



Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol and Programme

Newsletter N°16 - May 2015

Commonly used Acronyms

BEST: Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European overseas

BIOPAMA: Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme

CaMPAM: Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network and Forum

CEP: Caribbean Environment Programme

ECCMAN: Climate Resilient Eastern Caribbean Marine Managed Areas Network

GCFI: Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute

GCRMN: Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network

IWC: International Whaling Commission

MaMPAN: Marine Mammals Protected Areas Network

MPAs: Marine Protected Areas

MARFUND: Mesoamerican Reef Fund

PAs: Protected Areas

SPAW: Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife

SPAW-RAC: Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife - Regional Activity Center

UNEP-CEP: United Nations Environment Programme - Caribbean Environment Programme

CONTENTS

FOCUS ON

Sargassum: an emerging issue on the coasts of the Wider Caribbean.....1

PROJECTS

- Sperm whale project: first images from animal borne camera systems!.....2
- The newly shaped Caribbean GCRMN mobilises its experts to improve the monitoring of coral reefs in the region.....2
- Creation of a new network for Marine Mammal Protected Areas.....3
- Launch of new Mangrove Reforestation and Integrated Management of Natural Resources Project in the north of Haiti in the Three Bays National Park (Parc Marin des Trois Baies).....3
- BEST III: A European Initiative to strengthen the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the European overseas entities4

SPAW PAs / CaMPAM NEWS

- CaMPAM – ECCMAN Small Grants Program: a second wave of proposals approved.....4

- Caribbean Marine Conservationists Benefit from Regional Capacity Building Partnership.....4

BRIEFS

- New funding opportunities for environmental projects in the EU OCTs: BEST 2.0 Grant Program. .2
- Manatee Bycatch Pilot Project.....3
- The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund: Supporting Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Caribbean.....4

SAVE THE DATE

“Lionfish Management Workshop” scheduled at the 68th GCFI (November 12th 2015, Panama).....5

PUBLICATIONS.....5

UPCOMING EVENTS.....5

USEFUL LINKS.....5

FOCUS ON

Sargassum: an emerging issue on the coasts of the Wider Caribbean



Massive arrival of *Sargassum* on Guadeloupe Coast, spring 2015

During 2011, massive quantities of pelagic *Sargassum* occurred throughout the Caribbean, impacting aquatic resources, fisheries, shorelines, waterways, and tourism. A similar event occurred in 2014 and continues in 2015.

Following those episodes, several countries in the Caribbean who are Contracting Parties to SPAW, expressed their wish to address this topic. The Eighth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol (COP8) held in Cartagena, Colombia, December 2014, led to the following recommendation about the brown algae *Sargassum*, that was included in SPAW’s workplan–

“support more research on origins, impacts and ways to control brown algae, as well as to improve the development of models in response to the increasing incidence of such events which affect the marine environment, biodiversity and health in the region.”

Therefore, at the beginning of the year the SPAW-RAC began work towards identifying regional efforts and initiatives on the subject in order to enhance the regional cooperation, and to develop a common reflection on the subject through collaborations and group discussions.

The French Government and local authorities of French islands of the Lesser Antilles and French Guyana are among the most mobilized countries on the issue in search of management solutions and better scientific understanding of the phenomenon. A summary on *Sargassum* events has been developed by the French Environmental Authorities in Guadeloupe and is available [here](#) (in French but will soon be available in English). There has also been a call for projects to propose innovative management solutions to address the *Sargassum* influx - this is currently being finalized. The selected projects will be implemented during this summer in Martinique.

In 2015, in addition to the University of Southern Mississippi's continuous effort and survey of this phenomenon, some regional events were also



related to the brown-algae issue. A *Sargassum* Symposium was held in Galveston, Texas by Texas A&M University Galveston Campus, NASA Stennis Space Center and Galveston Island Park Board of Trustees, which focused on sharing progress in the Gulf of Mexico on policy making, education and outreach, potential uses and new advances in sargassum alert systems.

