
CREATING THE NEXT "CABO PULMO" LIKE FISHERIES RECOVERY IN THE SEA OF CORTEZ



Click the picture above to see the amazing "Archipelago Espíritu Santo

For the last 25 years the Sea of Cortez has seen its reefs and reef fisheries decline at an alarming rate primarily due to illegal night time spear fishing using compressed air

There is only one place in the entire Sea of Cortez that has stopped and reversed the declines. Twenty years ago the citizens of **Cabo Pulmo National Park** took matters into their own hands, and with community-wide commitment, stopped the illegal fishing that was killing the reef and reef fish populations by providing 24-hour vigilance to stop the destruction. They reversed the decline and the recovery in fish populations was spectacular. Nowhere else has this happened in the Sea of Cortez.

[Video of Cabo Pulmo today – A recovered marine ecosystem due to citizen vigilance](#)

That was until now! Our goal is to replicate the success of Cabo Pulmo with a new citizen-based campaign called "**Espiritu Santo es parte de ti**" in La Paz, located 14 miles from Archipelago Espiritu Santo National Park.

[Video of Espiritu Santo Nov. 2016 - The most beautiful island Archipelago in all the Sea of Cortez, but its reefs are barren of fish](#)



"Espiritu Santo es parte de ti" is a local, grassroots campaign to restore the depleted reefs and reef fish in Espiritu Santo National Park by creating community pride and advocacy, promoting good practices and eliminating illegal fishing in the park.

Our campaign goals are to:

1. Convince citizens, fishermen, tourists and tourist operators in La Paz to take pride in Espiritu Santo National Park and help protect it by supporting citizen-driven vigilance and reporting illegal fishing.

2. Convince restaurants, markets and citizens of La Paz to adopt responsible consumption of fish, avoiding species important to the ecosystem health of Archipelago Espiritu Santo such as reef-critical parrotfish and surgeon fish.

THE CAMPAIGN TEAM

We have a great campaign team ([click here to meet the team](#)), along with some of the best underwater photographers and filmmakers to document our campaign. Our campaign director led the grassroots effort to provide permanent protection to Balandra Bay, one of La Paz's premier public beaches. And in just 6 months, our campaign has seen positive results, both in the water and support from the citizens of La Paz.

Our outreach has now exceeded 1.5 million views on our Facebook page since the launch of the campaign. In the last two months, 4 new videos of restaurateurs talking in their own words about the importance of Espiritu Santos, it's value to the economy and fisheries health (similar to the one below) have been produced. Our "Curious Facts about Parrotfish" video reached 314,000 people and was shared 2,000 times.

BUILDING PUBLIC PRIDE AND AWARENESS

The Campaign recently teamed with 2 other NGO's to design and install 30 murals in downtown La Paz with the help of 27 national artists inspired by Campaign sponsored trips to Archipelago Espiritu Santo to personally see it's natural beauty. These murals have captivated the attention of the citizens of La Paz and tourists, inspiring people to become more aware of this beautiful Archipelago and the need to protect it's marine environment.

[What the artists had to say about Archipelago Espiritu Santo](#)



Ciudad Mural: time lapse murals painting.

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION: PARROTFISH FREE RESTAURANTS

Our job became, convincing restaurants, markets and citizens of La Paz to promote responsible consumption of fish, avoiding species like Parrotfish, critical to healthy reefs in Archipelago Espiritu Santo



EN ESTE LUGAR

NO
VENDEMOS
PEZ
PERICO

El pez perico es esencial para la salud de los arrecifes, ya que limpia el exceso de algas que los sofocan.

Aunque no es ilegal consumir, vender o comprar pez perico, la mayoría de los que se venden en mercados y restaurantes son extraídos con métodos de pesca ilegal (buzos que, con ayuda de tanque o compresor de aire, usan arpón y redes de encierre).

Gracias por elegir

pesca
responsable

Ayudas a proteger y restaurar los arrecifes del Parque Nacional Zona Marina Archipiélago Espiritu Santo y a mantener la economía turística y pesquera en la ciudad de La Paz.



EspiritoSantoespartedeti

IN THIS PLACE

WE DO
NOT
SELL
PARROT
FISH

Parrotfish are essential for healthy reefs, as they clean the excessive algae that suffocate them.

Although not illegal to consume, sell or buy parrotfish, most of the parrotfish sold at markets and restaurants are killed by illegal fishing methods (harpoon guns and gillnets with the help of divers using compressed air).

Thank you for choosing

responsible
seafood

You are helping to protect and restore the reefs around Archipelago Espiritu Santo Marine National Park, and the tourism and fishing economies in the city of La Paz.

