



Dear ICRI Secretariat:

Please consider this letter as an indication of the interest of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) to become a member of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). We believe that membership in this important global forum can both help us chart our course forward as well as pass along valuable lessons learned to the ICRI membership.

As a bit of background, the GCFI is a pan-Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico not-for-profit organization incorporated in the United States and has been operational since 1948. GCFI is dedicated to providing an impartial forum on the sustainable use and wise management of marine resources. We do this via a variety of approaches including convening an annual institute which brings together approximately 400 scientists, managers, students, fishers, and other marine resource stakeholders. We also publish the proceedings of the annual institute which likely represents the longest running record of scientific research and management in the region. GCFI also develops and implements initiatives that support sustainability, and we provide funding to support these objectives.

More specifically, the GCFI has a number of partnerships and activities that we believe align well with the mission of ICRI including:

1. MPACConnect – this regional network of Caribbean coral reef MPAs and their managers is focused on building capacity that the managers identified in self-evaluations. Capacity development is focused on sustainable financing, coral-ecosystem monitoring, development of sustainable fisheries approaches, effective communication within and among stakeholders, management plan development, and other areas that will benefit from our mentorship program. This activity was co-founded by our partners at the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. MPACConnect is supported by contributions from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and USAID.
2. Fisheries for Fishers Initiative – this activity focuses on empowering artisanal fishers to practice good stewardship of the resources they exploit. One component of the initiative is the Gladding Memorial Award which identifies and recognizes a fisher who has demonstrated through their actions a lifelong commitment to conservation. To date we have approximately 30 fishers from throughout the region who exemplify this ethic. This initiative also provides activities that unite fishers in coral-reef conservation. This activity is supported by NOAA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Shell Oil and Exploration.
3. Co-Host of the Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML-Caribe) – together with our co-host at the UNEP-Caribbean Environment Programme, we are focusing substantial efforts of the reduction of marine litter including providing alternatives to single use plastics.
4. Student Initiative – GCFI and our partners support scholarships for students whose activities (including research) focus on areas that address our mission and the missions of our partners. This initiative is supported by generous contributions from the Sea Grant initiatives of the Gulf of Mexico, the Harte Research Institute, and The Society for the Conservation of Reef Fish Aggregations (SCRFA)



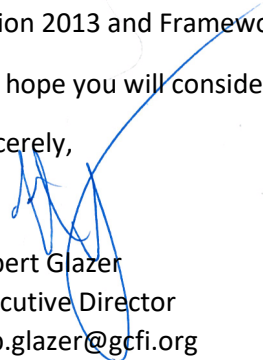
There are also other efforts and special publications that may be beneficial to ICRI and its members. These include:

1. A 2020 publication we developed that details the research priorities at the nexus of governance and science entitled [Science and Research Serving Effective Ocean Governance in the WCR](#). The report examined three regional fisheries, healthy ecosystems, and reduction of pollution. The priorities of each of these focal areas were identified based on gaps in science, monitoring, governance, communications, and socio-economics. The project was funded by the UNDP via the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) GEF project.
2. A publication released in October 2021 focused on best practices related to the management and control of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) in the Caribbean region. This activity and others in this list represent GCFI's commitment to addressing emerging issues. This paper was funded by UNEP-CEP.
3. Hosting the NOAA regional invasive lionfish web portal (<https://lionfish.gcfi.org>) and publishing the guide to invasive lionfish control and management (<https://www.icriforum.org/documents/invasive-lionfish-a-guide-to-control-and-management/>).
4. Publishing numerous outreach materials related to for example the Sargassum influx in the Caribbean, Marine Litter, and materials for fishers and coops related to the reduction of Abandoned, Lost, Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG).
5. A series of five annual workshops and associated publications that focused on emerging technologies and issues that address developing effective stock assessments of Caribbean fishery populations. This effort was funded by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.
6. GCFI has had a long-standing partnership with the UNEP-CEP Cartagena Convention offices of the Special Protected Areas of Wildlife (SPAW) and the Land-based Sources of Pollution (LBS) protocols. With regards to the former, GCFI helped relaunch the CaMPAM Network and Forum in 2004 and served as the developer and host of the webpage and database portal for many years until UNEP took over this project in-house.

These are just some of the activities that we believe are consistent with the priorities of ICRI and its partner countries and organizations. I have attached a list of the members of our Board of Directors so you can see the breadth and scope of the directors. Finally, GCFI is committed to achieving the goals of the ICRI Continuing Call to Action 2013 and Framework for Action 2013

We hope you will consider this application for membership and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Robert Glazer
Executive Director
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