

VALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PROVIDED BY CABO PULMO NATIONAL PARK

Natural Protected Areas (NPAs) benefit society by providing a range of ecosystem services. These include the provision of food, clean water, climate regulation, pollination, protection from storms and places for recreation. Nonetheless, the value of these services is not broadly understood. Benefits tend to be dispersed or are wrongly considered infinite. As a result, they are “invisible” within the economic system, and are therefore not valued.

Cabo Pulmo National Park is considered a model of sustainable development worldwide because of the impressive recovery of its coral reefs, due to strong participation by the local community and other users of the area. By ceasing to fish within the Park, these groups have generated enormous social, economic and environmental benefits. However, the lack of information regarding the economic and social benefits that the area generates has kept it from being valued as a key contributor to human wellbeing and development at both local and regional levels. This has resulted in constant pressure for medium and large scale tourism development in nearby areas, putting the provision of the Park’s valuable ecosystem services at risk. Additionally, the Park has limited resources for management, which makes it difficult to adequately address threats.

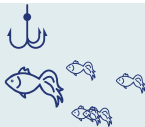
The purpose of this document is to effectively communicate the benefits generated by Cabo Pulmo National Park, as calculated in a study that quantified the economic value of the following ecosystem services:



The value Mexican society declares in knowing that the National Park exists and is well-conserved



The contribution of tourism generated by the park to the local economy



The value of providing a breeding ground for fish that can be caught commercially outside the Park



Photo: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Photo: Carlos Aguilera/PROCODES/Niparajá, A.C.



Cabo Pulmo National Park is located in the state of Baja California Sur. Its size is 7,111 hectares, of which 99% are marine. The Park was declared a Federal Protected Area in 1995, as a result of local interest in protecting the area’s marine resources. It contains the only system of coral reefs in the Gulf of California, and is home to more than 400 marine species, many of which are endemic. Other important species are migratory, visiting the Park to feed and reproduce. In 2006, it was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

MAIN FINDINGS



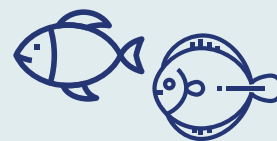
The value to Mexican society of knowing that the National Park exists and is well-conserved is 6,025 million pesos (USD 332 million) per year.



More than 8,000 visitors spend approximately 106 million pesos (USD 5.8 million) per year to visit and enjoy Cabo Pulmo National Park.



Park visitors are willing to pay a higher entrance fee – up to 2.5 times higher – to strengthen park management. This would generate an additional 745,000 pesos (USD 41,000) per year



The National Park exports 932 tons of fish per year to adjacent fisheries. The commercial value of this service is 22.4 million pesos (USD 1.2 million) per year.



106 million pesos are generated annually by Cabo Pulmo National park through recreational activities in the coastal zone. This spending strengthens the local and regional economies.



Photo: Carlos Aguilera/PROCODES/Niparaja, A.C.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Build collaboration between municipal and state governments and the environmental and tourism sectors, aiming to update the Los Cabos Ecological Planning program. Failing to address this issue would generate losses of 6,025 million pesos.
2. Promote participation and alliances with tour operators and other service providers to strengthen sustainable tourism practices.
3. Increase and diversify the Park management budget, potentially through additional funds from the public treasury, or by capturing the willingness to pay for improved Park conservation demonstrated by visitors and Mexican society more broadly.

Based on these results, a priority for decision-makers at all levels of government is to take actions to secure the ecosystem services provided by Natural Protected Areas, which are key building blocks to economies at regional and national scales. The solutions may seem complex, but the benefits for human wellbeing and economic activities are well worth the cost.