



**GULF AND CARIBBEAN  
FISHERIES INSTITUTE  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2015-2019**



Dear GCFI members,

I am very pleased to present our 5-year strategic plan to the GCFI membership. This is our roadmap, our way forward, our vision.

GCFI was founded in the years after World War II when the riches in our seas appeared limitless. The early focus of GCFI was to develop new ways to exploit the region's marine resources and to develop new fisheries based upon this perception of an inexhaustible sea. It wasn't too soon thereafter that the first papers appeared in the Proceedings documenting increasing overfishing and degrading habitats.

The shift towards sustainability was inevitable. Soon the focus of GCFI evolved toward developing a greater scientific understanding of our oceans, how species and systems interact with each other, and what our role is in sustaining those resources. It is from this paradigm that this document was born.

In this spirit, this plan represents the vision of a modern GCFI responsive to all our core values – a Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea healthy and vibrant for this and future generations. This is the foundation for this plan and is the driving force behind our ongoing activities. All of us involved in the operations of GCFI are motivated by the daily reminder that each activity we do must work towards providing a better future based on sustainability and inclusion. In that way, this plan represents the path forward.

GCFI has long been centered on two principal activities: our annual conference and the proceedings derived from it. Yet, GCFI is so much more. We are also about education; providing an open forum where fisherfolk, students, managers and scientists can interact; capacity-building in underserved MPAs and fisheries; responding to threats from such diverse sources as invasive species and human activities; and promoting innovative solutions to complex problems. This strategic plan helps provide a blueprint for how we can be more effective in this wide range of activities.

None of what we do would be possible without our partners. In that spirit, GCFI can be viewed as a partnership of partners who help us fulfill our mission. However, GCFI is unwavering in our commitment to adhere to our principles of providing an organization without bias, a place where individuals and organizations can freely and openly interact. This core value underpins this plan.

As you read through this plan, some activities will be familiar, others not so much. We encourage any of you with specific interest to get involved not only in the specific activities that are detailed herein, but also with providing ideas on how GCFI can become more responsive to the region's needs, and how you can contribute to the evolution of our collective vision.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the Board of Directors of GCFI – this plan represents their dedicated work and articulates the many discussions held over countless hours in boardrooms and conference calls. I also recognize Dr. James Morris who shepherded the plan through its many iterations and designs. We are all truly grateful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bob Glazer', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Glazer  
Executive Director

This plan was developed by the GCFI Strategic Planning Committee including James Morris (Chair), Mark Peterson, Bob Glazer, Alfonso Aguilar, Nancy Brown-Peterson, James Franks, and Graciela Garcia-Moliner. The plan was approved by the GCFI Executive Committee and Board of Directors on July 9, 2015 and distributed to the general membership.



*Front Cover:*

*Grunts (*Haemulon sciurus* and *H. plumierii*) and snappers (*Lutjanus griseus*, *L. mahogani*, *L. synagris*) at Hol Chan Cut, a no-take zone in Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Belize. Photo: D. J. Southall, 2015.*

*Inside Front Cover*

*Fishers in Santa Marta, Colombia, location of the 65th GCFI. Photo: R. Glazer, 2012.*

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*Fishing boats at anchor in Barbados, location of the 67th GCFI. Photo: R. Glazer, 2014*

## Organization Overview and Five-Year Operating Plan (2015 - 2019)

### Background

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) was founded in 1947 to promote the exchange of information on the use and management of marine resources in the Gulf and Caribbean Region (hereafter Region). From its beginning, GCFI has endeavored to involve scientific, governmental, and resource-use sectors in providing a broad perspective on relevant fisheries issues. Dialogue, cooperation and mutual assistance are encouraged among entities that often operate in relative isolation from one another. For 37 years, GCFI operated as an informal association under the sponsorship of the University of Miami. In 1985 GCFI became an independent, 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation formally dedicated to building partnerships for achieving long-term sustainable management of marine resources within the Region. GCFI is entirely supported by its membership and donations and is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of elected representatives from the corporation's stakeholder groups. The Board

operates under rules defined by the corporation's By Laws. The list of current GCFI Officers and Board members can be found on the GCFI website (<http://www.gcfi.org>).

