



THE FORCE PROJECT

FUTURE OF REEFS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

WEST END, ROATAN, COMMUNITY MEETING

June 30th, 2011

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The FORCE project, a five-year initiative funded by the European Union, commenced in 2010 and brings together a team of researchers from 20 organisations based in 10 countries within the Caribbean, Europe, the US and Australia.

Caribbean people rely heavily on coral reefs, which contribute billions of dollars each year through tourism, fisheries and coastal protection. Coral reefs are being damaged by activities such as unsustainable fishing and pollution, and face an uncertain future with global climate change.

The FORCE project will address important questions about how changes will affect coastal communities and livelihoods such as fisheries and tourism. Recommendations will be disseminated to stakeholders throughout the Caribbean on how to protect the reefs.

COMMUNITY MEETING

FORCE fieldwork started in Honduras during June 2011. The FORCE team visited West End Roatan, Utila, and the Utila Cays. A meeting was held in West End to:

- Explore recent changes in tourism, fishing, and the community of West End.
- Talk about changes in people's use of the sea and coral reefs.
- Discuss the groups and organisations involved in coral reef use and management.

People were asked to help build a timeline about changes in West End and discuss who is involved in looking after the reefs. This leaflet presents the results of this meeting and some early results from the project.

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- Key Events
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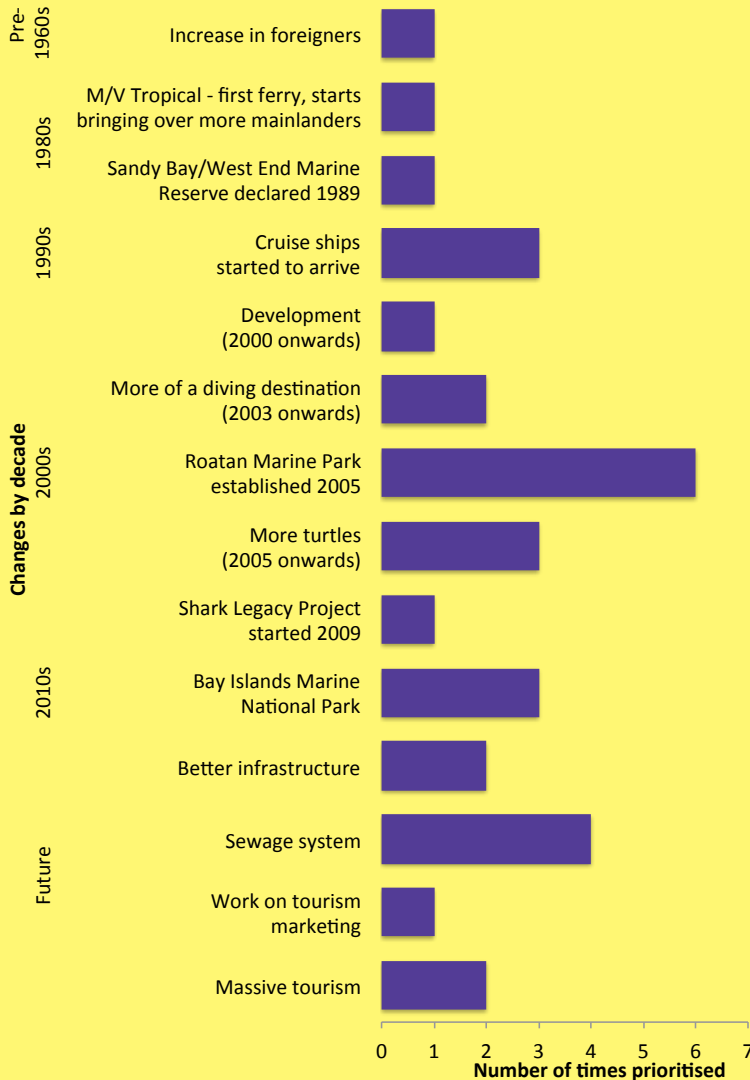
HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The purpose of the timeline was to learn more about the history of the community and the changes that have been important to local people. The timeline shows events and changes in West End identified by people at the meeting.



KEY EVENTS

People at the meeting identified the most important changes that have affected how people use the reefs.



“WHO SHOULD BE AT A MEETING ABOUT...?”

The FORCE team wanted to find out people’s opinions on who should be involved in taking care of the reefs. People identified the following stakeholders that should be invited if a meeting was held about fishing, tourism, or their community. Responses are listed in order of importance according to community members.

1) “... FISHING ON THE REEF?”

- Fishers Alliance
- Roatan Marine Park
- DIGEPESCA
- Independent fishermen
- Patronato
- BICA
- Shark Legacy Project
- Municipality
- UMA
- Healthy Reefs for Healthy People
- Port Captain
- Water Taxi Association
- Harbour Master
- Coral Reef Alliance
- Fishing charters
- Restaurants
- Fish export companies

2) “...TOURISM ON THE SEA?”

