

Title: The Role of Mpas in the Development of Northwest Mexico Fisheries

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Abstract: The northwest coast of Mexico is accountable for almost 70 % of the country's fishery production. This region, which includes the Gulf of California and the Pacific coast of the Baja California Peninsula, is also extremely important in terms of biodiversity and the presence of endemic species. Consequently, eleven marine protected areas (MPAs) have been established along the region. Although conceived primarily for biodiversity conservation, natural protected areas are having increasingly important socioeconomic effects. To better understand the effects on coastal communities, we conducted an analysis of the role that MPAs are having in the development of the region's fisheries. Six MPAs were selected for analysis using case study methodology. The main issue under investigation is the effect on fishery productivity. Main sources of information were documental research, official fishery statistics and expert consultation. Preliminary results suggest that the impact of MPAs on fishery productivity has been mixed. Better results have been achieved by the MPAs of the Pacific coast of Baja California; and that community involvement in MPA design and management has been instrumental in explaining these improvements.