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**NAWPA COMMITTEE  
MARINE WILDERNESS & PROTECTED AREAS WORKING GROUP**

**CASE STUDY OF MPA ESTABLISHMENT – AREA DE PROTECCIÓN DE FLORA Y FAUNA (APFF)  
YUMBALAM  
(QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO)**



**KEY MESSAGE**

*Yumbalam, example of coordinated local communities, NGOs and government stewardship, outstanding demonstration site of how a marine protected area contributes to the conservation of marine resources and improves local economy*

**BENEFITS**

- The MPA protects the northern tip of the Quintana Roo State, site of important wetlands and transitional zone for the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.
- The MPA protects one of the largest concentrations of migrating Whale Sharks.
- Local community changed from fisheries to ecotourism as main economic activity.
- International recognition as Ramsar Site (2004).

**CRITICAL STEPS**

- Working with the local community, the Federal Government declares the Yumabalam Protected Area in 1994.
- Local community together with NGOs and Federal Government develops ecotourism activities with Carrying Capacities and Limits of Acceptable Change.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

Yumabalam is an example and demonstration of how communities after having realized that fisheries resources are limited, organize themselves and switch from one economic activity (fisheries) to other (ecotourism) successfully. Furthermore, it also shows how this organization harnessed different stakeholders into action to promote a successful business model within the marine protected area.

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**FACT SHEET**  
**AREA DE PROTECCIÓN DE FLORA Y FAUNA (APFF) YUMBALAM**  
**QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO**

**Name:** Area de Protección de Flora y Fauna Yumbalam

**Location:** Northern tip of Yucatan Peninsula, Municipality of Isla Mujeres in state of Quintana Roo, Mexico

**Size:** 154,052 hectares

**Year Established:** 1994

**Purpose:** To conserve the wetlands, reefs, turtles, oceanographic and ecological processes, fish species of commercial importance. Promote and support sustainable tourism practices by local community. Promote environmental education.

**Status:** Decree signed by Mexico's President (*LGEEPA – Ecological Equilibrium and Environment Protection General Law*)

**History:**

- Prior to 1994 the local community used to fish diverse species in the area, with some low scale tourism activity in Holbox Island.
- On the 6 of June 1994 Yumabalam Area de Proteccion de Flora y Fauna was established by Presidential Decree.
- Fishers saw depletion by fishing overexploitation.
- In 2003, WWF México and the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) began a project with the fishers of Yumbalam.
- Training for fishers that were beginning to take tourists to swim and watch whale sharks was provided.
- The purpose of training was twofold – first, to support the fishers in order to have an alternative economic activity and second, to reduce the fishing effort during these months of the year, giving a relief to the marine resources of the area
- The MPA's authority, together with the local community and the support of NGOs, is elaborating the Public Use Program to regulate the tourism activities. The carrying capacities to swim with whale sharks and the limits of acceptable change are being assessed.