 14 feb. 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Octavio Aburto Oropeza <http://octavioaburto.com/cabo-pulmo>

<sup>4</sup> Bobadilla Jiménez, Mariana et al. Percepción de los prestadores de servicios dentro de Áreas Naturales Protegidas sobre la eficacia de las políticas ambientales ahí implementadas y su impacto sobre el bienestar de la comunidad. Caso: Cabo Pulmo, B. C. S. México. El Periplo Sustentable, [S.l.], n. 33, p. 760-797, nov. 2017. ISSN 1870-9036. Available at: <<https://rperiplo.uaemex.mx/article/view/9036>>. Date accessed: 14 feb. 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Octavio Aburto Oropeza <http://octavioaburto.com/cabo-pulmo>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



## Application and Selection Process

**Open until June 24, 2018**

If you and your team-mates meet the above program requirements and support the 2018 program theme, we invite you to apply to become a MAR Leadership Fellow by following these steps:

### Application

- STEP 1:** Contact María Eugenia Arreola ([maria.arreola@fmcn.org](mailto:maria.arreola@fmcn.org)) to request the project form in order to begin the application process.
- STEP 2:** Only one project form should be submitted by each team. However, separately, all the members must submit the personal form and the following materials no later than June 24, 2018
- Current résumé including contact details (email, Cellphone number/WhatsApp, office number, Skype id)
  - Two letters of recommendation from professional colleagues with whom you have worked in the past. Do not include your team mates.
  - A letter of support from your current supervisor.
  - A motivation letter (600 – 800 words) or a 3-minute video that describes the following:
    - Your educational background and current profession.
    - Why you want to be a MAR Fellow.
    - Your own opinion of the importance of the project you are submitting with your team.
    - How your project will help you develop professionally and your organization's goals.
    - Indicate if you require MAR-L sponsorship and why.

All documents should be submitted in MS Word format or PDF in English or Spanish.

You will receive an e-mail confirming our receipt of your application materials. Missing documents or late submissions will result in applicant disqualification.

### Interviews

- STEP 3:** A preliminary telephone or Skype interview will be conducted by MAR Leadership staff with qualified applicants during early July.
- STEP 4:** An in-person interview will be conducted by MAR Leadership staff with qualified teams.

### Notification

- STEP 5:** Applicants selected as Fellows in the 2018 MAR Leadership Program will receive official notice of acceptance early July in order to start participating in the program's activities.

All prospective applicants should mark on their calendar that the workshop is tentatively planned for 4-19 August.

Need more information?

Contact María Eugenia Arreola [maria.arreola@fmcn.org](mailto:maria.arreola@fmcn.org)

Website: <http://liderazgosam.org/en/> FACEBOOK: [www.facebook.com/MARLeadership](http://www.facebook.com/MARLeadership)

YOUTUBE: [www.youtube.com/user/marleadership](http://www.youtube.com/user/marleadership)