



***Ad Hoc* Committee report on activities to ICRI  
on Caribbean Regional Response to Lionfish Invasion**

**Presented by Mexico, on behalf of the Committee**

**Reporting period November 2010 – December 2011**

The ICRI General Meeting in January 2010 agreed on the creation of an ICRI *Ad Hoc* Committee to facilitate a coordinated response to the Lionfish invasion in the Caribbean region. The committee was formally established at the last ICRI Gm (November 2010), and the Terms of Reference were adopted (Annex 1).

The *Ad Hoc* Committee, known as the Regional Lionfish Committee (RLC), was co-chaired by Mexico, the United States of America and the Regional Activity Centre for UNEP's SPAW Protocol (SPAW-RAC), and was open to participation to other countries, territories and organizations within the region, and international experts. The Dominican Republic, CABI, and the ICRI Secretariat actively participated in the *Ad Hoc* Committee.

To accomplish the commitments listed in the Terms of Reference for the *Ad Hoc* committee, the following actions have been implemented:

**Report on activities**

1. The *Ad Hoc* Committee held monthly conference calls to review progress.
2. To facilitate information exchange, the *Ad Hoc* Committee developed a list of contacts including experts on marine invasive species, marine resource managers, fisheries experts, technicians and scientists Caribbean-wide. The list of contacts aims to comprise all individuals that are closely involved with the lionfish issue in the wider Caribbean region.

The list was built upon the participants that attended the first regional lionfish workshop convened in Cancun, Mexico, in August 2010. To date, the list has more than 150 contacts and is expected to total 200 contacts in the near future.

3. The *Ad Hoc* Committee drafted a Host Secretariat Advisory statement to call attention to the lionfish invasion and its threats to coral resources of the Caribbean region and urging implementation of local control measures and engagement in a regional response. The Host Secretariat Advisory statement was disseminated by the ICRI Secretariat in Spanish, French and English (annex 2).

**Actions supported by the *Ad Hoc* Committee**

In order to establish coordinated actions, with technical and scientific basis, to enable a high-level work in the Caribbean both at local, national and regional levels, a Best Practices manual called, “**Strategies and Practices for Invasive Lionfish Control**” was developed, focused on management of marine resources and coastal environments. This project was led by NOAA, through Dr. James Morris, a lionfish specialist in the Caribbean. Concept began during the 2010 Cancun Lionfish Workshop (hosted by ICRI), with over 25 Caribbean countries represented and over 40 workshop participants.

For the preparation of the manual, experts in different areas were brought together, with knowledge on natural resource management, scientists, law and policies, with the aim of developing a simple and understandable manual. The writing workshop was held in Miami in April 2011.

- Institutions represented included University of the West Indies in Jamaica, NOAA, REEF, SPAW-RAC, Simon Fraser University, CONANP-Mexico, and CABI.
- Chapter authors were assigned and outlines developed

#### Status

- Formal presentation of this Manual was done at the 64th Annual Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), 31<sup>st</sup> October- 4 November 2011.
- A side event was held at the 4<sup>th</sup> ITMEMS.
- In January 2012 the manuals will be printed in English.
- The translation into Spanish will be soon in process.

In parallel to the drafting of the Best Practices Manual, a project was submitted by REEF and the SPAW-RAC to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and funding was provided by NFWF to support the organization of three regional training workshops in order to facilitate dissemination of the Best Practices manual, including hands-on training underwater. The first **regional lionfish collecting and handling workshop** of the series was convened during the 64<sup>th</sup> meeting of GCFI in Mexico, November 2011. It attracted over 20 participants from a dozen Caribbean countries. The two remaining workshops are scheduled for 2012 in the Bahamas and Florida.

#### Next Steps

- Enhance participation in the RLC
- Develop regional response strategy for control of the lionfish
  - Distribute invitation letters asking governments to appoint participants to a drafting committee
  - Convene a workshop to discuss a draft strategy
- Distribute Manual using the ICRI, GCFI Listserv and various websites
- Develop a Lionfish Web Portal
  - Provide multi-media training tools
  - Clearinghouse for information
  - Updates on new findings
  - Regional coordination

**Due to the magnitude of the problem of lionfish invasion and the intended actions by the *Ad Hoc* Committee members in 2012, the *Ad Hoc* Committee Co-Chairs request the extension of the *Ad Hoc* Committee. The amended ToR are available in annex 3.** This would continue the main objective of the *Ad Hoc* Committee, which is to facilitate the continued regional response to the Lionfish invasion in the Caribbean region.