The sargassum influx is also a source of concern due to its potential ecological impact, and in particular on threatened species like sea turtles. Special *Sargassum* working sessions were thus organised during the 2015 WIDECAST meeting held in Maunabo, Puerto Rico in March. One objective was to exchange about the observed sargassum influx, causes and transport pathways, and impacts on sea turtles in various life stages in the Caribbean. Another dedicated session led to examine the issues and needs related to the sargassum influx in a selection of WIDECAST countries. Of particular note, the meeting participants developed a resolution about sargassum.

Following this latter meeting, and in response to coastal managers' need for information on this topic, GCFI has produced a fact sheet that seeks to share pertinent information about the *Sargassum* influx. The three-page fact sheet addresses some of the questions that are frequently being asked by GCFI members. Please go to www.gcfi.org/Publications/GCFISargassumFactSheet.pdf to view or download the GCFI *Sargassum* Fact Sheet.

As reflected within the various reports, observations and findings on *Sargassum* are similar across the region. However, brown algae arrivals in particularly large quantities can be understood and felt differently according to the affected areas and their local configurations. The sargassum, transported on currents, progressively affects different locations across the region and along the years, and the quantities of algae drift ashore vary between and within each location. The combination of the current phenomenon's unpredictability and the territories's specificities (i.e. governance, environmental policies, economy, physical and biophysical aspects, demography..) makes this issue a complex one to understand and manage at the regional level.

The SPAW-RAC is therefore willing to develop inter-regional exchanges on this subject to confront the experiences within different regions. This could lead to a shared regional analysis of the situation and possibly to recommendations adapted to meet the configurations of the areas affected by the phenomenon.

To provide feedback and comments on the *Sargassum* influx, please contact the SPAW-RAC: julie.belmont.carspaw@guadeloupe-parcnational.fr and the GCFI sargassum@gcfi.org

PROJECTS

Sperm whale project: first images from animal borne camera systems!



Adult spermwhale - Guadeloupe - April 2015. Jérémy Kiszka / CAR-SPAW-FIU.

For nearly a year, the SPAW-RAC has been working in partnership with the [Florida International University](http://www.fiu.edu) (FIU) and the [laboratory of Mike Heithaus](http://www.mikeheithaus.com) as part of a project dedicated to improving scientific knowledge on several species of marine vertebrates in the Caribbean through the use of animal-borne video systems.

This research project is being implemented thanks to funding from the [TOTAL Foundation](http://www.total.com) and aims to improve the knowledge on critical habitat

use, feeding strategies and social behaviour of sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and two species of sea turtles - the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), through the use of new generation cameras. Several field missions compose this two year project which was launched in May 2014, and takes place in the French West Indies in collaboration with public institutions, associations, natural reserves and local scientists. In early April of this year, the second 'sperm whale' mission ended successfully. After two weeks patrolling the waters of the leeward coast of Guadeloupe in search of the cetaceans, the project team was able to bring back the first images captured from the installation of cameras on sperm whales! Several hours of underwater videos have been recorded and will be analysed for scientific purposes in the coming months before being used to produce a series of small documentary films for the general public. Added to this great result, are the observation and identification-images of several additional species, including some rarely seen footage of false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) and pygmy killer whales (*Feresa attenuata*).

Finally, biopsies were performed on Fraser dolphins (*Lagenodelphis hosei*), sperm whales, false killer whales and pantropical spotted dolphins (*Stenella attenuata*), and will be used to better understand the foraging ecology of the sampled species in the Lesser Antilles, as well as to investigate their exposure to contaminants (metal and organic pollutants).

