

Creating the next Cabo Pulmo fisheries recovery in the Sea of Cortez

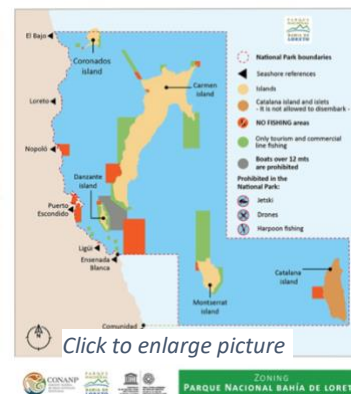


Where there are fish of any commercial value, fishing interests will find a way to take them.

In 2019 and 2020 with the legalization of [fish traps](#) in the Espiritu Santo National Park (banned in most other places 30 years ago) it became clear that *where there are fish, fishing interests will find a way to take them*. While it is critically important to ban traps, the only permanent way to protect the reefs and reef fish is to create **No Take Zones** around all reefs. This is what was done in [Cabo Pulmo National Park](#). Established in 1995, it is known as one of the greatest reef fish recoveries worldwide and is one of the top 10 dive spots on the planet.

Loreto Bay National Park (LBNP) failed to make needed changes in the Management Plan.

In 2019, LBNP modified their Management Plan as they have done every 5 years since the park was formed 27 years ago. LBNP was formed in 1995, the same year as Cabo Pulmo, yet it has witnessed dramatic fisheries declines while Cabo Pulmo National Park has seen dramatic recovery. It appears that nothing had been learned from the example of amazing reef and reef fish recovery at Cabo Pulmo, where extraction was prohibited. LBNP is only protecting 3.39 % of their park, when science says it must be a minimum of 30% of the total area to have any chance of recovery. Cabo Pulmo has proven that protection not only works, but also creates abundance for local fisheries outside the **No Take Zone**.



In 2020 and 2021 SeaWatch made the decision to try to stop Espiritu Santo National Park from following the same pattern of continuing decline. We hired environmental attorney [Camilo Thompson](#) and, working with other organizations, developed the science and data to show the need to protect reef-critical parrotfish. We petitioned the Government to protect Parrotfish nationally in the Mexican Pacific or at least in the National Parks. ESNP needs to eliminate traps and nets and create a **No Take Zone** from the shoreline out 1km completely around the islands in the park. That would protect 100% of the reefs and reef fish and only cover 17% of the total park area. This would allow a complete reef and reef fish recovery like Cabo Pulmo. [SeaWatch Action Plan](#)

We also realized that there were reasons no one had accomplished reef and reef fish recovery in the 27 years since the Cabo Pulmo success story. We discussed this in depth with [Lorenzo Rosenzweig](#) who had run [Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza](#) for 26 years. Now retired he is Chairman of the Board of [ROC](#) (the citizen driven vigilance program originally envisioned by Sea Watch and founded by [SeaWatch](#) and NOS). Lorenzo had ideas about what it would take to successfully accomplish reef and reef fish recovery at Espiritu Santo National Park and has agreed to help at no cost. This Project (funding mechanism) which has been successfully used in other parts of Mexico is presented here in this [FVMGC document](#). SeaWatch [budget](#) for their part in this project. We also realized that success was a function of getting consensus from the Conanp Advisory Board made up of 29 members from the different user groups, scientists and NGO's. It was obvious we needed the best and in 2021 we reached out to [Julian Portilla](#) and his team who are well known worldwide for fisheries consensus negotiations. They have agreed to be involved as an independent consensus builder working directly for Conanp.