Global Wildlife Program

Collaborative Management Partnerships: Case studies

Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize

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Acknowledgements

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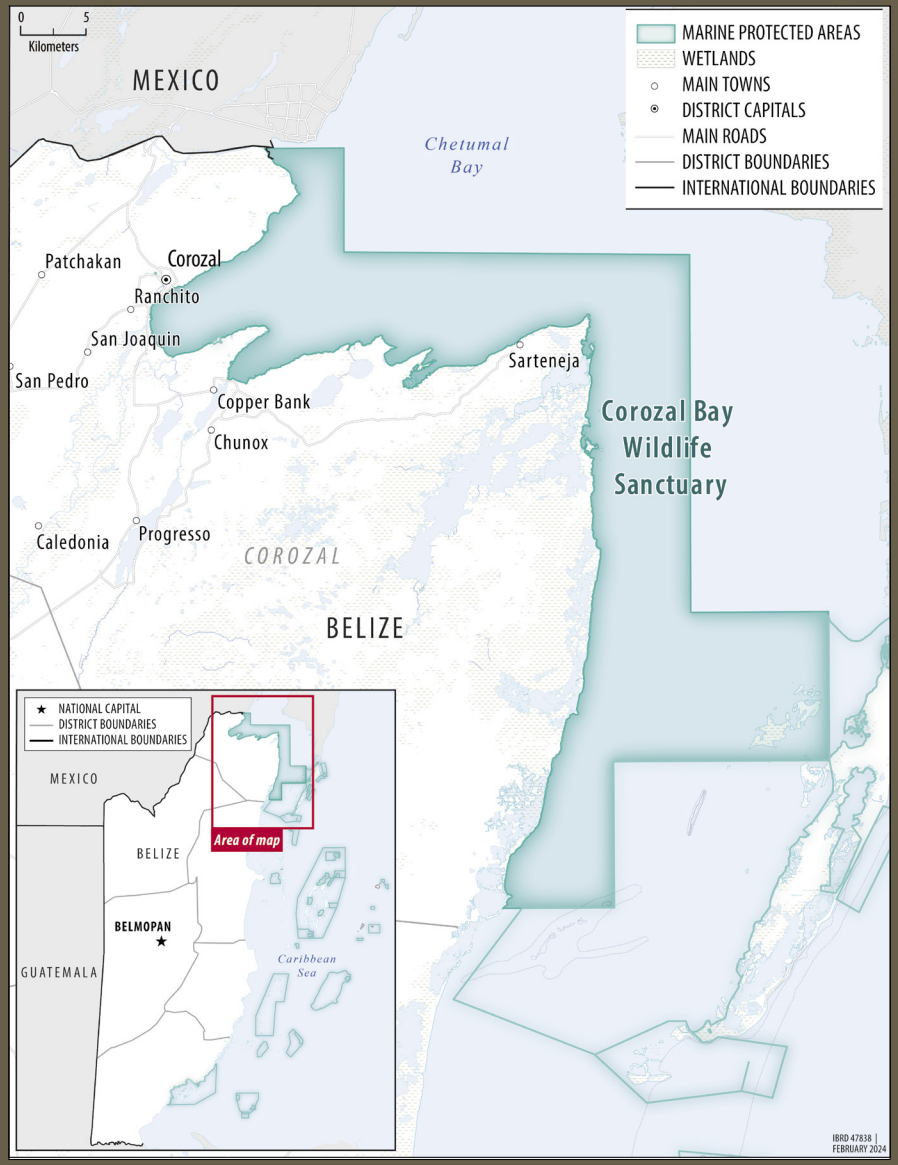
CASE STUDY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize



Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize

Snapshot

Type of collaborative management partnership (CMP): Delegated

Size of CMP: 720 km^2

Type of protected area: Marine protected area (MPA)

CMP timeframe: 2012 to 2027, renewable every 5 years

Years to establish: 1

About

Why CMP?

From 1998–2012 Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary was not actively managed. Illegal fishing and hunting of endangered manatees threatened its biodiversity.

Goals of the partnership:

To provide the best governance and management structure to maintain biological diversity and ecosystem integrity.

Contributions to the Global Biodiversity Framework:

Targets 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 21.

Why CMPs?

Collaborative management partnerships (CMPs) are public-private partnerships to manage protected areas. CMPs enhance the ability of protected areas to secure environmental, social, and development goals. They help position protected areas at the forefront of biodiversity conservation, which is critical to achieve the target of the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to conserve 30% of the earth's land and sea by 2030 (the 30x30 target).