The newly shaped Caribbean GCRMN mobilises its experts to improve the monitoring of coral reefs in the region

[Since its revitalization last summer, the Caribbean network of experts dedicated to coral reefs monitoring](#) (Caribbean GCRMN) finalized its restructuring with the nomination of a Steering Committee. Their first online meeting was held in February to facilitate developing a workplan along with several activities to be fulfilled within the year. The Caribbean GCRMN is an open network of coral reef scientists and managers involved with coral reef monitoring in the region. Following the publication of the ["Status and Trends of Caribbean Coral Reefs: 1970-2012"](#) report, it has

New funding opportunities for environmental projects in the EU Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs): BEST 2.0 Grant Program



One of the strategic orientations from the International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change held in Guadeloupe in November 2014 stressed the need for facilitated access to funding

for European Overseas entities' stakeholders, especially small-sized grants. With BEST 2.0, the European Commission is addressing this important request and is providing new funding opportunities for projects in the OCTs.

Recognizing the urgency to maintain support for projects on the ground while a long-term BEST financing mechanism is being developed, the European Commission has decided to allocate new resources towards concrete projects in the OCTs through a 5 year programme called [BEST 2.0](#), with calls for proposals organised over the next two years with a budget of over €6 million. Discussions are underway for a similar initiative benefiting the Outermost Regions.

The BEST 2.0 programme will primarily support - 1) implementing actions for biodiversity conservation and 2) sustainable use of ecosystems and ecosystem services in the key biodiversity areas identified through the participative Ecosystem profiles process led by the BEST knowledge hubs. For the Caribbean region, SPAW-RAC along with Réserve Naturelle Nationale de Saint-Martin will be acting in the capacity as the BEST Caribbean knowledge hub.

Please regularly visit the EC BEST website and the SPAW-RAC website for information on the calls for proposals:

- <http://ec.europa.eu>
- www.car-spaw-rac.org



Coral Reef monitoring in St Eustatius - 2015. Photo credit: Steve Piontek.

taken this initiative to strengthen and revitalize coral reef monitoring in the region to ensure systematic collection of useful and accessible data that can effectively reveal the status and trends of the coral reefs in the region.

Under the guidance and leadership of a Steering Committee, the Caribbean GCRMN hopes to be instrumental as an information and exchange platform for the entire region and all relevant stakeholders. Comprised of a dozen experts from around the region and various organisations (e.g. Universities, Protected Areas and NGOs), the Steering Committee is chaired by UNEP-CEP/ SPAW RAC as the regional coordinator, with the assistance of Maria Pena from the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) of the University of the West Indies. Part of its mission is to communicate and promote the biophysical and socioeconomic core coral reef monitoring [elements agreed upon by the Caribbean GCRMN](#) in Curacao last summer. Thanks to this effort, recommended methods (based on-going monitoring) put forward by the Caribbean GCRMN, are progressively taken into account by those monitoring coral reefs in the region.

[The island of St. Eustatius has started utilizing these methods](#) by way of a recently implemented coral reef monitoring program on twenty representative sites around the island which will be monitored yearly. Following the first field work mission, Steve Piontek, marine biologist for the Dutch Government, provided positive feedback and constructive remarks on the methods recommended by the Caribbean GCRMN.

During the [37th Scientific Conference of the Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean \(AMLC\)](#) that was held from May 18th to 22nd in Curacao, a special session on 'Collecting, Organizing, and Accessing Caribbean Reef Data' was organised by the Caribbean GCRMN in collaboration with the [US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#). Several key presentations contributed to this session, from the GCRMN Caribbean Regional Coordinator, NOAA [Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology](#), the [Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment \(AGRRA\)](#), the [Waitt Institute](#), and the [Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem \(CLME+\)](#) Programme.

One specific objective of the Caribbean GCRMN is to also identify or develop a central database for the region towards creating an archive for essential data on coral reef across the region, and support information sharing and communication. The network is closely monitoring the progress and development of data platforms in the region, and actively supports cooperation between existing and new programmes. In this context, the Caribbean GCRMN will be represented by UNEP-CEP/SPAW-RAC during several workshops and meetings on the subject within the coming months.