Particular effort is made to ensure balanced representation from throughout the Region in GCFI's annual programming and organizational decision-making processes. The primary activity of GCFI is the Annual Conference which has been convened in the Region since 1948. The conference is devoted to technical presentations, symposia, workshops, and forums of current relevance to the use, management and sustainability of marine and estuarine resources in the Region. The Conference is hosted by governmental, academic, and/or private sector sponsors in countries throughout the Region. GCFI publishes the Proceedings of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute which consists of the technical presentations from the Annual Conference. The Proceedings are provided to all Institute registrants and are also received in more than 80 countries. A number of special publications, including those related to science and management, have also been produced by GCFI. Professional interaction and networking opportunities are afforded via the Conference and the GCFI listserv and website.

## Vision

The Vision of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute is to become the most comprehensive and inclusive network in the Region for the exchange and dissemination of information on marine and estuarine science and resource issues. GCFI will accomplish this vision by developing partnerships with and facilitating communications among governmental and educational institutions, conservation and fisher organizations, and corporate entities.

## Mission

To advance the goals of sustainable use, wise management, conservation, and restoration of marine and estuarine fisheries and resources in the Region by providing a forum for the exchange of information and perspectives among decision-makers, scientists, managers, educators, resource users, and students.

## Philosophy

Marine and estuarine fisheries and other aquatic resources are an integral and essential part of the environmental, economic, cultural and social fabric of the Gulf and Caribbean Region. The most effective approach to improve environmental quality, economic health, cultural integrity, and social well-being of the Region is one that recognizes these vital and coupled interrelationships.

The GCFI strives to be an effective force in the development of linkages and dynamic interactions between fisheries and other biological, economic, and social components within the Region. GCFI promotes and enhances a sense of connectivity throughout the Region by serving as the common meeting ground for discussions of regional interest aimed at problem solving. GCFI

also strives to encourage the use of ecosystem-based fishery management principles, the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge in natural resource management, and the recognition of the interconnectivity of socio and ecological systems. GCFI also supports regional marine spatial planning and the use of marine protected areas as a critical conservation tool in the Gulf and Caribbean region. GCFI upholds the FAO code of conduct for responsible fisheries as a standard for management. Through its Annual Conference, GCFI maintains a venue for information exchange and the development of workshops, symposia and forums on topical issues which facilitates translation of that knowledge into effective actions to inform the conservation, management, and restoration of fisheries and aquatic resources within the Region.



*Myles Phillips, Monitoring Coordinator for the Grenadines Network of Marine Protected Areas, ascending in sargassum from a dive near Mopion, St. Vincent and the Grenadines in April, 2015. Photo: E. Doyle, 2015*

## Membership

The GCFI membership comprises over 25 nations and territories representing university faculty and students, governmental agencies, policy-makers, private sector, fishers, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. The needs and perspectives of the membership are diverse and represent a cross-section of interests in the sustainable use and management of marine and estuarine fisheries, vital habitats and aquatic resources in the Region. GCFI strives to continually engage its membership to solicit input relative to the services they deem essential for their ongoing activities and special needs, and implement programs to address those needs.

## Services

The GCFI provides the following services to its membership:

**Annual Conference:** a scientific forum for the exchange of information on research and management of marine and estuarine resources in the Region. The conference is multicultural, and technical sessions are simultaneously interpreted into Spanish and English, and when needed into French. High priority is placed on engaging students and artisanal fishers.

### Symposia

The GCFI provides guidance and assistance in planning workshops and symposia that occur as



*The Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) Leadership Program's 2012 MAR Fellows take part in a field trip to Laughing Bird Caye, Belize. Photo: E. Doyle, 2013*



part of the scientific program. Symposia address current issues in the Region, including subjects of importance to the country/organization hosting the Annual Conference.

