

Conservation and Management in Latin America, with Emphasis on Central America

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Ten countries from Latin America have coral reefs in the Caribbean Sea. The size and condition of those reefs varies across the region, but the natural and anthropogenic impacts are similar. Also similar is the history of reef research in those countries; mainly carried out by foreign scientists during the late 19th Century and up to the mid 20th Century. Since the 1970's most of the research is carried out by local scientists, with a significant increase in information. Another similar trend is the creation of protected areas that include coral reefs, the development of specialized

offices related to marine affairs and marine related legislation. Even so, there are still significant gaps in laws, institutional overlap and lack of human capacity to conduct integrated reef management, especially in the northern Central American countries. A detailed evaluation of the conservation and management situation on each country is needed. Also, funds should be made available for training at all levels. And finally, support for research is a basic requirement to generate the necessary information for management.