

Using Socioeconomic Information for Management in the US Caribbean Public Workshop (SocMon) Saturday, October 31, 2009 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Report to the CRTF: Manuel Valdés Pizzini (UPR-Mayagüez) and Christy Loper (NOAA)

The Socioeconomic Monitoring (SocMon) methodology developed by NOAA has been applied to a number of Caribbean sites. In Puerto Rico, NOAA sponsored a project to study at least three sites, all coastal or marine protected areas managed by the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER). The Interdisciplinary Center for Coastal Studies (CIEL), the University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant College Program, the DNER and NOAA formed a partnership to engage in SocMon at the Boquerón (Iris Alameda) Wildlife Refuge (Southwest Coast), Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (South Coast) and the Tortuguero Lagoon Natural Reserve (North Coast).

The workshop presented the SocMon experience in Puerto Rico, and covered the following topics:

1. The historical trajectory of socioeconomic studies to understand resource use in Puerto Rico
2. NOAA's role in the development and funding of projects over the last 25 years
3. The role of the DNER, the UPR and other institutions and NGOs in the social analysis of resource utilization
4. The pathway of the SocMon methodology in the Caribbean since 2002
5. The testing of SocMon in the La Parguera Natural Reserve
6. SocMon training for DNER MPA managers, sponsored by NOAA
7. Site selection process by DNER
8. Research techniques used in the three sites
9. Results of the SocMon process

Key outcomes of the SocMon project:

- a. Identification of stakeholders
- b. Observation and documentation of resource uses in the MPAs
- c. Description of historical trends of land and resource utilization
- d. Socioeconomic information and documentation for management plans

Accomplishments of the SocMon project:

- a. Formed partnerships among between the university, the DNER and local NGOs to gather data
- b. Incorporated stakeholders in a dialogue with managers on MPA critical issues and potential solutions
- c. Identification of critical issues to management
- d. Empowered managers through the knowledge of social and economic processes at their sites
- e. Developed ancillary projects to expand the data base: research on the socioeconomic profile of hunters and the application of the Conservation Action Planning methodology to the Boquerón refuge
- f. Supported and assisted graduate students in the preparation of three master theses on resource management, land conservation (Jobos Bay) and ecotourism opportunities (Tortuguero Lagoon)

Accomplishments of the workshop:

- a. Thirty to forty participants throughout the event
- b. Opened a debate with the public on the benefit of the SocMon guidelines for the Caribbean
- c. Discussed, in a critical manner, the value of the research techniques applied to each case
- d. Offered the opportunity to share with DNER middle management the value and future potential of the SocMon partnership
- e. Received three formal requests to train NGOs and community based organizations to incorporate SocMon in their strategies to participate in the stewardship of the resources
- f. Underscored NOAA, DNER and UPR leadership in this area