CMPs are contractual partnerships between protected area authorities (government, private, or community) and private partners (mainly NGOs) to co-manage protected areas. CMPs are helping governments to improve conservation business models and attract much-needed funds for protected areas. An analysis of CMPs in Africa by the GWP shows that CMPs attract more funds than conventional protected areas and benefit local communities by supporting tourism- and wildlife-based livelihoods.

This new set of CMP case studies complements the nine African case studies published in the GWP's *Collaborative Management Partnership Toolkit*. It highlights the positive impacts of CMPs in other regions of the world and aims to generate greater awareness of CMP models, benefits, and opportunities.

Visit the GWP's CMP page for more information and resources.

CMP structure

CMP partners: Government: Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management.

NGO: Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD).

Legal structure: Co-management agreement.

Governance: Board of Directors (3-year terms). Government and local stakeholders represented through the Corozal Bay Advisory Committee.

Operational budget: US$281,827 (2022)

Annual income: US$422,322 (2023)

Revenue retention: Entrance fees are not yet charged. Tourism revenue earned by SACD is reinvested into its business operation and the remaining profit is used to manage the MPA.

Impacts of the CMP

Management

- SACD is responsible for MPA enforcement and uses many approaches to curb illegal fishing and hunting and to promote sustainable practices, such as:
  - **Transboundary collaborative MPA enforcement with authorities in Mexico to reduce piracy and illegal fishing within five years and eliminate the hunting of manatees for meat.**
  - Training SACD rangers to enforce environmental laws in the MPA.
  - Using the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) and drones for surveillance.
  - Increasing annual patrols from 183 in 2017 to 224 in 2021 and reducing illegal actions from 44 to 12 in the same years, despite a significant increase in fishing vessel inspections from 60 to 138.
- From 2006–2023, Corozal Bay's management effectiveness rating grew from 53% to 87%. **It is now one of the most effectively managed protected areas in Belize.**

Community

- In 2021, SACD has provided 60 days of training workshops in 15 topics to train women, youths, fishers, tourism stakeholders, and others.
- SACD helped train 30 fishers as tour guides which allowed them to switch from fishing to tourism.
- Successful scholarship, internship, community researcher, and income diversification programs have been implemented.
- SACD has formalized the use of the MPA by traditional beach trap fishers and maintains the engagement of this vulnerable sector to encourage legal practices.
- SACD is pursuing equal gender participation in activities and youth engagement.

Tourism

- 95% of SACD's budget (over US$200,000 annually) comes from donor grants. To generate its own income, SACD established a tourism operation that also supports local tourism groups with licensing, policies, and procedures.
- Since 2022, SACD has been hosting international expedition groups who come to Belize for conservation and tourism programming. Its tourism program offers homestays and trains tour guides in order to diversify incomes in the largest traditional fishing community in Belize.
- Sport fishing has grown as Corozal Bay becomes known for tarpon, bonefish, permit, and other gamefish.

Environment

- Species have increased or stabilized, including:
  - Estimated 75–100 manatees are still present.
  - Dolphin numbers doubled to 87.
  - More birds and sharks observed by local people.
- Traditional beach fishers now comply with regulations and help to monitor commercial fish populations, showing the growth of community stewardship.

Employment

- SACD is the largest employer in Sarteneja, with 15 full-time staff members by the end of 2023 in finance, natural resource management, education, patrolling, and other positions. It also provided 34 part-time jobs annually to local people as tour guides, community researchers, captains, and cooks. Jobs and livelihoods are expected to increase and diversify, respectively, through tourism growth and public investment in better roads.

Research and Monitoring

- Trends in populations (such as manatees, commercial fishes, and birds), non-compliance with MPA regulations, and economic and livelihood improvements are monitored.
- Protection and monitoring of mangroves, estuaries, and seagrasses are maintained through research and patrols.

Covid-19

- The pandemic collapsed Belize's tourism economy. SACD maintained its patrols during the pandemic and continued to support stakeholders, while donors met higher fuel and materials costs.

Lessons

- For many years, the co-management of Corozal Bay was based on a non-binding agreement. However, a legal foundation is important to address potential conflicts between partners. The new co-management framework and agreements are more balanced, and require commitment and accountability from both parties. They also improve the investment environment for donors.

"Our successes have been the fruits of positive collaboration and partnerships...for the conservation of our uniquely important and imperative resources of Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, which for us is, and will forever be our 'home sweet home.' "

Carolie Verde, Director, Board of Directors, SACD

Partners and donors

Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary is co-managed by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change. Between 2018–2023, over US$200,000 in funding was received from MAR Fund/KfW/German Cooperation, OAK Foundation, Protected Areas Conservation Trust of Belize, and Inter-American Foundation, with ongoing operational support from The Summit Foundation and the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future.

Resources

Website: SACD official

Facebook: SACD

Story map: Securing Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

For more reading on CMPs, see the CMP Toolkit

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