



Mac Stone/ WWF-US

UPDATES FROM THE WATER

MARCH 2021

HONDURAS SPINY LOBSTER - TRAP FISHERY

Gear Type: Traps

Volume: 4,520 MT (average 2000-2018 trap and dive fisheries)

FIP Stage: Stage 5 (Improvements on the Water)

Progress Rating: B (Good Progress)

Start Date: July 2012

Honduras is the second largest lobster producer in Central America after Nicaragua with an average production of over 4,000 tons per year for the trap and dive fisheries, which generates about \$42 million annually in exports to the United States. The industrial trap fleet is made up of 87 vessels that employ approximately 1,500 fishers. Fishers are engaged in the trap FIP mainly through the industrial fishing associations APESCA and APICAH, where representatives attend FIP meetings to get updated on the latest management regulations and FIP actions. The FIP has helped fishers to better understand the fishery management regulations and improve their catch data collection efforts by learning what information is required to inform the stock assessment. Under the FIP, studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of the fishery on the habitat. The research found that there is a risk that the fishery is negatively impacting deep coral reefs (deeper than 25 m) and in response, the government is considering new measures such as improving the monitoring of coral reef distribution and prohibiting discards of lobster traps to reduce the fishery's impact on vulnerable marine habitats.

FIP efforts have been focused on completing the first-ever binational stock assessment for spiny lobster—a stock shared with Honduras. The joint assessment, which is required for the Honduras and Nicaragua lobster fisheries to meet the MSC standard, will provide a more accurate measure of the impact of both countries' fisheries on the lobster population and will inform whether additional management measures need to be implemented. The compilation of catch data from Honduras was completed in November 2020, and scientists from Nicaragua's Fisheries Institute (INPESCA) conducted a preliminary run of the stock assessment in January 2021 using ten years of Honduras and Nicaragua spiny lobster data. The results indicated that the fisheries are fully exploited, and overfishing is not occurring.

However, the scientists cautioned that it is important to ensure that fishing effort does not increase and recommended that additional measures be implemented in both countries to better monitor artisanal fishing effort and put a limit on the size and number of traps that are used.

In Honduras, an ecosystem impact risk assessment study was completed in December which indicated that the fishery has a high impact on the ecosystem and highlighted the importance of implementing trap management measures to control fishing effort and ensure that traps are not discarded at sea to prevent negative impacts on the habitat and ecosystem. The Nicaraguan lobster fishery management plan, which is expected to be officially adopted by March 2021, includes measures to put a cap on fishing licenses, establish a lobster catch quota, and improve the monitoring and control of the artisanal fleet. A Honduras spiny lobster fishery management plan is currently being drafted and is expected to include similar measures as well.

Priority activities expected to occur over the next several months include: Conducting additional runs of the stock assessment model and finalizing the binational stock assessment report by March 2021; finalizing the Honduras lobster fishery management plan by June 2021; and conducting an external FIP review meeting in February 2021 to review the progress of the FIP against the MSC standard.

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