

New marine protected area designated in Costa Rica

June 22 2017, by Daniel Steadman



Credit: Fauna & Flora International

International days, such as World Oceans Day earlier this month, are vitally important for raising awareness of topics such as marine biodiversity. But in Costa Rica this year, not only was awareness raised but a key action was taken –the government announced the designation of the Área Marina de Manejo Cabo Blanco (Cabo Blanco Marine Management Area), as a new 831 km² marine protected area (MPA).

The MPA is on the Nicoya peninsula of the country's Pacific coast and has been established to safeguard the livelihoods of hundreds of fishermen and their families, as well as the rich [biodiversity](#) in Cabo

Blanco National Park which includes humpback whales and four species of sea turtle (including the Critically Endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle).

Since 2013, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and its Costa Rican partner CoopeSolidar R.L have been working with the local fishing community of Cabuya – which now sits within the boundaries of the new MPA – to ensure that the community's traditional knowledge of the area's local marine biodiversity and their traditional uses and access to local fishing grounds could inform and guide the establishment of the site and how it will be managed in the future.

The fishers of Cabuya have worked the waters of the MPA for generations, using low impact fishing gear like lines and nets (and even freediving and collection by hand) to catch red snapper, dorado, lobster and other species. With the fishers recommendations and their proposal for the management of the area, the Ministry of Environment zoned the area taking into consideration traditional knowledge and local governance.



Don Trino, artisan fisherman of Cabuya, develops his fishing activity in a responsible way. Credit: CoopeSolidar R.L 2014

"The Cabuyan fishers are key to understanding the amazing biodiversity around the Nicoya peninsula and how best to protect it," explains CoopeSolidar's Vivienne Solis.

"The new MPA is a landmark achievement – it is Costa Rica's first MPA under the management area of the Ministry of Environment close to the coast that has been (and will be) taking into consideration local people. The first steps towards ensuring the new MPA is a success are ensuring that traditional uses of the sea are fully respected."

The country now has a great challenge to promote a protected area governance model that is able to conserve the rich biodiversity and

secure the livelihoods of responsible fishers.

FFI, the Ministry of Environment, INCOPESCA and CoopeSolidar R.L will continue assisting the managers of the new MPA – the Costa Rican Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía – in making sure the waters around Cabo Blanco are managed fairly and that local fishers (from Cabuya and other communities in the MPA) play a leading role in protecting the area's globally significant biodiversity.



An artisanal fisherman from Cabuya revising his fishing gear. Credit: CoopeSoliDar R.L 2013

Provided by Fauna & Flora International

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