#LibreDePezPerico
#NoCompresPezPerico

Since the beginning of the campaign all 28 of the 33 top restaurants in La Paz that we have talked to have agreed to not sell parrotfish and to share the message with their clients and the public through television spots and on social media.



All the major Supermarkets in La Paz, Walmart, Chedraui, Arambros and Soriana's have also stopped selling parrotfish.

[Parrotfish free restaurants signed up overall and in the last two months](#)



The campaign continues to interview the major restaurateurs and chefs in La Paz to get their thoughts and comments about the importance of Archipelago Espiritu Santo and the need for parrotfish and surgeon fish for healthy reefs and reef fish populations. View latest interview with Mirsha Macklis.

Responsible restaurant kit

All the restaurants that commit not to sell parrotfish receive a "responsible restaurant kit" that contains stickers, informational flyers, portable flyers, and bracelets. We even include a parrotfish coloring template for kids to color while they learn!



The fish vendors at markets, like Bravo Market, were the last holdouts and now they are also becoming involved due to pressure from their major customers like the Cristina Kiewek from NIM's and her sister Margarita Kiewek from Azul Marina. That pressure was recently reinforced with a raid on the market by a motivated Conapesca (fisheries

agents) and 135 kilo's of illegally captured seafood were confiscated. It's the first time that has happened in 40 years I've been here.



ROC - citizen driven vigilance the key to stopping illegal fishing and keeping the fishermen and citizens aware and involved.

For the last 25 years, [pistoleros and encerradores](#) have stripped the reefs of most fish around Archipelago Espiritu Santo and in the Bay of La Paz.

This destruction stopped temporarily in 2009-2010 as a result of [Red de Observatorio Ciudadano](#) (or “ROC”), the first citizen-driven vigilance in the Bay of La Paz. In its first year of operation, ROC stopped the killing of over 500 tons of reef fish in the Bay of La Paz and the number of illegal boats was reduced from 29 to 4.



The ROC patrol boat does night and day vigilance patrols in the Bay of La Paz. The boat is run by ex-pistoleros who are used to running boats at night and know where the illegal boats fish.

Realizing the effectiveness of ROC's work ([meet the ROC team](#)) and new citizen awareness and involvement, new formal agreements have been negotiated with

CONANP (the Mexican national park service), CONAPESCA (Mexican fisheries) and PROFEPA (the legal arm of the Mexican national park service) to include government authorities on ROC patrol boats. So far in 2017, 13 boats (with motors, equipment and product) have been confiscated by CONAPESCA with the help of ROC.

None of the fisheries recovery success would have happened without the support of the CONAPESCA inspectors who have worked diligently with citizen driven ROC vigilance team to stop illegal fishing in the Bay of La Paz and at Archipelago Espiritu Santo. Their joint operations work is now being recognized and supported by the community. This recent dinner was put on to highlight for the public the joint efforts of the citizen driven ROC vigilance team, the Federal CONAPESCA team and the State FONMAR vigilance team.



The joint efforts of citizen driven ROC vigilance working with State and Federal authorities has produced outstanding results



Pistoleros caught at Archipelago Espiritu Santo by ROC night patrol in March.



ROC vigilance patrol with CONAPESCA inspectors aboard stopping illegal shrimp boats



The 13 pangas and equipment confiscated in 2017 are all in this storage yard at



federal fisheries.

Two more pangas,
compressors, all
equipment and
catch confiscated.
That makes 13
confiscated in the
last year.



These are reef critical parrotfish aboard pistolero boats (boats shooting fish at night using compressed air which is illegal) All catch is confiscated.

THE RECOVERY HAS STARTED

Archipelago Espiritu Santo National Park just had its 10th anniversary and the recovery of fisheries is evident and measurable due to the reduction of illegal fishing around the islands. This success is a result of the involvement of user groups, the

citizens of La Paz, and ROCs vigilance and coordination with committed federal authorities.

In the video below, you will see the way it was a year ago compared to today. We don't have the big fish yet, but there are many small cabrilla and snapper, the fish most targeted by illegal fishermen (pistoleros and encerradores). Most notable is the tranquility that has returned to the reefs. No longer are fish diving for the protection of the rocks when you enter the water, their natural curiosity has returned and they swim up to investigate what you are.

[Video's taken at Archipelago Espiritu Santo in May and June of 2017 that show the first stages of a strong fisheries recovery](#)

[The latest videos of the parrotfish recovery at Archipelago Espiritu Santo taken in April of 2018, 15 months after the Campaign started](#)

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