

# The Wild Coast of the Caribbean

## CONSERVATION IN CUBA

WILDCOAST  
COSTASALVAJE



Photo by Claudio Contreras-Koob

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Mexican Embassy, WILDCOAST was able to launch a photographic exhibition in Havana called "Treasures of Mexican Conservation" highlighting the natural beauty of the Guanahacabibes Peninsula.

In July 2015, WILDCOAST participated in the [International Convention of Environment and Development](#) in Havana, Cuba. After the Convention, the WILDCOAST team embarked on an expedition to Guanahacabibes Peninsula, a vast ecoregion in Cuba's southwest encompassing 120,000 hectares of land, including the Guanahacabibes National Park (GNP). Selected as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve back in 1987, the Guanahacabibes Peninsula, complete with vibrant mangrove forests, coastal grasslands and coral reefs, represents some of the most highly intact ecosystems in the Caribbean.

Isolated from many of the world's most reef-destructive factors such as overfishing, chemical run-off and extensive tourism, Cuba's coral reefs are among the healthiest on the planet. However, in 2016, 90 cruise ships docked in Guanahacabibes' bay and this number is only slated to increase. Inspired by Cuba's conservation successes and motivated by the immense impacts of predatory tourism, WILDCOAST began to explore the timely launch of a joint-conservation project in Cuba.

Since the beginning of 2016, WILDCOAST has collaborated with the staff of the Guanahacabibes National Park in an exchange of experiences based on the successful conservation model employed in the Cabo Pulmo National Park in Baja California Sur, Mexico. Aimed at safeguarding the long-term health of the park's reef and mangrove ecosystems, WILDCOAST conveyed aspirations of elevating the Guanahacabibes National Park to a global beacon of conservation and international cooperation.



In order to highlight the challenges and successes of Cuban conservation, WILDCOAST partnered with Mundo Latino, and Televisa - Por el Planeta to create a powerful documentary broadcasted nationally in Mexico.

WILDCOAST is an international 501(c)(3) that conserves coastal and marine ecosystems and wildlife. We establish and manage protected areas, advance strong conservation policies, and work with communities to preserve healthy thriving oceans and wild coastlines.

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A single collision between boat anchor and coral reef can pulverize thousands of years of coral growth and cause rippling damage to the long-term health of a reef system.

After engaging with the GNP and National Center for Protected Areas (CNAP) staff during a trip to Cabo Pulmo, we jointly decided to address three core issues:

### 1. Sustainably Managing Increased Tourism

In order to provide a lasting framework for sustainable human-ecosystem interactions, WILDCOAST has developed 4,000 Guanahacabibes National Park Wildlife and Dive Guides highlighting park rules, best practices, and the incredible marine wildlife.

### 2. Strengthening Marine Protected Areas

After engaging with local stakeholders to quantify short and long term threats to the coral reefs of Guanahacabibes, WILDCOAST is installing mooring buoys to limit anchor-related damage.

### 3. Combating Climate Change

WILDCOAST is facilitating the integration of climate change planning into protected area management. WILDCOAST and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas of Mexico (CONANP) facilitated an international cooperation workshop in Mexico City to provide training in climate change adaptation and mitigation to key personnel of the National Center for Protected Areas of Cuba (CNAP) and the National Service of Natural Protected Areas for the State of Peru (SERNANP).

Following the 11th International Convention on Environment and Development in Havana, WILDCOAST has signed an agreement with ECOVIDA, paving the way for the international financing of ambitious joint-climate initiatives between Mexico and Cuba.

