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The Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor - CMAR

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Costa Rica – Panamá – Colombia- Ecuador (South America).

Size: 1.374.496 km²



Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Ministries of the Environment of Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador
- Fisheries and Tourism Authorities: Colombia (AUNAP)
- Ecuador (Viceministry of Aquaculture and Fishing)
- Costa Rica (INCOPECA)
- Panama (ARAP).

Protected area administration:

- National Parks Services of Colombia (PNN)
- National System of Protected Areas of Costa Rica (SINAC)
- National System of Protected Areas of Panama (SINAP)
- the Galapagos National Park (Ecuador)

International NGOs:

- WWF
- MarViva

National NGOs:

- Charles Darwin Foundation
- Malpelo Foundation
- Fundar Galapagos
- Pretoma
- Turtle Island Restoration Network
- Amigos de la Isla del Coco Foundation
- Albatros Media

Local NGOs:

- Malpelo Foundation
- Amigos de la Isla del Coco

Objectives: The Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor (CMAR) is a regional and cross-border initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of the region's marine and coastal resources. The aim is to properly manage the Eastern Tropical Pacific's biodiversity through ecosystem based management and the development of regional intergovernmental strategies with support of None-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international cooperation agencies.

1. Promoting the management and conservation of the biodiversity and coastal-marine resources of the marine corridor, focusing on ecosystems, endemic and endangered species, as well as species with commercial importance.

2. Improving the management of the marine protected areas that constitute the CMAR.

3. Establishing a regional management of the CMAR, consistent with national laws and policies of the four countries, and under international agreements and conventions.
4. Promoting the cooperation and collaborative work between the governments, international agencies, Non-governmental Organizations, and other stakeholders, in order to facilitate the adequate management of the CMAR.
5. Targeting technical and financial cooperation at the national and regional level for the CMAR, based on priorities established for the four countries.
6. Encouraging tourism and fishing that contributes to sustainable development in local communities involved with the CMAR.
7. Encouraging stakeholder's participation concerning the CMAR management.

Values and importance: The CMAR aims to promote and foster the voluntary cooperation of four countries (Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador) to attain coordinated management of its core zones, meaning the Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) surrounding 5 islands: Malpelo and Gorgona (Colombia), Coiba (Panama), Galapagos (Ecuador) and Cocos (Costa Rica), four of them are UNESCO World Heritage Sites (all except Gorgona), and two RAMSAR Sites (Coco and Galapagos). These MPAs and their influence zones, constitute an important world-wide hot spot for its great biodiversity with more than 600 marine species and key marine ecosystems, ecological connectivity, high endemism and natural conditions to sustain migratory species.

The CMAR provides benefits for approximately 3,5 million people and their local economies. The fishing and tourism are the most relevant economic activities related to the transboundary area. At least 48 thousand artisanal fishermen depend on the CMAR's marine resources, as well as around 50.000 vessels for industrial fishing. The number of visitors in the core zones has increased, reaching more than 255.000 tourists per year, which contributes with more tourism services offered by local communities.

Illegal fishing needs urgent actions because is the most serious threat in the marine corridor. This activity not only depletes the fishing resources and biodiversity, but also violates borders and international laws, becoming a security issue.

Aspects of transboundary cooperation: Nature Conservation, Sustainable use of marine biodiversity focused on tourism and fishing, MPAs management, Common regional ecosystems, endemic and endangered species, Building capacities and training, Inter-sectoral stakeholders participation.

Stage in the process: Heads- of-Ministries of Environment voluntary Agreement

Date Established: 2nd April 2004

Official Protected Area Designation: National Park; Flora and Fauna Sanctuary; UNESCO World Heritage Site; RAMSAR Site.

The Catalyst: The creation of the CMAR arises from a Presidential intention of the 4 countries (Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica) that responds to the international commitments made by the countries at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), on the urgent need to implement actions that aim to protect and manage the natural resources, base for the economic and social development.

In addition, the UNESCO World Heritage Program identified a need of cross-border management of the marine World Heritage Sites and their connectivity, in the framework of the experts workshop “Filling critical an promoting multisites approach to new nominations of tropical coastal, marine and small ecosystems“, developed in Vietnam (2002). According to this, the Latin-America and the Caribbean experts group, proposed the Galapagos-Cocos islands zone, as one of the most important places to be designated a cross-border management zone in the region, due to shared biological and geological conditions, relevant genetic exchange and common marine species, most of them endemic and highly migratory.

History: The UNESCO recommendations about cross-border management of the marine World Heritage Sites, and the scientific proposal of experts in Latin America and the Caribbean, were decisive factors for the Ministries of the Environment of Costa Rica and Ecuador, initially, to move forward in seeking a joint region management. Then, Panama and Colombia were included in this regional initiative, after the invitation to participate of Costa Rica and Ecuador, during the “Ministers of Environment World Forum” in 2002. After that, in April 2004: “The San Jose Statement” was signed (technical document was adopted) by the Environment Authorities of the four countries.

The creation of the CMAR has a strong base on scientific and technical information provided by scientific institutions from Colombia (INVEMAR), Costa Rica (CIMAR), Ecuador (Charles Darwin Scientific Station), Panama (Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute).

Barriers, challenges, obstacles, or constraints: It is a challenge to obtain a stronger political engagement and a more permanent financial support / a Memorandum of Understanding is being created between CMAR and PACIFICO (a recent alliance of environmental funds in the Eastern Tropical Pacific).

