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Promoting a portfolio of regional MPA projects to potential donors and investors

Dos Mares, an international initiative, promotes MPA sustainability in Central America by disseminating marine science knowledge and conservation tools, and by fostering green business opportunities. The initiative now aims to build a portfolio of community-aligned projects in regional MPAs, and then attract support for those projects from donor institutions, NGOs, banks, entrepreneurs, and investors.

Dos Mares has produced a paper, [Creating VALUE in Protected Areas of Central America](#) describing how to generate MPA projects in the region – refocusing traditional management programs to take surrounding communities into account and attract investment or donor attention. An [explanatory video in Spanish](#) is available, as well as a preliminary [Projects Processing Guide](#).

“Much of Central American society does not assign value to protected areas,” says Carlos Espinosa, founder and director of Dos Mares. “Given the region’s degraded socio-economic environment – where the goal is often just to survive, amid misery and crime – local communities simply don’t perceive the protected areas’ services.” This leads to poaching and environmental loss.

The ecosystem services provided by protected areas must be made more apparent, says Espinosa. Management programs that align MPA activities with the needs of their local communities – such as by conducting pertinent research, or ensuring public safety, or providing entrepreneurial opportunities – can do that.

Dos Mares hopes that by guiding regional MPAs to plan rigorous projects, it can build a portfolio that actively attracts a broad array of financing for the region’s MPAs. And by serving MPAs and communities together, it can create sustainable conservation in the process.

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