

MARINE ECOSYSTEMS & FISHERIES

The Way Ahead for Coastal and Ocean Ecosystems in the Wider Caribbean

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Urgency and coordinated planning are key. This is the core message presented by the leading coastal and marine researchers in the Caribbean. The Wider Caribbean is an extremely diverse region with complex ecosystems underlying the [many marine resources that we heavily depend on](#). Equally complex, and often convoluted, are the organizations that govern coastal and marine management, research its resources, and implement its policy framework. The *“transboundary nature”* of our unique ecosystems means that innovative solutions are required.

The authors present major challenges to bringing about change, stating the need for a clear path from project initialization to mobilization, shifting *“mental models”* to a reality. Stakeholders will need to find their niche within the web of issues, identifying common goals, and implementing changes that maximize outcomes. Over 25 regional and sub-regional organizations are already on the ground, yet, the authors suggest that leaving their coordination all to chance, is grossly [short-sighted](#) and *“irresponsible”*.

A [multilevel institutional approach](#) is already underway, led by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and Adjacent Areas ([CLME](#)) Project. The CLME Project covers the entire Wider Caribbean Region from the mouth of the Amazon River through Central America, the Greater and Lesser Antilles to the Bahamas, and seeks multi-institutional collaboration over the 10-year period of 2015-2025.

What's next?

The major regional and sub-regional organisations with responsibility for the marine environment have signed on as have more than 25 countries at the ministerial level. The authors clearly outline pushing the CLME+ Initiative forward through proper documentation of historical, current and future projects, as well as establishing a network of regional ambassadors to implement needed change and planning. To quote the main article, *“we can choose to engage with and build [this opportunity], or we can each continue doing our own ‘thing’ ”*.

REFERENCES

