

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE OCEANS

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SESSION THREE: SCIENCE FOR DECISION MAKING

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Humboldt Current Project

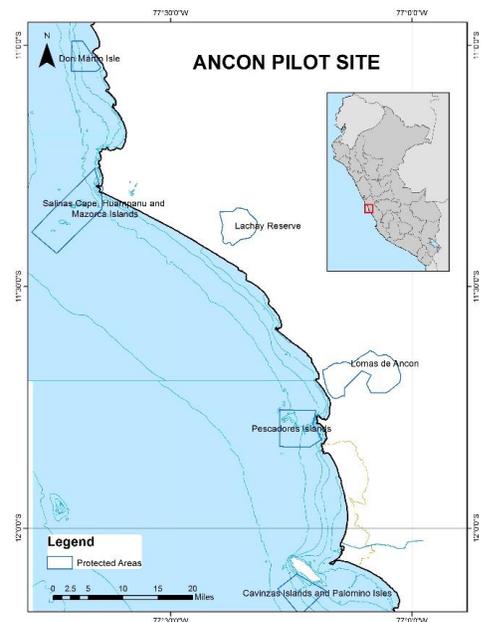
Working with Fishers to Overcome Management Inefficiencies in Peru's Artisanal Fisheries

Ancon, Peru

1) What is the focus of this project?

The aim of this pilot project is to help shape new approaches to artisanal fisheries management in Peru. It is designed to be a collaborative learning experience between the benthic fishers of Ancon – a fishing community located 46 kilometers north of Lima – and The Nature Conservancy. Ancon is home to more than 400 artisanal fishers that rely on the fish and shellfish they harvest in the Pescadores Islands, a group of 11 islands and isles located 5 kilometers offshore. The Pescadores are part of the National Reserve System of Guano Island, Isles and Capes, a network of protected sites managed by SERNANP, Peru's National Service for Protected Areas.

Artisanal fisheries account for close to 10% of the Peruvian wild fish catch and provide almost 80% of the seafood consumed in the country. More than 45,000 fishers are directly employed in this sector and operate within an 'open-access' regime, with the anticipated negative effects associated with the 'tragedy of the commons'. Very little information is available on the condition of stocks, levels of fishing effort, management effectiveness or performance. This lack of knowledge, combined with informality and weak governance and regulations, limited market access, and very low levels of public engagement in fisheries reforms, are impediments to sustainability.



2) Which organizations and other partners are involved?

The fishing community of Ancon is engaging with IMARPE (Peru's Ocean Institute), SERNANP and The Nature Conservancy to implement this project.

The association of benthic fishers and divers of Ancon is working with The Nature Conservancy to help them evaluate the impacts of the "bottom up" measures they have implemented in their traditional fishing grounds. These self-imposed measures, taken in response to the increased fishing pressure that has led to the collapse of several fishing resources, include harvest control rules, such as effort controls, size limits, seasonal closures

and spatial closures for invertebrates, as well as compliance measures that are anchored in legitimate governance systems.

3) What activities or tools have proven successful in building capacity?

In January 2015, the project started a monitoring program to evaluate the impacts of the spatial closures, established by the benthic fishers, on the productivity of some fishing grounds. After closing one of their main fishing spots – called the ‘Isleta’, a small island with a perimeter of 1.4 kilometers – The Nature Conservancy trained the divers in monitoring techniques so they could determine the condition of their fishing resources and assess the effects of the new management measures they are imposing. Initial results showed a 50% increase in the catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of the black rock snail after five months of closures. After seeing the first results, the community agreed to extend the closure for six more months, to let the resources recover fully. They were also able to test other new ideas, such as establishing rotational closures to prevent the over exploitation of their fishing grounds, and making their fishing activities more steady.

The ‘Isleta’ was re-opened to fishing in early 2016, while a similar closure was established in the ‘Big Island’, their main fishing ground. Since then, the monitoring program, which started with very basic actions, has grown in complexity as fishers become more familiar with the science used to validate their measures and agreements. The modules on biology and population dynamics, stocks assessments and oceanography are now complemented with business and organizational training.

