

# Arrecifes La Cordillera Natural Reserve Management Board Agreement



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## **Introduction**

During the calendar years of 2012 and 2013, the East Puerto Rico Coral Reef Education and Management Coordination Specialist for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, implemented the goal to support the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PRDNER) on several tasks pertaining to the implementation of management plans and Local Action Strategies (LAS) for two East Puerto Rico Natural Reserves: Canal de Luis Peña (Culebra) and Arrecifes la Cordillera (Fajardo) Natural Reserves. The Specialist developed and implemented outreach and education activities for both sites and assisted in efforts to engage stakeholders from surrounding local communities in the implementation of management activities of both sites.

The approach was to establish a public participation strategy to strengthen the dialogue and exchange between key stakeholders in both: Canal de Luis Peña and Arrecifes la Cordillera Natural Reserves. These dialogues departed from the concept that current management efforts can be more effective if a more democratic and participatory decision-making and management process takes place in these reserves. One of the main goals of this exercise has been the constitution of two management boards composed by representatives from different key sectors with interest in CLP and AC natural reserves. The purpose of these boards is to guide and inform future conservation and management efforts in both reserves.

Numerous activities were organized as a way to present alternatives to work with key management issues such as illegal fishing, inappropriate ecotourism practices and lack of community outreach and education in the region. Among the accomplishments was the production of a detailed chart of key stakeholders and documentation of their perceptions about the management of both reserves. Another accomplishment was to conduct informal, formal and focus groups interviews with some of these stakeholders. During the process, we conducted 17 informal or formal interviews, 4 focus groups with the commercial fishing sector and 8 meetings with managers, educators and enforcement agents specifically for Arrecifes La Cordillera Natural Reserve. With this data, we have been able to refine the list of sectors and representatives for the management boards and engage in an in-depth dialogue with stakeholders about the structure and composition of the board. As a follow-up to these dialogues, during December 2013 we organized the first management board meeting of the Arrecifes La Cordillera. Presented in Appendix 1 is a representation of the sectors identified and board members elected.

### **Arrecifes la Cordillera Natural Reserve Management Board**

One of the primary goals of this project was to promote community involvement in the management of both reserves and facilitate collaborative management efforts between PRDNER and the local community. As a result, the Specialist coordinated the development of a Management Board for each reserve that will assist in identifying management activities that will be implemented with the Board's assistance

On December 18, 2013, the first meeting of Arrecifes La Cordillera management board was conducted. With attendance of 11 people, the meeting was a success and the group was able to:

- 1) clarify the board's main purpose and concept;

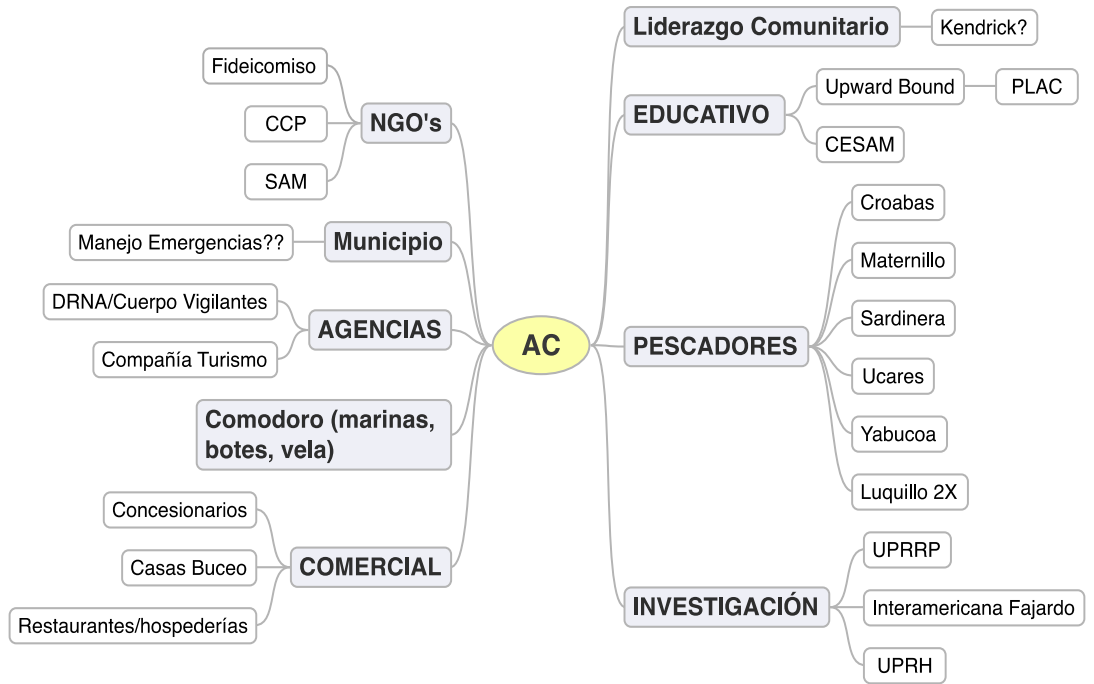
- 2) present the key sectors identified;
- 3) elect the board members;

The next meeting is scheduled for January 2014. From the 11 participants at the meeting, 9 were selected for representatives at the board. The sectors and representatives identified were:

- 1) Community Leadership- Bethsaida Colón;
- 2) Fishing Associations;
- 3) NGO's with interest in the region- Alejandro Torres;
- 4) Educational sector- Elizabeth Padilla;
- 5) Research- Francisco Soto;
- 6) Scuba operators- Joel Meléndez;
- 7) Licensed Kayak Concessionaires- Carlos Castro; and
- 8) DRNA- Robert Matos (see Appendix 1).

