

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE RESOURCES: A CASE STUDY OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN DOMINICALITO AND TARCOLES, COSTA RICA

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Traditional forms of conservation through government-based protected areas have not had great success in protecting the environment or gaining support of local communities. A movement to return lands to community-based management has become the new focus of conservation efforts (Young 1999, Agrawal and Gibson 1999, World Bank 1992). Costa Rica, known worldwide for its natural beauty and protected environmental areas, has recently begun to increase the number of conservation projects under the community scheme. However, few studies have been done comparing the effects of these conservation areas on local communities and how local people perceive both the government-scheme of environmental protection versus community-scheme efforts. Past research and the results of this study show that community perception and support of protected area is critical to the success of conservation goals (Young 1999, Agrawal and Gibson 1999, World Bank 1992). Marine conservation is particularly critical as the state of the world's fisheries has reached an unsustainable level of exploitation. This study explores the effects and perceptions of two coastal communities in Costa Rica on two protected marine areas, one under government management scheme (the National Park), and one under the community scheme (A Responsible Fishing Area). Results show that residents more positively view community-based conservation areas and that the success of protected areas depends largely on support of local people which will increase as multi-stakeholder participation and benefits back to the community increase.