### Workshops

Workshops on topical issues are held concurrent with the Annual Conference, and offer opportunities for smaller groups of stakeholders to learn new techniques, discuss management concerns, interact, and build productive relationships.

### Proceedings of the Annual Conference

The proceedings are a published collection of scientific papers presented either orally or in poster format that represent the record of the Annual Conference. The Proceedings are archived electronically and available to users free of charge.

### Publication Series

In addition to the Annual Proceedings, GCFI occasionally publishes peer-reviewed books that are a result of symposia, workshops or initiatives occurring at the Annual Conference. GCFI also develops partnerships with other scientific journals to publish volumes devoted to a Symposium that took place at the annual conference. Sponsors of the symposium and/or the publications are responsible for funding and organizing peer-review of submissions. The GCFI Publications Committee has oversight regarding selection of books for publication, formatting, and final publication.

**Student Awards:** members of the GCFI strongly encourage student participation in the Annual Conference, and recognize academic excellence in the form of several awards presented annually



*Participants in a regional workshop 'Marine Protected Area Management Through a Climate Change Lens', hosted by TIDE Belize and sponsored by a 2014 NOAA cooperative agreement with GCFI (L to R: E. Valencio, E. Romero, M. Muschamp, S. Novelo and N. Budna). Photo: P. Etienne, 2015*



*Casimiro Newball, winner of the Gladding Memorial Award at the 65th GCFI in Santa Marta, Colombia with Eric Castro and Martha Prada. Photo: R. Glazer, 2012*

### **Academic Achievement Awards**

Initiated in 1999, these awards are given in recognition of the best oral and poster presentations by students at the Annual Conference. Currently, the awards are made possible through a partnership of the GCFI, U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); Caribbean Fishery Management Council; and NOAA Sea Grant offices in the Gulf region. The awards cover financial expenses (travel, hotel and registration fee) for the following year's Annual Conference.

### **Student Travel Awards**

Two awards are given annually to support student travel to the Annual Conference. Recipients are students from a US/Canadian/European academic institution and a Caribbean/Latin

American academic institution. Both recipients are required to give an oral or poster presentation at the conference. These awards, first initiated in 2007, are made possible through a current partnership between the GCFI and Puerto Rico Sea Grant.

### **Ronald L. Schmied Scholarship**

This scholarship was first awarded in 2006 and is presented annually to a qualified graduate student engaged in a research with a marine recreational fisheries component. The scholarship covers travel, hotel accommodations and registration fee for the Annual Conference. This award is based on a current partnership between GCFI, the International Game Fish Association, and private donors.



GCFI home page at [www.gcfi.org](http://www.gcfi.org), 2015

### Science and Conservation of Fish Aggregations (SCRFA) Travel Award

First awarded in 2013, the SCRFA award is presented annually to a student giving an oral or poster presentation related to fish aggregations, and is a partnership between GCFI and SCRFA.

**Email Distribution Lists:** a real-time forum for the discussion of topics of regional importance. It is also a mechanism for soliciting expert advice on issues that require immediate attention and assistance, and for announcing items of importance to the GCFI membership.

**The GCFI Website:** a source of marine resource news from the region, archives of the GCFI proceedings, announcements of meetings, a discussion board, and results of findings from GCFI workshops. GCFI hosts the website for the regional network for marine protected areas (MPA) managers (CaMPAM Network and Forum) and their email distribution list. GCFI hosts a regional email distribution list (gcfinet). Links are also provided to marine organizations in the region. Information of practical use is also available for those attending the Annual Conference.

### Web-Based Information Dissemination

GCFI has partnered with a number of organizations to serve as their platform for providing information on focused topics. GCFI only engages in projects which are consistent with the mission of GCFI. All of these projects are hosted on the GCFI server as a subdomain of [gcfi.org](http://gcfi.org).

To accomplish building these websites, GCFI employs website designers and developers who are well-versed in the applications that are queried for each contract.