One positive aspect to highlight is the commitment that this group of fishers has shown towards learning monitoring techniques and using that knowledge to set sound management measures, even when they might translate into lower incomes for their already economically uncertain livelihoods. Allowing fishers to access simple and easily applicable science tools and methods is helping them support their own empirical decision-making processes, and be more confident about the prospects of their management decisions. Furthermore, this knowledge-based empowerment is helping them to approach interactions with buyers and authorities with a different, more proactive, attitude.

Finally, the experience in Ancon underlines the value of developing the capacity building plan together with the fishers, making sure that it is relevant to their needs and expectations. This approach has helped create a better sense of ownership and legitimacy, that translates into the active engagement of the fishers. In addition, benthic fishers are becoming the primary advocates for learning and sound management. They are spreading the word among other fishing groups, not only in their fishing areas but across the country. Among these fishers some champions have emerged who are leading positive and progressive change.

4) What challenges have been experienced, specifically related to maintaining a focus on capacity building and/or replicating the project in other areas?

While the initial results are encouraging, there is still a long way to go in order to fully build the competencies of the fishers of Ancon. The initial level of knowledge, skills and attitudes among fishers was uneven, as is the progress each of them have achieved so far, making regular reviews of the capacity building program and the roles of the different parties essential, especially as the tasks grow in complexity over time.

The positive growth of demand for learning also creates a challenge on the supply side. It is vital to secure the continuity and relevance of the capacity building process in Ancon, as well as build the mechanisms needed to support other fishing communities as the program scales up and expands across the country.

Finally, it is necessary to address the conditions that could justify the investment in learning and enable the use of the acquired knowledge and skills. Better capacities usually result in positive change, however, this will

not deliver lasting results if the positive changes do not produce meaningful outcomes for the fishers. If the fishers' increased competencies do not translate into actual improvements in their lives, all future capacity building efforts will be in jeopardy, especially in relation to future generations.

5) What are the next steps for the project?

Next steps include expanding the capacity-building program and monitoring its progress and relevance, and reinforcing the 'training for trainers' approach, particularly for champions, to increase the practical capacity for self-training and scaling up. In addition, the project will foster the sharing of lessons learned through exchange visits and meetings, media platforms (i.e. radio, Internet, social networks) and existing social connections.

To implement responsible sourcing practices and increase market access for sustainable seafood products, the project will also assist the establishment of business partnerships between fishers and local seafood restaurants and retailers. Training will be provided to both fishers and restaurants to support the implementation of agreed protocols to guide these business ventures and secure their long-term viability.

Considering the current open-access scheme that prevails in the artisanal fishing sector of Peru, the project will work with the parks authority to grant the fishers of Ancon priority-access status in the fishing grounds that overlap with marine protected areas. This measure is expected to reduce the potential negative effects of having other fishers interfering with the control rules set by the fishers of Ancon, as a first step towards establishing a right-based system for coastal artisanal fisheries in Peru.

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To watch a video featuring the fishers of Ancon discussing this initiative, please visit: <https://vimeo.com/173991513>



Picture 1: 'Pintadilla' assessments include maturity analysis. Fishers are trained on how to recognize the level of maturity of a fish and whether or not it has had the chance to spawn.



Picture 2: Fishers are trained on how to correctly measure fish lengths. This information is used to assess the status of fish stocks. Size limits are also a common control rule used by the fishers of Ancon.



Picture 3: Edgar Oscanoa, a diver Ancon, shows two octopus extracted during monitoring activities. Octopus are measured and weighted to assess the status of their stocks, all captured invertebrates are released.



Picture 4: Octopus length is measured as part of a monitoring activity with local fishers.



Picture 5: Technicians and fishers working together during a monitoring activity in "La Isleta". The picture shows how a biologist explains basic biological aspects, such as sexual differences for rock crabs.