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Thank you for meeting with us during our trip to Guatemala to support the Association of Land and Sea in their efforts to build Reef Ball artificial reefs in Guatemala. I wanted to take this short opportunity to highlight, from a tourism point of view, some approaches for using Reef Balls based on our observations from our initial surveying trip to the Amatique Bay area.

As we all noted at the meeting, Guatemala already has a significant number of tourist attractions such as Mayan ruins, Antigua, diverse ecosystems, volcanoes, local unique artisans, white water rafting, tourist fishing (on the west coast), and others. These features make Guatemala a natural consideration for tourists that now travel to Mexico, Costa Rica, Belize and other similar destinations. As we all noted, Mexico and Belize and to some extent Costa Rica all have scuba diving as a tourism option whereas Guatemala does not. We believe that the addition of scuba diving opportunities for Guatemala will help to divert some tourists to Guatemala. A big advantage of tourists interested in scuba diving is that they tend to be high-end spenders staying at nicer hotels, eating more expensive meals and generally adding more money to the local economy than tourists seeking the cheapest or economic vacations.

For Guatemala to become a world class diving destination, several things need to come together.

First, Bahia de Amatique needs dive operator(s) equipped with gear, training and boats required offering tourist class dive operations. It is our understanding that at least one facility such as this is already in the planning stages. Easy transportation to this area will also greatly enhance tourism and it is our understanding that a new international airport is being built. It would be ideal to time the opening of the diving location to the opening of the airport.

Secondly, a clear water diving destination within an hour or so boat time needs to be created since Guatemala lacks the natural coral reefs of Mexico and Belize. Reef Balls in sufficient quantity can be used to create natural coral reefs in Guatemalan waters within 2-5 years from deployment. (And the sites will be a good diving location within a year).

And finally, the local community should develop additional infrastructure and money making services which cater to divers such as lunch/snack locations on the water close to

the diving destination for breaks, etc. This will help round out the divers experiences to create an exciting destination. There are several local communities on the finger that could be developed to capture this opportunity.

Back up diving locations should also be considered to ensure diving opportunities in times of rough seas or rain. We surveyed several locations that show promise for this on the protected side of the finger with visibility of 5-10 meters. These sites will also directly benefit local fishing.

Due to the visibility within the Bay of Amatique, the locations most suitable for the primary coral reef development are outside the Bay of Amatique in the gulf of the Honduras. Luckily, we located a potentially perfect spot that is only an hour's boat ride from Puerto Barrios. There is one charted feature only 15 minutes by boat from Punta Manabique which records a depth of only 7 meters with surrounding waters more than 30 meters deep. This represents a "dream spot" for potential development as a diving location. During our trip, we visited this location and despite rough seas, visibility was in excess of 30 meters!

Such rare sea features are referred to as "Sea Mounts" and I believe this site could be properly dubbed, "The Great Guatemalan Sea Mount." Sea Mounts often serve as special habitats for marine fisheries including not only higher concentrations of pelagic fish such as manta rays, whale sharks, and other large fish but they are known to be spots for aggregations and spawning activities for fish such as grouper. The addition of Reef Balls to the top and sides of this location in depths considered ideal for diving would undoubtedly create a fantastic natural ecosystem.

As a marketing idea, one of the best times and place to announce the "discovery" of the "Great Guatemalan Sea Mount" would be the DEMA (Diving Equipment and Marketing Show) held annually in the U.S. (This year it is in January in Las Vegas, Nevada). It would be a good idea for INGUAT to take a booth at this show once the development of diving opportunities in Guatemala are complete.

The "discovery" should be made with underwater surveying of the area and some exploratory dives. It is possible that some natural reef already exists on the Sea Mount which would provide even more possibilities for diving. I have already briefed the Association of Land and Sea on the type of equipment they need to properly locate and document the Sea Mount. With proper funding we can also assist them directly in this effort.

Some resources will need to be brought to bear on this opportunity and I thank you in advance for your commitment to the promotion of this new diving destination. Any other support you can offer to the Association of Land and Sea is also appreciated. If we can be of service in any way, do not hesitate to ask. When the time is right, if you wish us to add credibility to the "discovery" we would be happy to do so...(I think a good tourism model to work off of is Cousteau's discovery of the Blue Hole in Belize).

We hope that these suggestions help you to formulate the goals and direction for Reef Ball projects designed to increase tourism in your country. Thanks again for visiting with us during our stay.

Thanks,
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