

Engaging the Private Sector in Marine Management
Involucrando al Sector Privado en la Gestión Marina
Engager le Secteur Privé dans la Gestion Maritime

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute annual conference is the ideal opportunity to trade ideas with diverse practitioners, scientists, and coastal experts about the diverse challenges we face in coastal areas. My presentation showcased some of the measures the private sector can take to confront rapidly changing fisheries, climates, and economic realities and convert environmental risk into competitive advantages. In my keynote, I talked about Grupo Puntacana's experience in coral restoration, engaging local fishermen in tourism related jobs, utilizing market-based solutions to confront invasive species, and using corporate creativity to confront the very real challenge of *Sargassum* seaweed invading our coastal ecosystems. Our goal is to share our experiences and motivate other companies to engage in and confront these critical issues. GCFI is the ideal platform to begin this conversation.



Grupo Puntacana Foundation's Center for Sustainability and Centro de Innovación Marino

Sargassum mats have become a significant coastal nuisance along the Wider Caribbean region as they get massively stranded along windward shorelines, particularly since 2011. This has created multiple social-ecological problems to many Caribbean nations, with paramount regional socio-economic consequences affecting artisanal fisheries, community-based livelihoods, property value, and the hospitality industry. Finding a timely, cost-effective, and practical alternative to reduce stranded *Sargassum* mats impacts in Punta Cana and Dominican Republic has become a fundamental priority for the conservation of beach and shallow benthic marine communities, and for the recovery of the nature-based tourism and marine recreation economy.



Algeanova floating barriers and *Sargassum* Collection Barge in Punta Cana Dominican Republic, 2018

The tourism industry has not only become affected by this seasonal event but has also taken interest in identifying mitigating alternatives such as the one being used by the Grupo Puntacana. The Grupo Puntacana Foundation have been using *Algeanova* floating barriers to control and harvest *Sargassum* and to investigate on the most effective ways of handling, processing, and/or disposal of extracted *Sargassum*. In the last few years we have learned that:

- i) Rapid change is the new normal,
- ii) The capacity to adapt creates competitive advantages and resiliency,
- iii) Innovators attract innovators, and
- iv) Private companies are uniquely equipped to confront rapid change

The Grupo Puntacana Foundation firmly believes in a long-term commitment to sustainable tourism as a result the Center for Sustainability (Centro de Sustentabilidad) was established in 1999. We are involved in different initiatives of interest to the GCFI membership such as: coral restoration initiative, control of lionfish, protection of parrot fishes, coastal management, education and outreach.

We believe that the engagement, partnerships and transfer of information at all levels from local, regional and international and especially the citizen level is the key for the sustainability of the marine resources of Dominican Republic and the Caribbean.



Parrot fish management project



Coral restoration project



Lionfish Control project



Grupo Puntacana Foundation Outreach and Education Initiatives