- Roatan Marine Park
- Patronato
- Institute of Tourism
- Chamber of Tourism, Canatur
- Business owners
- Tourism students
- Shark Legacy Project
- Healthy Reefs for Healthy People
- Coral Reef Alliance
- Community members
- BICA
- Zolitur
- Water taxis
- Tour guides
- Property owners
- Land taxis
- Cruise ship companies

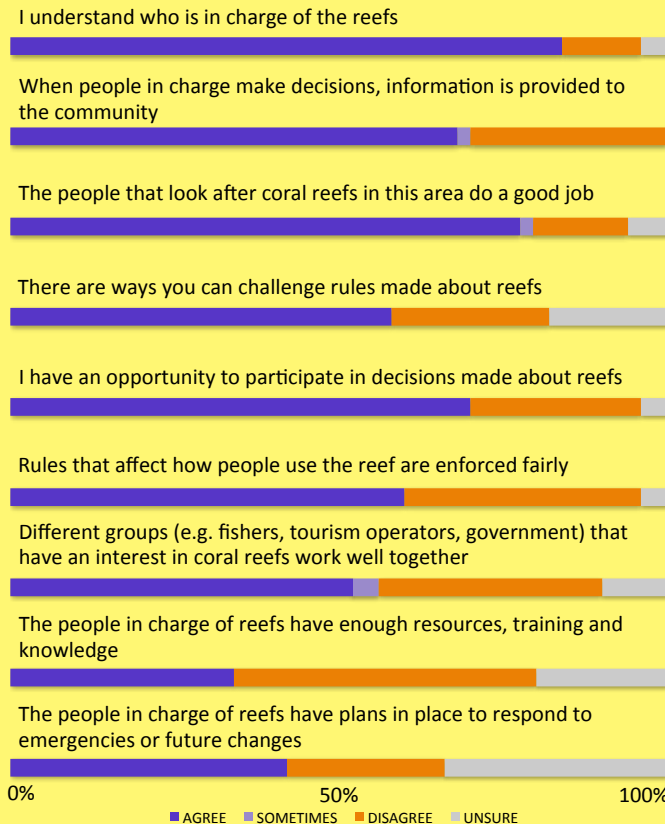
3) “...THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY?”

- Patronato
- Community members
- Community leaders
- Waterboards (both)
- Roatan Marine Park
- Police
- Businesses
- School principals
- Municipality
- Tourism Police
- Representatives from Water Taxi Association
- West End Business Association
- Fishers Alliance
- Advisory committee for protected areas



OPINIONS ON REEF MANAGEMENT

We are interested to get people's opinions about how the reefs are being looked after. People we interviewed were given a series of statements and asked whether they agreed or disagreed. The following shows the community's feelings about the management of the reefs.



KEY ISSUES

REEF HEALTH

Some people commented that the Roatan Marine Park has had a positive effect in terms of increasing the numbers of fish and other marine life near West End. However, there was concern that numerous divers and snorkelers pose a threat to the reef, and several people thought that snorkelers should be required to have a guide. In particular, people talked about the impact on the reef from cruise ship passengers, who lack awareness about the reef.

When asked about changing environmental factors, some people stated that they have noticed changes in the reef and climate, but most people said that these changes haven't really affected them.

LIVELIHOODS

The growth of tourism was perceived to have provided opportunities and jobs to many people in West End. Many people we spoke to recognised the importance of coral reefs to their livelihood, and support the Marine Park as a means to protect the resource for the future. The longevity of the reef will provide many benefits for the island and continue to attract tourists.

MANAGEMENT OF THE REEF

Most people we talked to thought that the Marine Park is doing the best it can with the resources available, and overall is a positive organisation. However, several people expressed concern about illegal fishing in the Marine Park, and suggested that more resources are necessary for increased patrolling.

Many people recognised that the Marine Park are trying to involve the community through education, awareness building and providing information, and people commented that the community is more aware now of the importance of protecting the reefs. However, some people also thought that there should be more local people involved in the Marine Park.



DIVING

Every year thousands of tourists from around the world travel to the Bay Islands to have the chance to experience beautiful coral reefs and abundant fish life. As a result the dive industry plays a very important role in the economy of the Bays Islands. Interviews were carried out with over 20 dive businesses in the Bay Islands to get an understanding of the economic value of the industry. More than 160 SCUBA divers were also interviewed to identify how changes in reef fish could affect the dive industry, and to gather information on the types of divers who visit.

Of the divers who were interviewed in West End, 65% were visiting for the first time and 40% said the main reason why they came was to dive. Divers who visit are relatively well-experienced, averaging 147 dives and expect to complete an average of 13 dives during their stay. 64% were certified as advanced divers or higher. Divers in West End were mainly from the US (67%), and stay an average of 14 nights. Most divers were aware that their dive was in a marine park.

