



## Case Study

# THINKING LONG TERM ABOUT HIGH- LEVERAGE PARTNER ATTRIBUTES VENEZUELA, SOUTH AMERICA

*How focusing hard on partner criteria resulted in game-changing marine conservation and changed 'threat industry' relations in the Southern Caribbean.*

The southern Caribbean Ocean near Venezuela is home to both great concentrations of biodiversity and considerable oil reserves. However, poorly managed oil exploration, development and delivery threaten marine resources.

The Nature Conservancy's Venezuela team dedicated a great amount of time and energy in considering the attributes prospective partners must have. In their words, they "*swam upstream to the highest level of long-term thinking and planning.*" The team had clearly identified the highest priority areas in need of protection. These targets were embedded in one of the world's richest marine oil reserve areas, one that supplies over 25% of Latin America's regional oil demands and makes Venezuela a major OPEC producer, along with Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The team visualized what attributes a prospective partner(s) would need to have now in order to effect change that would last far into the future. Criteria included:

- Highly-respected by the Government of Venezuela
- Has deep roots regionally
- Will last as an institution far into the future
- Must be nimble and able to think creatively
- Needs to have ability to communicate with the oil industry
- Must have a "game-changing" ability to affect the future of marine conservation
- Needs to understand the value of marine conservation
- Has pre-existing trust and working relationship with key players
- Able to influence decision makers
- Able to influence process protocols in the oil industry

Ultimately they chose to create a partnership with the Institute of Technology and Marine Science (INTECMAR) of Venezuela's Simón Bolívar University and a state-owned oil company, PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.). They also chose these partners because they felt that the combination would result in creative thinking that would be beneficial to marine resources far into the future.

And they were right. Because of these partners' deep understanding of the situation, an extremely creative, highly voluntary, and ultimately successful approach was generated. The partnership has literally changed the way that oil companies do business in the area. Now, when oil companies submit a bid to do business with Venezuela, as part of the process they must learn about Conservancy-vetted conservation guidelines and fill out a question: "What are you going to do to protect our conservation targets?"

Focusing hard on partnership criteria resulted in the creation of a great partnership that has resulted in making "marine conservation savvy" a sought-after, competitive industry trait by inculcating conservation "best practices" into an ongoing, transactional process constantly in use by the Venezuelan oil industry.

For more information about this project, visit  
<http://marineplanning.org/50.htm> and <http://www.theebi.org/>.