

A Profile of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Professional Development Program

Perfil del Programa de Desarrollo Profesional en la Gestión de la Pesca en el Golfo de México y la Región del Caribe

Profil de Programme de Perfectionnement Professionnel en Gestion des Pêches dans la Région du Golfe du Mexique et des Caraïbes

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Professional Development Program was developed to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing among organizations that manage and promote the sustainability of fisheries resources. This program provides an excellent opportunity to bridge knowledge for marine and fisheries professionals around the needs and capacity shortages present in participating countries.

Each year, the successful applicant is matched with Florida Sea Grant-affiliated faculty that works alongside them to close an skill/knowledge gap in fisheries management and helps them to implement an ongoing or proposed project of their choosing that is related to a need identified by the awardee's organization. The awards covers round trip airfare, housing at the University of Florida (UF), and a stipend for four months. This program represents a partnership between several NOAA Sea Grant Programs, the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism.

Since 2011, the program has received 42 applications and has awarded training grants to seven Caribbean-based fisheries management professionals (Figure 1). Our first awardee was Mr. **Riviere Sebastien**. He was a fisheries officer when he participated in this opportunity, but he is currently the acting Chief Fisheries Officer of Dominica. During his time at UF he pursued facilitation and spatial analysis skill that were key to develop a plan for engaging stakeholders to promote co-management of Dominica's Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) fishery. **Randel Thompson**, a fisheries biologist with the Department of Marine Resources, requested specialized training in the application of geo-spatial technologies (GPS and GIS) to help him implement an action plan for the management of a system of FADs being deployed in the waters of St. Kitts and Nevis. His training included graduate-level courses in the application of Trimble Navigation global positioning



Figure 1. The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Professional Development Program Awardees 2011 - 2019.

system (GPS) and geographic information system (GIS) technologies. **Anginette Murray**, a Fisheries Officer with the Jamaica Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, completed a course in the application of geospatial technologies using the ArcGIS platform. She applied the concepts and skills learned in the classroom to evaluate the spatial distribution of Queen Conch stock abundance relative to fishing pressure on Jamaica's Pedro Bank. Complementary analyses involved the mapping of government-owned gear sheds and fisher's cooperatives. Murray returned to Jamaica where she is applying her knowledge of GIS mapping to organize and manage fishing infrastructure data, map the demographic characteristics of fishing communities, and enhance outreach efforts. **Jamie Herbert**, was a fisheries cadet, with the Antigua and Barbuda Fisheries Division. Since participating in the training program he has been promoted to Fisheries Officer. Jamie's training interest involved the development of survey implementation and analysis protocols for the collection and evaluation of catch and effort data from offshore artisanal fishers that use FADs. Jamie applied concepts and skills learned from graduate-level fisheries management and quantitative methods and statistics courses offered at UF to update the existing data collection form and to develop skills for analyzing catch and effort data. **Rosemarie Kishore**, a senior fisheries biologist with the Institute of Marine Affairs in Trinidad and Tobago, worked with Dr. Debra Murie, a fish ecology and physiology specialist with the UF's Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences Department on a project to improve growth modelling and otolith processing and imaging of Wahoo and Spanish mackerel. This training has increase Trinidad and Tobago's Institute of Marine Affairs' ability to collaborate regionally on efforts to assess stocks and manage these commercially important fish. **Alicia Eck-Nunez**, a Fisheries Officer and Marine Protected Area Coordinator with the Belize Fisheries Department enrolled in a GIS class because she was interested in mapping Queen conch abundance in Belize's marine reserves. **Noemi Espinosa**, our current participant, is currently employed by the NGO Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBI) assisting the Mexican government on a project to design and evaluate the effectiveness of non-fishing zones in the Caribbean and Mexican Pacific. She undertook training in applied statistical analysis and data management.

Due to its success in the Caribbean Region, the program has recently been expanded to the South Pacific through a partnership with Hawaii Sea Grant. This year we hosted a visitor scholar from American Samoa. **Valentine Vaeoso** is working for the National Park of American Samoa's marine team. She was interested in analyzing and mapping water quality thus she participated in a graduate level GIS class. Based on her training at the university of Florida, Valentine has recently been promoted to Coral Reef Coordinator for American Samoa's system of marine parks.

Are you interested in becoming our next awardee? Then visit the following websites for more information about this opportunity:

<https://www.flseagrant.org/education/caribbean-professional-development-program/>

https://www.gcfi.org/opportunities/professional-development-program_trashed/professional-development-program-announcement/

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