



## **FUNDEMAR Reveals Accomplishments And Future Goals**

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The Dominican Foundation for Marine Studies (FUNDEMAR), an NGO dedicated to marine research and conservation in the Dominican Republic, has announced its accomplishments in 2015 and goals for 2016. Founded by Professor Idelisa Bonnelly in 1992, FUNDEMAR works hand in hand with the communities of the southeastern Dominican Republic to protect the area's marine environment. The organization is pleased to announce that it has experienced several breakthroughs in its marine conservation efforts during the past year and is excited to continue to work with its partners and the community to build off of this success.

In 2015, the NGO collaborated with local hotels and dive shops in order to expand the number of coral gardens that it manages from two to five, thereby increasing the impact of its coral restoration program and improving the resiliency of local marine ecosystems to climate change and overfishing. There are now around 1,800 meters of coral growing in FUNDEMAR's coral gardens.

Over the course of the past year, FUNDEMAR transplanted around 400 meters of coral onto the reefs surrounding Bayahibe, helping to restore the threatened coral reef ecosystems that provide a refuge to fish and an excellent destination for snorkelers and divers. The organization again proved itself to be at the

forefront of marine research and conservation when in it recorded a coral spawning event in its gardens in September and showed that the corals it manages reproduce sexually ? the first time that such research has been performed in the DR.

In addition to coral reef restoration, FUNDEMAR also carried out successful projects to conserve endangered species in the area, educate local youth about the marine environment, and monitor the activities of the area?s marine mammals with the help of fisherman and other members of the community. This year, FUNDEMAR aims to continue to build on the success of its coral reef restoration program by increasing its alliances with tourism companies in the area in order to continue to build more coral gardens and ultimately increase the amount of coral that is transplanted onto the reef. They hope to sign agreements with at least three more hotels and dive shops, bringing the total number of coral gardens managed by the NGO to eight.

As part of these alliances, FUNDEMAR plans to offer new dive excursions to help restore coral reefs. It also hopes to develop new techniques to help raise and maintain coral embryos and larvae, furthering the scientific research in this field. Finally, it will work together with local stakeholders to conduct research on the region's Marine Protected Areas and provide insights into how MPAs can best be used to promote desired conservation outcomes.

Rita Sellares from FUNDEMAR says: "We here at FUNDEMAR are excited about what 2016 will bring and hope that you?ll join us in making this our most successful year in marine conservation to date. Visit our website at <http://www.fundemardr.org/#!home/mainPage> and follow us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Fundemar/>) in order to learn more about us and how you can get involved."

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## FUNDEMAR

*FUNDEMAR is an organization dedicated to the promotion of the sustainable use of marine resources and ecosystems through research, education, and the development of conservation projects.*

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