**Terms of Reference  
ICRI *Ad-Hoc* Committee  
on Caribbean Regional Response to Lionfish Invasion**

*Adopted by the participants on November 12<sup>th</sup>, at the 25<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting (Apia, Samoa)*

Recognizing that the lionfish invasion in the Caribbean region is a mounting threat to the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the region's coral reef ecosystems;

Acknowledging that identifying and implementing measures to control the lionfish invasion, while minimizing other harm to marine ecosystems, are desirable;

Recalling discussions during the Caribbean Day at ICRI's 24<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and the emphasis placed on invasive lionfish as a high priority threat to the region;

Recognizing the outcomes of the August, 2010, ICRI workshop in Cancun as an important step in assembling best management practices as part of a regional strategy;

Acknowledging the decision taken at the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the SPAW Protocol in Montego Bay, Jamaica, October 2010, to participate in the development of a Caribbean regional response to the lionfish invasion;

Emphasizing the importance of collaboration and coordination with CAR-SPAW, all Caribbean countries and territories, and other key stakeholders in the region;

Recalling the ICRI 2009 Recommendation on Invasive Alien Species;

The ICRI General Meeting agrees on the creation of an ICRI *Ad Hoc* Committee to facilitate a coordinated response to the Lionfish invasion in the Caribbean region.

The Ad Hoc Committee will be co-chaired by Mexico, United States of America and the SPAW- RAC, and will be open to participation to other countries, territories and organizations within the region.

The Ad Hoc Committee will implement the following activities:



- 1) Guided by Cancun outcomes, develop a regional lionfish control strategy to identify and guide collaborative responses.
- 2) Work with ICRI Secretariat to facilitate the review, completion, and dissemination of the best practices manual resulting from the August, 2010, Cancun meeting.
- 3) Raise awareness among the fishery and marine protected area managers on the lionfish threat and the need to develop effective local response plans.
- 4) Share best management practices identified in Cancun with marine managers, including through local workshops, as feasible, and seek input on regional strategy for lionfish control.
- 5) Conduct a workshop to substantively review the draft regional strategy and develop a consensus vision on regional elements of a response plan.
- 6) Build an active participation between organizations and countries.
- 7) Work with ICRI Secretariat to produce an Host Secretariat Advisory statement, to be released in 2011, calling attention to the lionfish invasion and its threats to coral resources of the Caribbean region and urging implementation of local control measures and engagement in a regional response.
- 8) Work with the ICRI secretariat to disseminate lessons learned, particularly on prevention, early detection and actions, to other regions.
- 9) Report to the 26<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of ICRI on implementation of actions herein described.

## **International Coral Reef Initiative**

### **Host Secretariat Advisory on Invasive Lionfish**

*July 2011*

The International Coral Reef Initiative urges immediate action to address the

#### **Lionfish Invasion in the Wider Caribbean**

Invasive lionfish (*Pterois miles* and *P. volitans*) pose a serious threat to coral reef ecosystems and associated biodiversity in the western Atlantic Ocean from South America to the northern Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and southeastern United States. Lionfish, native to the Indo-Pacific oceans, have no known native predators in the western Atlantic and Caribbean. Invasive lionfish populations can reach high densities and cause extreme disruption to native fish communities.

A growing body of scientific work has demonstrated that, in some areas where they have become established, invasive lionfish have reduced the biodiversity and resiliency of coral reefs. The expanding invasion may cause declines in ecologically important species and hinder stock-rebuilding efforts for economically important fish species. The invasion has the potential for negative economic impact on local fishing and tourism industries. In addition, lionfish have venomous spines on their fins that can inflict a serious sting to humans; medical attention is recommended following a lionfish sting.

**In recognition of the severity of the lionfish invasion and its impact on coral reefs and local communities, ICRI urges that immediate action be taken to control the lionfish invasion in collaboration with relevant international and regional partners and initiatives.**

#### **Response to the Invasive Lionfish**

This invasion can be most effectively addressed by local action facilitated by a regional strategy encompassing the Wider Caribbean. To this end, in August 2010, ICRI convened a Regional Lionfish Strategy Workshop with managers from 18 Caribbean countries and territories. The workshop resulted in a compilation of best practices to serve as a guide for local managers as they respond to the lionfish invasion. Coral reef managers are encouraged to develop local control plans, partnering with commercial fishing and diving operations where appropriate.

In a recommendation on invasive alien species (IAS) at its 23<sup>rd</sup> General Meeting, ICRI elevated attention to the threats posed by IAS to marine environments, and many Caribbean governments and institutions are engaged in prevention and control activities. To facilitate development of a regional strategy, ICRI has formed a Regional Lionfish Committee, co-chaired by Mexico, the United States, and the Regional Activity Center of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Protocol to the Cartagena Convention. ICRI urges Caribbean governments to develop appropriate frameworks and actions at the national level



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to limit and control the invasion, and invites interested parties, at all levels, scientific institutions, civil society and the private sector to engage with the Regional Lionfish Committee and to collaborate in a regional response to ensure its wide implementation and success. Information on the Committee and the invasive lionfish best practices manual can be found at [www.icriforum.org/lionfish](http://www.icriforum.org/lionfish).

