

Mexico and Northern
Central America

Oceans

Charting a sustainable
course for oceans
and people

The Nature
Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.



Oceans provide us with food, jobs, recreation and protection. Mexico and Northern Central America (MNCA) have two of the most important seascapes in the world. The Gulf of California supports 70 percent of Mexico's annual catch and contributes \$900 million to the country's economy each year. The Mesoamerican Reef spans 625 miles from the tip of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, through Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. It is the second largest barrier reef system in the world and home to the greatest aggregation of whale sharks. It is also a major tourist destination, generating over \$6 billion annually.

The Conservation Challenge

Although commercial fishing and tourism bring substantial revenues, they also threaten to destroy the very ecosystems that produce fish, attract tourists, and buffer the coast from storms. Overharvest and use of destructive fishing gear have contributed to declines in fisheries. Unsustainable coastal development coupled with climate change is destroying ecosystems that provide valuable benefits to communities and economies, such as carbon storage, fisheries habitat, water filtration and tourist attractions. An underlying driver for degradation is the belief that our natural capital is inexhaustible, which leads to poor quantification of its value by stakeholders and decision makers. While these challenges may seem daunting, there are also favorable conditions and important opportunities for ocean conservation in the region.

Fundraising
Target
by 2020

\$30
million

“The seas of MNCA are places of tremendous natural wealth. We are building alliances with a wide array of partners to balance conservation, economic and social needs in order to assure that the region's ocean bounty is sustained.”

– Diana Bermúdez, Oceans Program Director, MNCA

Our Work

The Nature Conservancy in MNCA is playing a catalytic role in marine conservation by mobilizing political will and large-scale private and public resources to target solutions that are scalable and that leverage our expertise in fisheries, marine spatial planning, climate risk and resilience, and conservation finance. Our work focuses on two priority seascapes:

Mesoamerican Reef

In the Mesoamerican Reef we are working to reduce the vulnerability of people, livelihoods and infrastructure to climate change by protecting and restoring ecosystems that provide natural protection and sustain fisheries productivity. We are also implementing a variety of strategies to reverse the decline in fish stocks, ensure sustainable seafood supplies, and help local industries thrive.

Gulf of California

Most conservation efforts in the Gulf of California have been organized around individual sites without a system-wide vision. In 2012, the Conservancy launched the Baja Marine Initiative, a 10-year endeavor that brings together a wide array of stakeholders to implement solutions, mobilize political will and large-scale funding to transform ocean management in the region.

Protect

marine and coastal ecosystems that sustain fisheries and safeguard communities and infrastructure

Transform

practices, policies and incentives to enhance the health and resilience of coastal ecosystems

Inspire

those who drive ocean and coastal development to better manage fisheries and invest in natural infrastructure

2020 Outcomes

9 million

hectares under sustainable fisheries management

3,600

people's livelihoods improved

\$6 million

invested annually in fisheries management and marine conservation

23.2 million

hectares in deep sea areas protected

1,200

people trained in marine resource and fisheries management

12 municipalities

investing in natural solutions for risk reduction

How it works

Human activity that is planned, based on science, and inspired by sustainability can lead to a future where people, communities and oceans can flourish together. Sustaining our species and growing our economy does not need to come at the cost of our oceans' health. We seek to spark a revolution in ocean conservation that sustains marine and coastal ecosystems, supports abundant fisheries and integrates ocean management. By bringing together other stakeholders – government, industry, communities, finance and conservation – we can place ocean development on a sustainable trajectory.



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