As described earlier, GCFI hosts the homepage of the CaMPAM Network and Forum. In addition to providing information on programs,

GCFI also has developed a database of all the MPAs in the region which includes fields related to resources, governance, and management. A separate mapping application provides spatial maps of the website (under a partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the University of Southern Mississippi) with interactivity related to threats as defined by the World Resources Institute.

Besides the CaMPAM Network and Forum, GCFI has also built the website for the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem's (CLME) Information Management System which is a meta-database for marine activities within the Caribbean region (<https://clmeims.gcfi.org/>).



*Dr Paul Marshall speaking at the regional workshop 'Marine Protected Area Management Through a Climate Change Lens', hosted by TIDE Belize and sponsored by a 2014 NOAA cooperative agreement with GCFI. Photo: P. Etienne, 2015*



*A fisher and his young assistant in Cumaná, Venezuela, location of the 62nd GCFI. Photo: R. Glazer, 2009*

GCFI also hosts the Invasive Lionfish web portal., which is supported by a consortium of academic, government, and NGO organizations. The website features a variety of functions that will enhance the exchange of information related to the invasion, current research and monitoring topics, and the methods of control.

### **Electronic and digital information dissemination**

In association with various GCFI activities, GCFI has begun implementing approaches that include a variety of digital services including the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) and a webinar series. These activities are meant to provide value to individuals and organizations/agencies that are unable to attend the events live (e.g., the annual conference, peer to peer workshops.) GCFI has also been using these

platforms to build internal capacity by providing a mechanism to develop additional products (e.g., designing the web page, reviewing strategic documents.).

**Initiatives:** GCFI provides the venue and logistics for entities which organize and conduct Initiatives as part of the Annual Conference. Examples are:

### **CAMPAM and the GCFI/NOAA MPA Capacity Building Program**

The GCFI will continue to seek partnerships in relation to marine protected areas that help to achieve its mission. Through these partnerships, GCFI has been key in developing activities that support capacity-building in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico region. GCFI has worked closely with the United Nations Environment

Programme's Caribbean Marine Programme to help coordinate activities of the Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management (CaMPAM) Network and Forum. Specifically, GCFI has developed and hosts the CaMPAM webpage, the CaMPAM database and mapping project of marine protected areas, the CaMPAM email distribution list (CAMPAM-L), and a technical session on MPAs at the annual conference. GCFI continues to serve on the Steering Committee of CaMPAM which provides vision on activities and scope of the CaMPAM program. GCFI has also worked in close partnership with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program by developing and implementing significant capacity-building projects in the region. GCFI conducted a capacity assessment of MPAs and, together with our NOAA partners, has devel-

oped projects to address the identified needs (i.e., sustainable financing, management planning, enforcement, and monitoring). New areas of focus include climate change adaptation planning and sustainable fisheries. GCFI built and hosts a web page on those activities and has provided technical and logistical support to achieve the goals of the capacity assessment projects. Also, in association with these projects, GCFI has begun focusing efforts on enforcement training.

Many of these efforts work in concert with each other thus broadening the partnerships thus ensuring that synergies are achieved and that duplication of effort does not occur. For example, the CAMPAM-L list serves the entire region and all GCFI programs for stakeholders



*Eddie Toomer, winner of the Gladding Memorial Award at the 66th GCFI in Corpus Christi, USA.  
Photo: Toomer family*



*Representatives from The Bahamas National Trust and the Abaco of Fly Fishing Guides Association on a NOAA-sponsored exchange visit to Hawaii to learn about community fisheries enforcement.  
Photo: E. Doyle, 2015*

interested in ecosystem-based solutions. The same is true of the on-the-ground activities for our capacity-building programs. Through these efforts, GCFI has become a go-to independent reference point for MPA managers in the Caribbean region for technical advice, networking and capacity building and we will work to cement this important role for GCFI.