Creation of a new network for Marine Mammal Protected Areas

On March 28th in St. Maarten, on the recommendation of Mr. Paul Hoetjes, Policy Coordinator for Nature at the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands, a special meeting dedicated to cooperation for Marine Mammal Protected Areas (MMPAs) was held. This event gathered managers from several marine mammal sanctuaries which included - the [US Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary \(SBNMS\)](#), [French Marine Mammal](#)

[Sanctuary Agoa](#), and the Dutch marine parks ([Saba](#), [St. Maarten](#) and [St. Eustatius](#)) - unfortunately the Dominican Republic was not able to attend the meeting. SPAW-RAC was invited to highlight the link between the Marine Mammal Action Plan (MMAP) of the SPAW Protocol and previous initiatives such as transboundary management through the LifeWeb project. The workshop whose goal was to develop a common plan of action to implement a future cooperation framework between those different territories, was well received by all the participants.

This new cooperation originally planned specifically between marine mammal sanctuaries, was broadened to include MPA managers willing to work on marine mammal conservation. In order to share the experience on marine mammal management within protected areas, it was decided that a new network called "*Marine Mammals Protected Areas Network*" (MaMPAN) would be created, and there would be a focus on various topics such as the promotion of common protocols on acoustic monitoring, the development of a common stranding database, the publication of guidelines for whale watching or capacity building for stranding, and disentanglement.

For more information please contact: Sandra Jean, Marine Mammal Action Plan coordinator, (sandra.jean.carspaw@guadeloupe.parcnational.fr).

Launch of new Mangrove Reforestation and Integrated Management of Natural Resources Project in the north of Haiti in the Three Bays National Park (Parc Marin des Trois Baies)



Building on an initial project that was successfully implemented at a pilot site north of Port-au-Prince in Haiti, a second project has now started in the region of the Three Bays National Park in the northeast of Haiti, with the objective of implementing sustainable activities in local communities for the protection of marine and

Manatee Bycatch Pilot Project



The Manatee Bycatch Pilot Project has been launched within the framework of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region and the Regional Management Plan for the West Indian Manatee.

The SPAW-RAC, with funds from the Government of France, and Dr. John Reynolds (co-author of the manatee management plan and Senior Scientist for Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota, FL, USA) have collaborated with five territories (Belize, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico) to study two of the main threats region-wide facing the West Indian manatee, namely bycatch and vessel strikes. For this study, a questionnaire was submitted to fishermen with the main aim of investigating bycatch and use of West Indian manatees (*Trichechus manatus*), cetaceans (essentially delphinids) and sea turtles. A total of 610 interviews were conducted in the sample countries. The analysis conducted by Jeremy Kiszka of the Florida International University, provided new information on bycatch, hunting of manatees and other vulnerable megafauna in this region. [You can find the report on our website.](#)

coastal biodiversity. This project is composed of two main components:

- 1) integrated mangrove reforestation and
- 2) raising environmental awareness. The project also aims to offer neighbouring communities economic alternatives to mangrove cutting with the establishment of a nursery (with species that can be used instead of mangroves for the construction of houses or charcoal), and to establish inside the nursery the production of honey. A training component is also included in the project. The project is led by the SPAW-RAC and the [Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine \(FoProBim\)](#) in collaboration with various technical partners and donors (French Caribbean Botanical Conservatory and the NGO Mon École, Ma Baleine) along with the support of the French Government.

A recent mission to Haiti provided an opportunity to distribute more than 170 kg of material (teaching materials, school books, medicines and basic hygiene products) collected from various donors in Guadeloupe. The team was also able to work with over 100 schoolchildren between the ages of 10 and 15 to raise awareness on the marine and coastal environment. During these few days in Haiti, the SPAW-RAC had the opportunity to meet some key stakeholders from the North region in Cap Haitien to discuss new activities and opportunities for sustainable tourism.

BEST III: A European initiative to strengthen the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the European Overseas Areas



Photo credit: Romain Renoux, RNSM-CARSPAW

The Caribbean Hub for the [BEST project](#) aims to develop ecosystem profiles for the 15 European Overseas Regions (ORs), Countries and Territories (OCTs) in the Caribbean region ([see previous Newsletters](#)). Since January 2015, several meetings have been held with the objective to bring together stakeholders, local institutions, governments, and NGOs involved in biodiversity and conservation to start the consultation process.

