



Photo: Dana Pendygrasse



## Newsletter September- December 2014

Dear friends and partners,

It is our pleasure to provide our first quarterly newsletter of the Healthy Reefs Initiative. This collaboration of over 60 partner organizations aims to improve the health and management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecosystem (MAR).

### Accomplishments

#### Reef monitoring and data analysis

HRI increased the number of reef sites our team surveyed from 80 to 123 and compiled these, along with approximately 70 other “partner’s sites”. Data taken by the HRI team can be access through our online database. The complete data analysis will be presented in the Mesoamerican Reef Report Card 2015.



Photo: Mickey Charteris

*Reef Monitoring in Honduras,  
Belize, Guatemala and Mexico*

We want to extend our special gratitude to all the partners that contributed with data and helped carry out all the monitoring. This joint effort makes the next Mesoamerican Reef Report Card even more robust and reflects more sites where we are all working.

#### **2014, Regional Partners Meeting. Tela, Honduras**



*2014, Regional Partners Meeting attendees*

The 2014 Regional Partners meeting brought together more than 64 partner organizations to identify and prioritize concrete, measurable actions or recommendations achievable over the next two years. We aim to have these recommendations help reduce the most significant threats impacting the region. Examples include encouraging the implementation of region-wide regulations to protect parrotfish, as successfully done by Belize in 2009; and reducing carbon emissions associated with annual work-plans within governments, NGOs, academia and private sector. A draft of the 2015 Report Card was also presented in the meeting and all those present were given a voice on how the data will be presented in this new, updated report.

#### **Launch of the new online database**

HRI's new online interactive reef health database is now complete and live! The launch was carried out during the 2014 partners meeting. CREDIA Foundation, who houses the database, hosted a workshop on how to query the database, produce graphs and create map-based data visualizations. The database contains over 800 entries, each with over 100 records. When the new data comes online during our 2015 Report Card launch, this tally will increase to over 1000 entries, including more than 100,000 records of corals, fish, and key invertebrates.



Given our strong commitment to make this information accessible to our partners and others aiming to carry out conservation or research activities in the region, we have developed two user-friendly online tools to access, query, visualize or map this information at a variety of different taxonomic, spatial, and temporal levels.

Please follow this link to sign up for free and access the complete online database:

<http://www.healthyreefs.org/cms/database-2/>

## Events

### **Healthy Reefs Initiative hosted a Marine Symposium within the Mesoamerican Congress of Conservation Biology. Copan Ruins, Honduras.**

HRI held a marine symposium within the Mesoamerican Congress of Conservation Biology, held on October 16<sup>th</sup>. The HRI team members of Guatemala, Belize and Honduras presented information on the health of the Mesoamerican Reef, the online database, and how the Eco Audit helps evaluate progress and activities aimed towards the better management of this incredible shared marine resource. The symposium also hosted 6 oral presentations by leaders, experts and graduate students on different marine themes from around Mesoamerica, as well as two working group meetings focused on the marine resources of the Pacific of Central America and the Cuyamel-Omoa region in Honduras.



*HRI Marine Symposium attendees within the Mesoamerican Congress of Conservation Biology*

### **Media and Video Symposium. Belize City, Belize**

South Shore Productions and HRI held the first Video and Media Symposium in Belize on November 4<sup>th</sup>. This training event was designed to help non-profit organizations and small to mid-size businesses tap into the power of video and work with media more effectively to become better communicators, educators and marketers. HRI aims at hosting similar events in the other MAR countries!

More info at: <http://www.southshoreproductions.net/symposiums/>

### **ReelCause - Video Tells Your Story. PeopleSourcing Fuels Your Cause.**

HRI began a partnership and collaborative effort as the only marine conservation project highlighted in [www.reelcauses.org](http://www.reelcauses.org), a video development and fundraising program. HRI's Executive Director Melanie McField participated in the launch event at the UN Headquarters in New York on January 8th.

Please follow this link to HRI's ReelCause channel:

<https://reelcause.com/healthy-reefs/2015/01/healthy-reefs-for-healthy-people-overview/>



*HRI's Melanie McField with  
Yasser Heyaime of ReelCause*

### **Eye on Earth Initiative**

HRI is participating with the Eye on Earth Initiative specifically on the Eye on Oceans and Blue Carbon, affiliated with the United Nations Environment Program and the Environmental Agency of Abu Dhabi. The Initiative is exploring the emerging research and financing opportunities associated with the proposed global blue carbon market.

<http://www.eoesummit.org/blog/initiative/eye-on-oceans-blue-carbon/>

### **Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network**

HRI continues its collaboration with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network. HRI's Executive Director, Melanie McField, was appointed to the new Caribbean Regional Steering Committee. The group is interested in learning from and expanding the online database idea and the use and impact of reef health Report Cards.