### **Education Initiative**

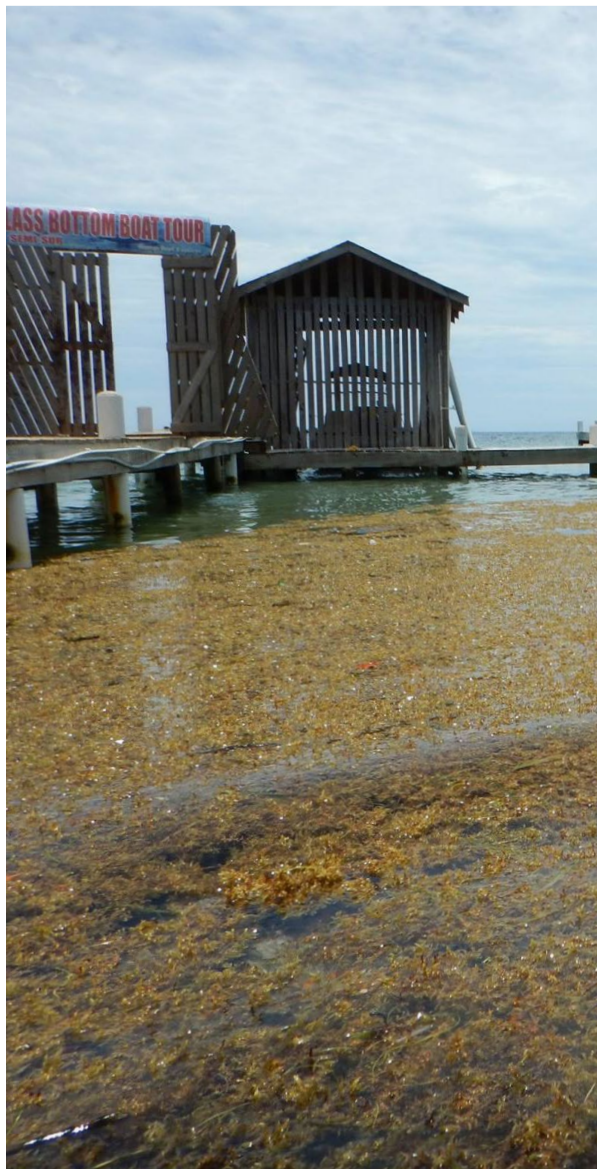
GCFI encourages participation of marine educators at the Annual Conference. The GCFI recognizes that education is critical for long-term conservation of marine and estuarine resources and works to facilitate education and outreach. Outreach to local school children (K-12) in the host country includes marine-related activities, field trips, and an opportunity to participate in a session of the Annual Conference.

### **Fisheries for Fishers Initiative (F4F)**

The Initiative is based on the premise that fishers must be directly engaged in the process that leads to long-term sustainability of the Region's marine resources. To meet that objective, GCFI has encouraged the participation of fishers within all activities of GCFI. To help guide the direction of GCFI, GCFI invites fishers to serve on the Board of Directors. Additionally, GCFI actively engages in finding support to facilitate the participation of fishers at the annual meeting within and to develop a forum that will serve as their voice in the marine resources management arena. GCFI also works to recognize fishers with outstanding vision and accomplishments towards developing the sustainability of the region's resources. Reports of each Fisher Forum are available on the GCFI Fisheries for Fishers website.

### Small Grants Program

GCFI has partnered with UNEP-CEP to develop a small grants programme that provides grants to encourage the sustainable use of the resources in the region either by developing alternative livelihoods or building sustainable fisheries. For example, funds have been provided for a variety of educational purposes and practical solutions to emerging problems. In one case, the small grants fund provided fund-



*Sargassum influx in August 2015 on Roatan, Honduras. Photo: E. Doyle, 2015*

ing to develop a cuisine in Belize by facilitating the exchange of chefs from The Bahamas to Belize. GCFI's role in the activity is to identify priority topics, put out a call for proposals, review proposals, award grants, manage the grants, provide oversight of projects, and publish the results on the GCFI webpage. Information about the grants that have been provided can be found on the GCFI Small Grants page.