For now, ecosystem profiles have been presented in St. Barthélemy and Guadeloupe for the French West Indies, the six Dutch islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten), and Anguilla for the UK Overseas Territories. These profiles aim to identify and map key biodiversity areas (KBAs) based on threatened and endemic species, habitats, ecosystems and ecological corridors. In each island, ecosystem profiles have been expanded based on the information provided by local stakeholders who are now asked to complete and validate the proposals. The broad consultation process will continue throughout this year in the six remaining islands and 15 ORs and OCTs for final validation.

The BEST initiative is a unique opportunity for local stakeholders to participate actively in the future investment strategy of the European Commission for biodiversity conservation in ORs and OCTs. [Read the first newsletter of the EU's BEST Initiative.](#)

SPAW PAs / CaMPAM news

CaMPAM – ECCMAN Small Grants Program: a second wave of proposals approved

Under the coordination of UNEP-CEP's SPAW-RAC and as part of CaMPAM activities to strengthen marine managed areas, the [CaMPAM- ECCMAN Small Grants Program](#) funded by the German agency The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety ([BMUB](#)) through a grant to The Nature Conservancy ([TNC](#)) for the [ECCMAN](#) program is already supporting 6 projects in the Eastern Caribbean. In the last two grants approved have already started implementation by national NGOs in close collaboration with the respective Fisheries and Marine Resource Departments, namely:

- **Strengthening Management Capacity at the South Coast Marine Conservation Area (SCMCA) and the Tobago Cays Marine Park (TCMP) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines** led by Sustainable Grenadines Inc. in collaboration with the National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority (NPRBA).

- **Developing an effective and sustainable community-based management regime for the Cabrits National Park in Dominica** led by Tantan Village Development Corporation in collaboration with six other agencies.

Summaries of on-going projects in the four other countries, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Antigua and Barbuda are available here.

As part of the project, both CaMPAM Coordinator and SPAW-RAC director attended the ECCMAN program Steering Committee meeting in Antigua and Barbuda where TNC ECCMAN project leadership, country focal points and implementing agencies discussed the activities executed in 2014 and the work plan for 2015. CaMPAM Coordinator visited project partners and marine managed areas in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in coordination with the SVG National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority, the Fisheries Division and the Sustainable Grenadines Inc. One of the sites visited was the Tobago Cays Marine Park, which recently joined the List of SPAW sites.

Caribbean Marine Conservationists Benefit from Regional Capacity Building Partnership

The 11th edition of the UNEP-CEP CaMPAM [Training of Trainers on MPA Management](#) was held last February in Grenada. This edition was organized by the IUCN – ORMMAC program, with funding from the EU-ACP Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management ([BIOPAMA](#)) Programme, and contributions from the CaMPAM-ECCMAN Small Grant Program and the Grenada Fisheries Division. **Twenty three** regional marine conservation professionals, coming from Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago spent ten (10)

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund: Supporting Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Caribbean

Part of our reality here in the Caribbean is that biodiversity supports the livelihoods of many people across the region. This means efforts to decrease degradation and restore ecosystems can have positive outcomes for both biodiversity and the income of those who rely on these ecosystems. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and its investment in the region supports several initiatives that recognise this inextricable link, and takes deliberate action to ensure that the livelihoods of local communities benefit from measures to improve ecosystems. The results are pointing to greater community commitment to conservation, as well as healthier ecosystems.