*Photos by Francesca Diaco of the Meso-Amazing Reef*

## **News**

### **United to stop a fuel storage plant in Quintana Roo, Mexico.**

The Riviera Maya Hotel Association at Quintana Roo, organized itself against the proposed fuel storage plant named TAR (Terminal de Almancenamiento y Reparto del Caribe) and invited HRI to share the results on the health of the reef and the actual and

potential threats the reef is facing. The reason behind this stand is due to the drastic damages this facility could cause to the surrounding environment and population, the tourism industry, the potential risks of an accident, the subterranean aquifer, and the wildlife and marine species that inhabit the Mesoamerican Reef.

<http://www.laverdadnoticias.com/unidos-contra-planta-de-almacenaje/450675/>

## New Partnerships

We thank and welcome our new partners listed below. They will all be collaborating with our over 60 other partners towards improving the health of the Mesoamerican Reef, our shared natural heritage.

**Mexico:** The Ministry of Environment of the State of Quintana Roo (Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, SEMA) and the Mexican Center of Environmental Rights (Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental, CEMDA).

**Guatemala:** Fundación Mundo Azul, Alianza de Derecho Ambiental y Agua (ADA2).

**Belize:** Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association.

**Honduras:** Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de Honduras (IDAMHO), Operation Wallacea, Whale Shark and Oceanic Research Center (WSORC).

**International:** Sylvia Earle Alliance (SEA).

## Publications

The Healthy Reefs Initiative team helped in coauthoring the *Status and Trends of Caribbean Coral Reefs: 1970-2012*, presented by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It is the most detailed and comprehensive study of its kind published to date – the result of the work of 90 experts over the course of three years. It contains the analysis of more than 35,000 surveys conducted at 90 Caribbean locations since 1970, including studies of corals, seaweeds, grazing sea urchins and fish. The most important conclusion presented in this report is that coral reef health is declining primarily due to the loss of grazers in the region. We can help reverse this effect by protecting key grazers like parrotfish and surgeonfish.

Please follow this link to the full report:

[http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/caribbean\\_coral\\_reefs\\_status\\_report\\_1970\\_2012.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/caribbean_coral_reefs_status_report_1970_2012.pdf)

HRI participated in the Natural Capital project and the development of the tropical marine invest model in Belize. The publication entitled: *“Assessing habitat risk from human activities to inform coastal and marine spatial planning: a demonstration in Belize”*. To access the article published in the Environmental Research Letters, follow:

<http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/9/11/114016/article>

And to enjoy a video on this subject, click on:

<http://woods.stanford.edu/static/media/ncp-pr-20141118.html>

HRI also contributed an article on the status of coral reef in Belize for the revival of the report entitled: ***“State of the Belize Coastal Zone, 2003-2013”*** published by the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute. To access the report, follow the link: <http://www.coastalzonebelize.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/State-of-the-Belize-Coastal-Zone-Report-2003-20134.pdf>.

HRI provided technical assistance to Germany’s premier national TV channel for nature films, SWR, on a series about ***Maya Culture and Natural Resources in Mesoamerica***. The team demonstrated HRI’s reef monitoring process and showed off the tangible benefits of full-protection in the renowned Hol Chan Marine Reserve. The German government is becoming an important supporter of marine conservation efforts in the region. To see more information on this TV series: <http://www.swr.de/lma/die-mayaroute-belize/-/id=100886/nid=100886/did=14556712/55v3yi/index.html>

## **The HRI Mesoamerican Reef Report Card 2015 COMING SOON!!!!**

### **Parrotfish Protection Plans**

**Belize:** The first country of the MAR Region that has protected parrotfish and other key herbivores, with their law published in 2009, Fisheries (Nassau Grouper & Species Protection) Regulation. STATUTORY INSTRUMENT No. 49 of 2009.

**Mexico:** HRI has been highly involved by providing specific information on herbivorous fish biomass and the important contribution of these species to the health of the reef, as well as starting to work with SEMA and CEMDA to organize a campaign of awareness trying to bring other groups (fishermen, government, and NGOs) to work with the objective of protecting parrotfishes.

**Guatemala:** HRI has been working very closely with the Fisheries Department (DIPESCA) to establish a fishing moratorium for the protection of parrotfish for 5 years. This has been socialized with the fishing communities of the Caribbean of Guatemala and they all agreed on protecting this key herbivore. The moratorium will soon be established and presented in the Official Newspaper.

**Honduras:** HRI was a key player in the inclusion of herbivores as no-take species within the management plan for the Bay Islands National Marine Park and Cordelia Banks Site of Wildlife Importance; as well as including these species in the future decree establishing the Tela Bay Marine Wildlife Refuge.

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**Healthy Reefs**  
*for healthy people*

[www.healthyreefs.org](http://www.healthyreefs.org)



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### **Healthy Reefs Initiative Team**

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