The representatives were elected by consensus by the public that attended the meeting. The appendices demonstrate the results of two years of outreach and education efforts conducted by the Specialist. They demonstrate the commitment of the relevant stakeholders for the future conservation and appropriate management of the coral reef resources in the Arrecifes la Cordillera Natural Reserve. It is now up to this Board and PRDNER to continue the conservation efforts. The Specialist, as seen in the list above (Alejandro Torres), has made a commitment to continue assisting by becoming a volunteer member of the management board. This will ensure a continuity of the NOAA funded efforts in the region.

Appendix 1. AC management board sectors



\*Note- question marks highlight sectors that needed further input from key stakeholders in order to identify the most appropriate representation.

10 de diciembre de 2013

Estimada \_\_\_\_\_:

Reciba un saludo cordial. Como es de su conocimiento, durante los pasados dos años el Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA) y la Administración Oceánica y Atmosférica Nacional (NOAA) hemos estado trabajando en un esfuerzo colaborativo para fortalecer las estrategias de manejo de la Reserva Natural Arrecifes la Cordillera (RNAC).

Una parte esencial de este esfuerzo tiene que ver con la participación activa de sectores interesados (*stakeholders*) en los esfuerzos de manejo de esta reserva. Entendemos que unos de los mecanismos más efectivos para asegurar dicha participación es el co-manejo.

Siguiendo estos lineamientos, nos complace informarle que el miércoles 18 de diciembre de 2013 a las 6:00 PM llevaremos a cabo la primera reunión para la creación de la junta. Y quisiéramos extenderle una invitación a participar de la misma. La reunión tendrá lugar en el segundo piso del Edificio Multi-usos de la Universidad Interamericana, Recinto de Fajardo.

Los objetivos de la reunión son los siguientes: 1) presentar los sectores que se han identificado como claves en el manejo de la RNAC, 2) determinar los representantes de cada sector que formarán parte de la junta, 3) comenzar a reflexionar sobre el tipo de co-manejo que quiere adoptar la junta.

Nos alegra comenzar este esfuerzo hacia la creación de la junta de co-manejo de la RNAC. Agradecemos, de antemano, que nos confirme su asistencia. Esperamos contar con su acostumbrado apoyo.

Cordialmente,

Robert Matos Morales  
Director Unidad Especiales Marinos y  
Gerente de Áreas Protegidas del  
Noreste  
Departamento de Recursos Naturales  
y Ambientales de Puerto Rico

Alejandro Torres-Abreu, Ph.D.  
Coordinador  
Proyecto Colaborativo del Litoral  
Noreste

## Appendix 3. Representatives

18 de diciembre de 2012

Primera reunion para creación de la Junta de Co-manejo AC

### Documento compromiso participación Junta co-manejo AC

#### Propósito

Durante los pasados años el Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA) y la Administración Oceánica y Atmosférica Nacional (NOAA) se han dado a la tarea de desarrollar el plan de manejo para la Reserva Natural Arrecifes la Cordillera. En el Plan de Manejo aprobado de la reserva se establece como prioridad la creación de una Junta de co-manejo. El propósito principal de la junta de co-manejo es dirigir los esfuerzos de conservación del CLP en conjunto con el Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA), basado en las estrategias que se establecen en dicho plan.

#### Sectores identificados

Los sectores que se han identificados son: 1) Municipio, 2) ONG's, 3) Agencias 4) Liderazgo Comunitario, 5) Educativo, 6) Pescadores, 7) Investigación, 8) Botes y marinas

#### Cualidades de los representantes

- 1) compromiso ambiental para contribuir a esfuerzos de manejo de AC, 2) persona reconocida en la comunidad que goce de la confianza, seriedad y honestidad del sector que representa, 3) que tenga la capacidad de poder comunicarse y recoger el sentir del sector para que pueda representarlo en la Junta, 4) pueda ser conciliadora y mantener un debate de altura en la Junta, a pesar de las discrepancias con otros miembros de la Junta, 4) tenga disponibilidad de asistir a las reuniones de la junta al menos 1 vez al mes.

#### Firmas participantes Junta de co-manejo

Beckhaeddi Calui  
Mancho Torres Abrian  
Carlos C...  
Joel Melendez  
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Redeigo Comunitario  
ONG's  
Marinas  
Conservacion  
Educación  
Buceo  
DRNA  
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