### Fishers Ambassador Program

GCFI is in the process of developing a Fisher Ambassador program. The vision behind this program is that one of the Gladding Memorial Award winners (Fishers with a demonstrated focus on conservation) will serve to provide a mentoring role to other fishers either in their locations, or regionally. The overall vision is that it will 'Scale-Up Success' by demonstrating from members of the fishing community that there are long-term benefits economically to fishing based on principles of sustainability.

**Fisher Exchanges** - The GCFI has partnered with the SPAW Programme of the UNEP CEP to make available a Small Grant Fund to promote sustainable fishing practices and alternative livelihoods for fishers. This fund forms part of the CEP/SPAW initiative to develop adequate management plans and programmes for priority species of regional concern including those of economic value. GCFI has provided funding support for numerous projects focusing on the core priorities: sustainable fishing practices and alternative livelihoods for fishers.

**Gladding Memorial Award (GMA):** The GCFI works to recognize a fisher from the Region who has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to conservation and sustainable resource use. Each recipient is selected by a GMA subcommittee composed of several GCFI trustees and one or more past recipients of the award. Fishers



from around the Gulf of Mexico and the wider Caribbean Basin are eligible for the award. Each year the full board of the GCFI is solicited by the subcommittee to forward the names and rationale for likely candidates. Any GCFI member or fisher in the region is also welcome to suggest names, preferably through a board member with some familiarity with the fisher or the proposer. The GMA subcommittee subsequently evaluates the submissions and chooses the final award winners based on the fishing experience and the conservation actions of the candidates. Given the wide geographic, cultural, and language diversity of the region, every effort is made to ensure that winners represent the full geographic range of the region.

**Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Professional Development Program (GCFPD):**

The GCFPD (formally the Caribbean Fisheries Training Program) works to provide training to marine resource professionals in the Gulf and Caribbean region. This program provides opportunities for engagement in advanced training and research which will serve to benefit the home agency. The purpose of this program is to promote sustainable management practices through capacity building of fisheries professionals in the region.



*Grenada Marine Protected Areas warden Cecil McQueen with a lionfish caught in Sandy Island/Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area during a workshop organized by Sustainable Grenadines, Inc.  
Photo: E. Doyle, 2013*

## GCFI Five-Year Operating Plan (2015 - 2019)

The following Goals and Action Items have been identified as the primary elements of the GCFI 2015-2019 operating plan. Goals represent strategic priorities and a long-term vision of areas of importance to GCFI. Action Items represent short-term (5 year) strategies for achieving each Goal.

### GOALS

#### Goal I. Strengthen the Institute

Develop new partnerships with organizations and other entities that share GCFI's vision for wise-use, sustainable management, and conservation of the Region's marine and estuarine fisheries, habitats, and aquatic resources. Establish endowments and long term financial relationships in support of GCFI's operations and services to its membership.

#### **Action Item: Maintain existing and identify new strategic partners**

Partners to be approached include governmental agencies, NGOs, fisher groups, universities, management councils, and scientific organizations both within and beyond the Region.

#### **Action Item: Establish a consistent source(s) of support funding**

Create an endowment that will provide for sustainable, independent operations of GCFI. The GCFI recognizes that in order to provide the highest level of service to its membership, a consistent source of funding is required. This will require development of long-term strategic partnerships with organizations and individuals that recognize the importance of the GCFI to the Region and are willing to contribute to achieving GCFI's vision.

#### **Action Item: Remove burdens of hosting the Annual Conference**

The GCFI strives to provide cultural diversification and cross-cultural opportunities at the Annual Conference. The Conference is an opportunity for a host to showcase their country. Unfortunately, the financial burden of hosting



*Participants in a regional workshop 'Marine Protected Area Management Through a Climate Change Lens', hosted by TIDE Belize and sponsored by a 2014 NOAA cooperative agreement with GCFI (L to R: M. Haughton, M. Muschamp, M. Aronne, C. Mahung, A. Justiniano, J. Foley, J. A. González, S. Novelo, and M. Arteaga). Photo: P. Etienne, 2015*

the conference has prevented many countries in the region from doing so. GCFI will attempt to alleviate some of the financial burden by seeking sustainable sponsorships to support key components of the conference, including simultaneous interpretation, publishing, and special sessions.

