

Through the Corridor: A Journey through the San Cosme-Punta Coyote Fisheries Refuge Network | Gulf of California Marine Program



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In early November 2017 we set sail with [Baja Expeditions](#) and our partners from [Niparaja](#) aboard the *Mechudo* Catamaran, heading to the San Cosme-Punta Coyote Corridor in the Gulf of California. In this corridor lies a network of [11 fisheries refuge zones](#), a management tool aimed at the recovery of fisheries resources.



The catamaran, El Mechudo, that took us north along the Baja California Sur coast in the Gulf of California. Photo by Astrid Hsu

During this six-day expedition, we visited several small fishing villages completely reliant on the health of its fisheries and, as such, are directly influenced by fisheries refuges.



El Pardito, a small fishing island home to 20 people. While here, we interviewed the community and screened our Mares Mexicanos films. Photo by Astrid Hsu

We interviewed six local fishermen from the Corridor, and most agreed that the fisheries refuges zones are beneficial for the fisheries and the community, and that they should continue to exist for years to come. Some of them even expressed an interest in increasing their size for better results. These interests were reflected in the [recently approved](#) expansion of San Marcial refuge and establishment of another refuge, La Brecha, near the community of Agua Verde.

While some agreed that the fisheries refuge were great management tools, others thought that the execution of the tool was lacking. A fisher from San Evaristo mentioned that the lack of federal enforcement of the refuges makes it incredibly difficult to regulate fishing activities in the area. He felt that to his family members and community members, his opinions about not following the rules only remain opinions, and don't have the same effect as a federal enforcer issuing a fine to those doing illegal activity could. Furthermore, the fisher mentioned that they believe if properly enforced, the refuge could recover fishery resources in less than five years—even in two or three years. If the parameters of the fisheries refuges were

respected, this fisherman thinks that San Evaristo’s closest refuge zone, Barra de San Diego which hasn’t seen notable increase in fishery stocks, could see fish biomass recovery comparable to that of Cabo Pulmo—or even better.

Additionally, at every community we visited, we screened two short [Mares Mexicanos](#) films about the Corridor’s fisheries refuges: [Fishing for a Future](#) and [The Mystery of the Hawksbill](#). Our set-up was modest: a 92-inch pop-up screen, a small speaker, a generator-powered projector, and popcorn, of course! Every audience was receptive and thankful, and excited to see their family and friends on a big screen as well as some underwater footage from the perspective of a hawksbill turtle.



Screening Fishing For A Future with the locals of San Evaristo. Photo by Astrid Hsu

In between interviews and movie screenings, we spent time getting

to know, and bonding with, community members, a key factor to bridging the divide between researchers and communities. Our team enjoyed conversations, learned how to stitch a fishing net, and even learned how to fish via hook and line when the sardines jumped along the shore!

All in all, our trip to the Corridor was even more insightful than we expected it to be.

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