## **Iniciativa Internacional de Arrecifes de Coral (ICRI)**

### **Aviso sobre el pez león invasor**

*Fecha, 2011*

La Iniciativa Internacional de Arrecifes de Coral (ICRI) exhorta a tomar medidas inmediatas para hacer frente a la

### **La invasión del pez león en el Gran Caribe**

El pez león invasor (*Pterois miles* y *P. volitans*) representa una grave amenaza para los ecosistemas de arrecifes de coral y su biodiversidad, en el oeste del Océano Atlántico, desde América del Sur, el norte del Caribe, el Golfo de México y el sureste de Estados Unidos. El pez león es originario de los océanos del Indo-Pacífico, por lo que no tiene depredadores nativos en el Atlántico occidental y el Caribe. Poblaciones invasoras de pez león pueden alcanzar altas densidades y causar afectaciones extremas a las comunidades de peces nativos.

Un número creciente de investigaciones científicas ha demostrado que, en algunas zonas en donde el pez león se ha establecido, ha reducido la biodiversidad y capacidad de recuperación de los arrecifes. Su creciente invasión puede causar la disminución de especies de importancia ecológica y obstaculizar los esfuerzos de recuperación de poblaciones de peces de importancia comercial. Esta invasión tiene el potencial de generar un impacto económico negativo sobre la pesca y las industrias turísticas locales. Además, el pez león posee espinas en varias de sus aletas que pueden causar una picadura grave para las personas, se recomienda la atención médica después de una picadura de pez león.

**En reconocimiento a la gravedad de la invasión del pez león y su impacto en los arrecifes de coral y las comunidades locales, ICRI exhorta a que se tomen medidas inmediatas para controlar la invasión del pez león, en colaboración con aliados locales e internacionales.**

### **Respuesta al pez león invasor**

Esta invasión puede ser eficazmente abordada por acciones locales, facilitadas mediante una estrategia regional que abarque el Gran Caribe. Para ello, en agosto de 2010, ICRI realizó el Taller Regional Estratégico sobre Pez León con participación de tomadores de decisiones de 18 países y territorios del Caribe. De este taller resultó una recopilación de buenas prácticas que sirven como una guía para poder responder a la invasión del pez león dirigida a los administradores de los recursos locales. Se busca que los manejadores de arrecifes de coral desarrollen planes locales de control, asociados con la pesca comercial y las operaciones de buceo, en su caso.



En una recomendación sobre especies exóticas invasoras (EEI), en su 23<sup>a</sup> Junta General, ICRI llamó la atención sobre la gran amenaza que representa las EEI a los ambientes marinos, y sobre los muchos gobiernos del Caribe e instituciones que dedican a actividades de prevención y control. Para facilitar el desarrollo de una estrategia regional, ICRI ha formado un Comité Regional de Pez León, co-presidido por México, Estados Unidos, y el Centro de Actividad Regional de las Zonas Especialmente Protegidas y el Protocolo de Vida Silvestre (SPAW) del Convenio de Cartagena. De esta manera, ICRI exhorta a los gobiernos del Caribe a desarrollar los marcos pertinentes y las acciones a nivel nacional para conseguir limitar y controlar la invasión. Así mismo, invita a los interesados en todos los niveles (instituciones científicas, sociedad civil y el sector privado), a colaborar con este Comité y participar en una respuesta regional, que asegure su gran aplicación y éxito. La información sobre el Comité y el manual de buenas prácticas para combatir al pez león se puede encontrar en el sitio: [www.icriforum.org/lionfish](http://www.icriforum.org/lionfish).



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A growing body of scientific work has demonstrated that, in some areas where they have become established, invasive lionfish have reduced the biodiversity and resiliency of coral reefs. The expanding invasion may cause declines in ecologically important species and hinder stock-rebuilding efforts for economically important fish species. The invasion has the potential for negative economic impact on local fishing and tourism industries. In addition, lionfish have venomous spines on their fins that can inflict a serious sting to humans; medical attention is recommended following a lionfish sting.

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## **Proposed amended Terms of Reference ICRI Ad-Hoc Committee on Caribbean Regional Response to Lionfish Invasion**

The ICRI General Meeting agrees to extend the work of the ICRI Ad Hoc Committee to facilitate a coordinated response to the Lionfish invasion in the Caribbean region.

The Ad Hoc Committee will be co-chaired by Mexico, United States of America and the Regional Activity Centre for UNEP's SPAW Protocol (SPAW-RAC). Participation is encouraged by other countries, territories and organizations within the region.

The Ad Hoc Committee will implement the following activities:

1. Guided by Cancun outcomes and questions identified below, draft a regional lionfish response strategy to identify and guide collaborative actions. Conduct a workshop to substantively review the draft regional strategy and develop a vision on regional elements of the response strategy. Governments in the region will be asked to nominate representatives to the workshop.
2. Continue to work with ICRI Secretariat to facilitate the dissemination and implementation of the Strategies and Practices for the invasive lionfish control in the Wider Caribbean.
3. Continue to raise awareness among the fishery and marine protected area managers on the lionfish threat and the need to develop effective local response plans.
4. Encourage governments and organizations working on this issue to participate actively by sharing best management practices identified in the Strategies and Practices for the invasive lionfish control, including through local workshops, as feasible, and by encouraging activities to implement the regional strategy
5. Launch a web portal to serve as a site for ongoing regional communication, current and credible scientific information, and access to best management practices and manager-training tools.