It is a challenge to gather all the scientific and technical information of the CMAR, inside a unique information system or virtual platform. / A project proposal is still under consideration by the Germany government to support this initiative.

It is a challenge to complete the formal establishment of the national commissions in every country. Currently, only Colombia has this structure created with a working plan.

The Governance and Management Structures

- **Cooperative relationship:** Non-binding agreement
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** None

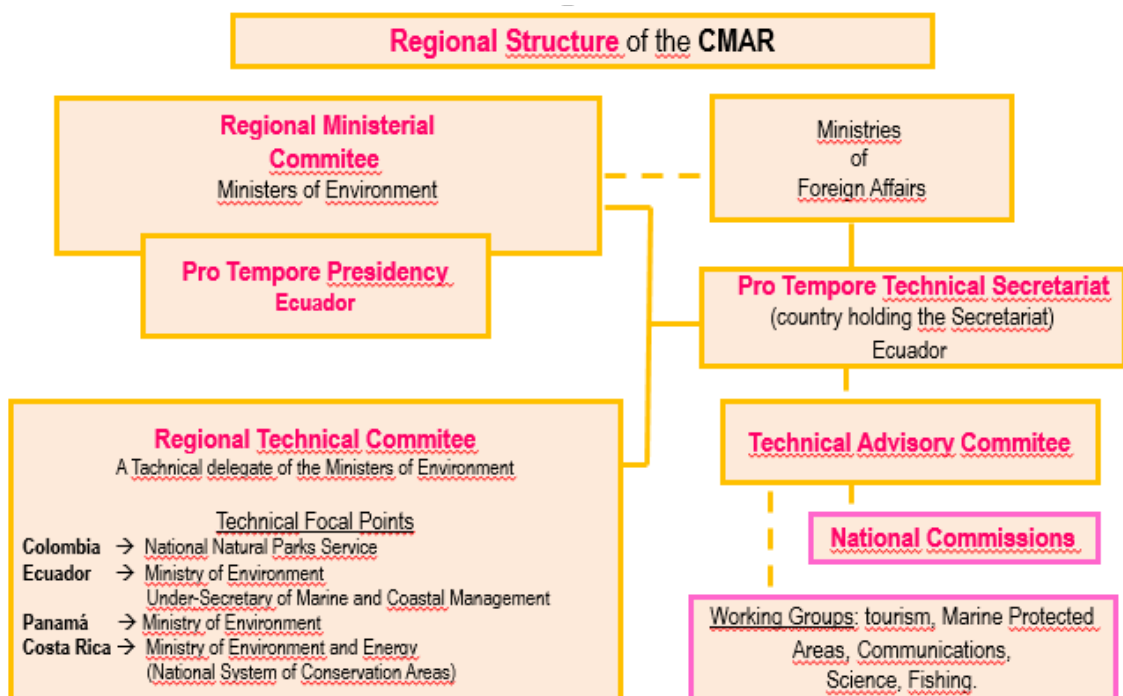
- **Governance structure**

Political level

- **Regional Ministerial Committee:** is formed by the Ministries of the Environment of the 4 countries, and politically supports the CMAR.
- **Pro Tempore Presidency:** sectorial coordination at the regional level. Rotates every (3) three years between countries.

Technical level

- **Pro Tempore Technical Secretariat:** proceed with the mandates and actions requested by both Committees (Regional and Technical). Rotates every (3) three years (same country as the Pro Tempore Presidency).
- **Regional Technical Committee:** Advise and prepare technical proposals to support the CMAR actions. Comprised of governmental representatives or official delegates from the Ministries.
- **National Commissions:** sectorial coordination at the national level. It works under the regional guidelines of the Regional Committees but according to the national policies and sovereignty of every country.
- **Working Groups:** Conduct technical actions addressed to accomplish the CMAR objectives in four lines of actions: biodiversity, fishing, responsible tourism, control and surveillance.



- **Cooperative management arrangement:** Regional Action Plan (every regional group and national committees not only target to this general plan, but also have their own action plans with annual activities).

Results

- Joint Work between the 4 governments and NGO's
- Internal regulations/ guidelines of CMAR.
- Created 5 working groups with representatives of the 4 countries (Tourism, Marine Protected Areas, Communications, Science and Fishing)
- Working Plans for the Regional Groups and the National Commission in Colombia, with short, medium, and long term actions.
- Set up National Commissions of the CMAR → Colombia (2012) National organizations as members. Panamá, Costa Rica and Ecuador groups are still under conformation.
- Strengthen the management and conservation of the 5 MPA's through the exchange of experiences and information.
- Strengthen the management and conservation of the CMAR biodiversity, specially endemic and endangered species (turtles, sharks, birds).
- Performed technical studies about regional fisheries (marketing chain, traceability, onboard observers program) for environmental and fishing authorities.
- Define institutional and community agreements to carry out participatory assessment and management fishing resources of the Gorgona-Sanquianga subregion.

Lessons Learned

- The intersectorial participation of different stakeholders (government, research, NGOs, community) has reinforced the management and aims accomplishment.
- The regional level of coordination should have a close interaction with the national level (national committees).
- Virtual meetings and interactions have been a good mechanism of communication between CMAR members.

For More Information

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Attached you will find “The San Jose Statement” and the Regional Action Plan.

Please find all additional information on the web-site www.cmarpacifico.org, the “library” (biblioteca) or “gallery” (galería) might be of interest.