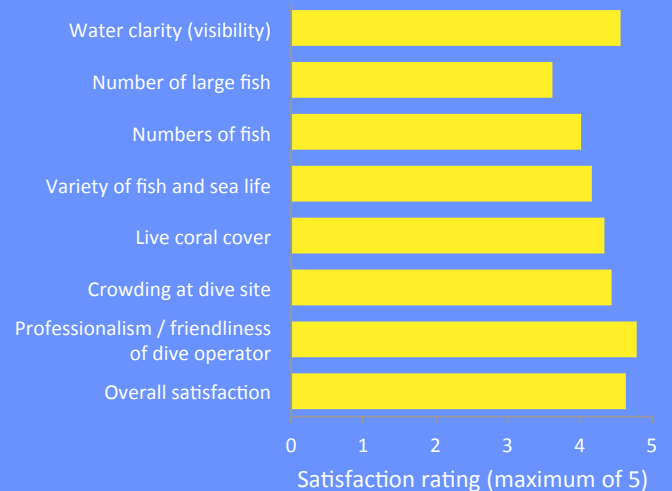


DIVER SATISFACTION

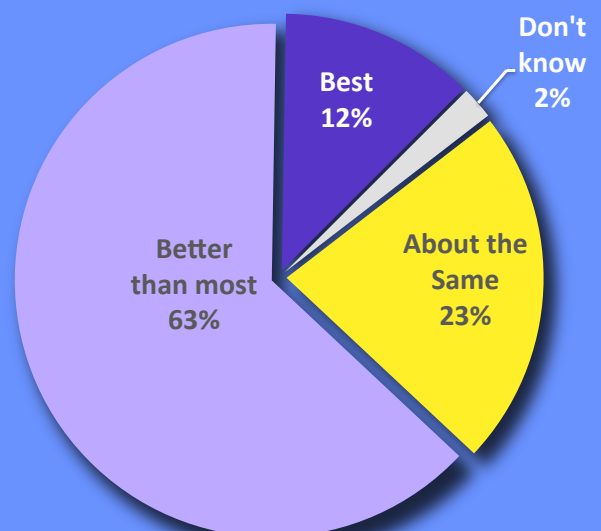
Most of the divers were very satisfied with their recent dives in West End. Compared to other places that they have been, 53% of the divers said that Roatan was better than most of the places they had dived before and 15% stated that it was the best. Divers were particularly satisfied with the professionalism and friendliness of the dive operators and the water visibility during their dive. Divers stated that they would have been more satisfied if they had seen more fish and larger fish on their dives.

Roatan appears to have an extremely positive reputation with 98% of the divers saying that they would dive there again. These divers also appear to spread the word about Roatan as more than half heard about diving here from family and/or friends. It is therefore important to maintain the quality of the reefs in Roatan as the island relies heavily on its reputation.

DIVER'S LEVEL OF SATISFACTION FROM THEIR MOST RECENT DIVE



HOW WOULD YOU RATE ROATAN COMPARED TO OTHER PLACES WHERE YOU HAVE DIVED?



FISHING

Over 90 fishers were interviewed from the Bay Islands, including people who fish for food, for fun and to earn a living. Most were “local islanders”, as well as people from around the north coast of Honduras.

Fishing plays an important role in the lives of many on the Bay Islands. In West End, line fishing is the only technique that is allowed in the marine park, excluding the use of cast nets for bait. Most fishers use dories and troll for kingfish, wahoo, tuna, mahi mahi and barracuda and spend about 4 hours fishing. As the outer edge of the reef drops off close to shore, many fishers are able to paddle beyond the reef to troll or bottom-fish for snappers and other deep fish. The average age of the interviewed fishers in Roatan was 41 years, and 58% said that they fished more than they did ten years ago. Fishers in West End are knowledgeable about the movement of fish and know how the “moons” and the weather influence fish behaviour. Many have had knowledge passed down from their parents on how to fish sustainably, taking only a certain amount of the larger fish.



USING THIS INFORMATION

This report shows some of the information we collected from people in West End. This information will be used to help to describe people’s opinions on how coral reefs are used for fishing and tourism, and how the reefs are being looked after.

The information people shared with us will help to develop an understanding about how people depend on reefs and how they will respond to changes in the future.

While this project is not involved in making decisions, we will share this information with people and organisations involved in reef management and decision-making at local and national levels. None of the information collected during this project will be linked to anyone’s name, but we hope that the project will provide an opportunity to share the interesting stories that we have collected.

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THANK YOU!

Many thanks to all that attended this meeting or took the time to contribute information to our research.

After Honduras FORCE team is conducting further fieldwork in 3 countries.