Follow [this link](#) to the latest issue of the [electronic newsletter](#) of the CEPF Regional Implementation Team in the Caribbean, to read more about this project and other initiatives across the region that link conservation with livelihoods and human well-being.

days sharing information and best practices to improve their skills to better manage MPA in their home countries. Lectures were imparted by experts from the region on marine resources management and international policy, ecotourism associated to protected areas, communication and outreach, research and monitoring, the community involvement in management. For more information on the course, go to CaMPAM [List archives for February, 2015 IUCN-BIOPAMA invites CaMPAM network members to join Yammer BIOPAMA the external network.](#)

SAVE THE DATE

“Lionfish Management Workshop” scheduled at the 68th GCFI (November 12th 2015, Panama)

In accordance with Recommendation V of SPAW STAC6 and the Decisions adopted by SPAW COP8 in Cartagena, Colombia, December 2014, and recognizing that the GCFI event is one of the main platforms in the Caribbean which brings together key stakeholders including fishermen, resource managers and decision makers, a special “*Lionfish Management Workshop*” will be held at the 68th GCFI to promote best management strategies and tools, and share main lessons learnt. This session will be coordinated and implemented by the SPAW-RAC on behalf of the SPAW Secretariat with support from the [Regional Lionfish Committee](#) (ICRI Ad-Hoc Committee on Caribbean Regional Response to Lionfish Invasion) and UNEP.

A lionfish science technical session will also be organized during GCFI by NOAA, [REEF](#), the Oregon State University, the Auburn University and the University of Hawaii. The purpose of this second session is to provide a volume of high-quality, peer-reviewed research on all aspects of lionfish and their invasion.

Both sessions will be synergistic and complement each other, linking science and management with case-studies and applications.

For those interested in participating as a convener for this management workshop, please contact Franck Gourdin, SPAW-RAC Senior Project Coordinator/ ICRI RLC Co-Head at : franck.gourdin.carspaw@guadeloupe-parcnational.fr , and/or Ruben E. Torres, REEF CHECK DR Director /ICRI RLC Member at : ruben@reefcheck.org

PUBLICATIONS



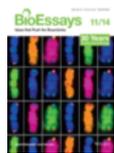
Factsheets on marine protected areas best management practices translated [in Spanish](#).



The Oceans 2015 Initiative, Part I. An updated synthesis of the observed and projected impacts of climate change on physical and biological processes in the oceans --- E. Howes, F. Joos, M. Eakin, J.-P. Gattuso --- www.iddri.org/publications



The Oceans 2015 Initiative, Part II. An updated understanding of the observed and projected impacts of ocean warming and acidification on marine and coastal socioeconomic activities/sectors --- L. Weatherdon, A. Rogers, R. Sumaila, A. Magnan, W.L. Cheung --- www.iddri.org/Publications



Assessing coral health and resilience in a warming ocean: Why looks can be deceptive. [Download the book.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **18 - 22 May 2015:** Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean. 37th Scientific Conference: “[Marine Ecosystem Conservation and Policy - The Way Forward](#)”.
- **14 - 17 April 2015:** Regional Forum on Solutions for Oceans, Coasts and Human Wellbeing in Latin America and the Wider Caribbean Region. Cancún, Mexico.
- **22 - 24 July 2015:** Innovators Symposium Refocused: Think Tank on Tourism & Climate Change to be held at Puntacana, Dominican Republic. Contact: www.responsibletravel.org
- **25 - 29 July 2015:** 20th International Meeting of BirdsCaribbean. Birds—Connecting Communities and Conservation. New Kingston, Jamaica. <https://sites.google.com/site/birdscaribbeanmeeting2015>
- **17 - 21 August 2015:** The Summer School ‘Small Island Natural Resource Development’. At the Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute, St Eustatius. www.cnsi.nl/Summer-School
- **6 - 8 October 2015:** National Symposium on Marine Protected Areas. Brest, France.
- **9 - 13 November 2015:** GCFI Conférence. Panama City, Panama.
- **16 - 20 November 2015:** MARCUBA: www.congresomarcuba.com Havana, Cuba.
- **01 - 04 December 2015:** ICRI 30th General Meeting. At the “A-One the Royal Cruise Hotel”, Pattaya City. Thailand. www.icriforum.org/ICRIGM30.

USEFUL LINKS

- **GCFI new Proceedings page:** <http://dev.gcfi.org/proceedings>
- **AGRR:** Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment ([AGRR](#))
- **The Waitt Institute:** [Waitt Institute](#)

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