**Action Item: Grow the membership by providing opportunities for under-represented nations and organizations to participate in GCFI activities**

The GCFI recognizes that effective communication of issues, management strategies, and current research requires the participation of individuals and organizations from all areas in the Region. The GCFI will identify those nations and sectors that are under-represented based on their current interaction with GCFI, and on the opportunities these entities will derive from participation with GCFI. GCFI will attempt to identify sources of funding to provide opportunities for travel to and participation in the Annual Conference.

**Action Item: Enhance services and opportunities to the membership**

GCFI will continually examine ways in which to provide enhanced opportunities to membership. One primary mechanism is to implement special sessions and symposia dedicated to topics of regional importance in association with

the Annual Conference. The GCFI has already implemented this strategy; however, the resources required and the efforts to organize them are enormous. The GCFI will examine developing strategic partnerships with organizations and individuals that recognize the importance of these to both the GCFI membership and, not insignificantly, the well-informed management of marine and estuarine resources in the Region.



*Angelique Mendez, winner of the Gladding Memorial Award at 63rd GCFI in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Photo: R. Glazer, 2010*

**Action Item: Encourage student participation at the Annual Conference**

The GCFI recognizes the importance of students to the future of well-informed management and use of marine resources in the Region and will encourage increased student participation at the annual conferences by identifying funding sources and sponsors for student scholarships and awards.

**Action Item: Develop a communications strategy**

Develop a communication strategy to expand the awareness of the

services provided to the Region, increase awareness of the media to regional issues raised at GCFI conferences, and recruitment new members to GCFI.

**Action Item: Encourage fishers participation at the conference.**

The GCFI has always recognized the impor-

tance of fishers to inform sound management and conservation initiatives in the region. The GCFI will promote fishers participation by creating a special time slot in the conference for fishers to express concerns and communicate with scientists on marine resource stewardship. This participation could easily be promoted by the programs (Fishers Ambassador and Gladding memorial awards). GCFI will also explore additional funding mechanisms to enhance participation of fishers at GCFI conferences and workshops.

**Action Item: Develop the GCFI Ocean Innovation Research Initiative.**

The Ocean Innovation AWARD (OIA) supports the development of innovative data collection methods, sampling technologies, and analytical tools to achieve the GCFI goals of promoting sustainable use, wise management, conservation, and restoration of marine and estuarine fisheries and resources in the Region. The OIA Committee shall be comprised of diverse expertise from the GCFI community of scientists, managers, fishers, and other stakeholders to identify the priorities and gaps to be addressed during GCFI's 2015-2019 strategic plan. Four key OIA theme areas include:

(1) Innovative data collection methods – there is a need to optimize survey design and data sampling operations to efficiently provide obtained scientific information required for wise management and conservation policy decisions to achieve the sustainability of marine resources.

(2) Innovative sampling technologies – there is a need to develop, evaluate, and implement cost-effective sampling technologies (i.e., sensors, sampling platforms, near real-time data processing, data communication) to provide more accurate, precision, and timely scientific information.

(3) Innovative analytical tools – there is a need to develop and evaluate analytical tools that provide statistically sound results, including sources of uncertainty in data collections and performance of models, especially for data-limited situations.

(4) Conceptual framework and innovative solution development – marine resource conservation and sustainability depend upon framing complex issues in ways that provide achievable solutions. In some cases, the most robust solutions are not technological; rather, they may address issues in which the problem has not been properly framed, or the solutions have been particularly vexing.



*Introducing the staff from the hotel of the 64th GCFI in Puerto Morelos, Mexico to lionfish.  
Photo: J. Morris, 2011*

The OIA Committee shall foster partnerships among scientists, managers, fishers, philosophers, economists, legal scholars, historians, and other stakeholders to identify the priorities and gaps of scientific information in the Region. This can be achieved by soliciting proposals and supporting workshops that address specific OIA topics, and by sponsoring academic scholarships to develop the necessary expertise relevant to the OIA theme areas.

