



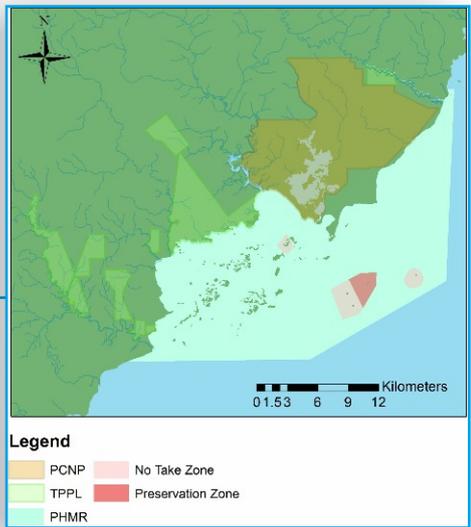
The Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean (SPAW):

Port Honduras Marine Reserve - A SPAW listed site -

Identification

Country: Belize
Name of the area: Port Honduras Marine Reserve
Administrative region: Toledo
Date of establishment: 1/25/2000
Geographic location:
 Longitude X: -88.573837
 Latitude Y: 16.196872
Date of listing under SPAW: 09 Décembre 2014

Contacts:
 Contact address:
 1 Mile San Antonio Rd.
 Box 150, Pa Gorda,
 Toledo, Belize
 Website: www.tidebelize.org
 Email address: schan@tidebelize.org



Introduction

The Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR) is unique along the coast of Central America in lagoon system size and the number of in-shore mangrove islands. This ecological system is in relatively pristine condition and includes three related components: coastal and tidal wetlands, marine lagoons, and mangrove islands with associated shallow banks and fringing coral reefs. Almost all of the coastal and island vegetation, including mangroves, is intact. The purpose of PHMR is the maintenance of coastal ecosystem functions and natural resource values, including water quality and nursery habitats of the area, in order to protect biodiversity and traditional fishers' livelihoods. The ecological uniqueness of PHMR was first recognized in 1990 from a Critical Habitat Study. This study identified the area from the Bladen Nature Reserve to Port Honduras as a potential protected corridor from the Maya Mountains to the sea, preserving a wide range of biodiversity. Subsequently, PHMR was the subject of two rapid ecological assessments (REAs) funded under the PACA (Environmental Project for Central America) Project. The REAs revealed that PHMR serves extremely important ecological functions of regional significance. Compared with the water quality

beyond the Snake Cayes, the inshore area was found to be quite turbid. This indicates that much of the sediment from runoff is confined within the coastal basin, allowing for appropriate water quality for coral growth offshore. The area was found to be high in juvenile fish, including most of the commercial species. PHMR has three adjacent and nearby human settlements: Monkey River, Punta Negra and Punta Gorda. The predominant use is fishing. Many of the Belizean fishers who work in the Port Honduras area complained of illegal fishing by foreign nationals, and attribute the apparent reduction in certain fish stocks to transboundary fishing. For this reason (and because of the availability of a relatively good dataset on commercial species going back 5-10 years), PHMR was chosen to be one of two pilot sites in Belize for Managed Access fisheries management. Managed Access has reduced the number of commercial fishers using PHMR from over 300 to approximately 120. While tourism impacts are currently low, the future is likely to bring an increased number of visitors. Recently, the Punta Ycacos Lagoon has been used as a tourist attraction primarily for flyfishing. New Haven, a natural harbor, is witnessing increased use by sailboats.

SPAW criteria met

- Ecological criteria**
- Representativeness
 - Conservation value
 - Rarity
 - Naturalness
 - Critical habitats
 - Diversity
 - Connectivity/coherence
 - Resilience

- Cultural and socio-economic criteria**
- Productivity
 - Cultural and traditional use
 - Socio-economic benefits

Site description

General features of the site

Size: 405 sq. km

Terrestrial surface under sovereignty, excluding wetlands:

0 sq. km

Wetland surface: 0 ha

Marine surface: 405 sq. Km

National status of your protected area: Marine Reserves

Marine ecoregion: 68. Western Caribbean

Management structure, authority

PHMR is managed under a co-management agreement between the Belize Fisheries Department and the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), a non-profit NGO.

PHMR is zoned for multiple use. A general use zone comprises 97.8% of the MPA while 3.2% lies within five replenishment (no-take) zones. One of these zones is also off limits to all visitation except for research and emergency rescue. A proposal to expand the replenishment zones to 5.1% of the reserve is currently (2014) being considered by the Fisheries Dept. The zoning system is embedded within the Statutory Instruments for the MPA (SI 9 and 18 of 2000 under the Fisheries Act).

Management plan

The management plan has been developed following national guidelines (National Protected Areas Policy and System Planning Plan, 2005), and the outputs from the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor Conservation Action Strategy (TIDE, 2009).

There has been extensive stakeholder input, through meetings with staff at TIDE, the Port Honduras Marine Reserve Advisory Committee, representative stakeholders, members of the buffering communities and the Fisheries Department. It has also taken into account planning for the adjacent Southern Belize Reef Complex system, stretching north from the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve to South Water Caye Marine Reserve.

Main fauna populations and/or those of particular importance present (resident or migratory) in the area:

The Marine Reserve contains assemblages of regionally important ecosystems of importance for several species of global conservation concern, among them the critically endangered staghorn and elkhorn corals (*Acropora cervicornis* and *Acropora palmata*), hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and goliath grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*). The area also protects the endangered green and loggerhead turtles (*Chelonia mydas* and *Caretta caretta*), and contributes towards the regional viability of important commercial species, including the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) and spiny lobster (*Panulirus argus*). About seventy fish species were caught in the coastal zone of Port Honduras, almost forty of which had commercial value. These fish belonged to mostly the snapper (*Lutjanidae*), grunt (*Haemulidae*), parrotfish (*Scaridae*), and mojarra (*Gerreidae*) families. The rest are small or non-palatable species that are usually common in seagrass habitats. These are anchovies (*Engraulidae*), pipefishes (*Synhnathidae*), filefishes (*Sciaenidae*), small wrasses (*Labridae*), gobies (*Gobiidae*), and puffers (*Tetraodontidae*).

Inhabitants inside the area or in the zone of potential direct impact on the protected area:

Inside the area:

Permanent: Not given

Seasonal: Not given

In the zone of direct impact:

Permanent: 5250

Seasonal: Not given

International status and Date of designation

Biosphere reserve: No

Ramsar site: No

Significant bird area: No

World heritage site (UNESCO): No

SPA Site : 2014



Links

PA LISTING : www.spaw-palisting.org

CaMPAM : <http://campam.gcfi.org/campam.php>

UNEP-CEP : www.cep.unep.org/

SPA-W-RAC : www.car-spaw-rac.org