The OIA will be an ongoing initiative with sustainability achieved by fostering partnerships with institutional, private, and corporate sponsors.

**Action Item: Identify a funding mechanism to continue participation in the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Professional Development Program.**

The GCFI considers the GCFPD program as a high priority for building capacity for sustainable marine resource management in the region. GCFI will work to identify long term funding mechanisms to support this program.

## Goal 2: Enhance GCFI Publications

GCFI Publications are one of the most visible products of the organization and reflect upon the Annual Conference. Continued publication of the Proceedings, in addition to on-line and print publications of items of special interest should be a priority of the GCFI.

**Action Item: Develop manual and funding for Special Publication Series**

Define categories within the Series; develop requirements to be met for publishing in the Series; develop a guide to authors for publication in the Series. Identify costs of publication and a business plan for the Series.

**Action Item: Explore possibilities of a peer-review journal for GCFI publications.**

Peer-review journals are vitally important to the scientific process and dissemination of science among members. The GCFI will explore possibilities of creating or partnering with other organizations on a peer-review journal to increase science credibility and communication within GCFI and the region.



Patrol boat, Soufriere Marine Managed Area, Saint Lucia. Photo: E. Doyle, 2014

### Goal 3: Increase administrative support and oversight

**Action Item: Obtain funding for part or full time GCFI staff to conduct the daily business of GCFI**

The GCFI will work towards obtaining the resources required to fund a full or part-time position of Executive Director of the GCFI. This executive leadership and management position will be responsible for overseeing the daily activities of the GCFI and will include fundraising, organizing meetings, providing editorial oversight, grant program initiation and management, and other tasks that are required. The Executive Director will be directly answerable to the Board of Directors.

**Action Item: Conduct a biannual audit**

A regular audit is required to efficiently conduct the business of GCFI both from a grants perspective (many granting agencies/foundations require a regular audit) as well as to ensure that the fiduciary responsibilities are met.

**Action item: Develop the GCFI Operations Manual.**

The operations of GCFI are complex and need to be cataloged for current and future operational needs. This will ensure that operations, forms, procedures and other activities are standardized and that the organization operated efficiently.

**Action Item: Develop a plan for executive succession**

Strong Executive Director leadership is critical to the effectiveness, stability and sustainability of the Institute and its ability to provide services to its membership and the GCFI region. The GCFI will develop a Plan focused on successful

transition of Executive Director leadership. The Plan will be structured for application to both departure-defined succession and emergency succession and will provide detailed guidance for implementing the transition process. The Plan will serve to ensure continuity of Executive Director leadership for the Institute.

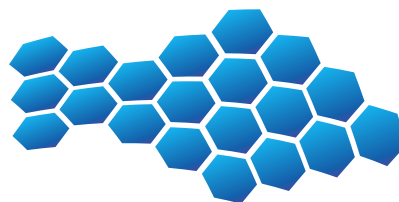
**Action Item: Amend and edit the bylaws as required to reflect current operations of the organization**

- Describe the position and duties of Executive Director
- Define the nomination process for Officers of the Corporation and Board of Directors membership
- Consider inclusion of Immediate Past Chair on the Board of Directors

### Goal 4: Evaluation of the Strategic Plan Accomplishments

**Action Item: Develop a strategic planning committee**

The strategic planning committee will be chaired by the Board Chair (or Vice Chair) and is responsible for regular (bi-annual) evaluation of progress on strategic directives. The committee will provide an annual report summarizing progress. Individual members of the GCFI Board of Directors and GCFI officers will be assigned as Action Item Leads for each action item in the Strategic Plan by the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. Action Item Leads will be responsible for ensuring annual progress on their assigned action item(s).





*Dog snapper (Lutjanus jocu) and black margate (Anisotremus surinamensis) at Hol Chan Cut, Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Belize. Photo: D.J. Southall, 2015.*

