

Web Update

Day 1: 02/25/2008

Describe your role in the project?

My primary role in this project is to work with the Coral Reef Conservation Program and the Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment to secure funding for this body of work. This involves developing a successful proposal that gets reviewed and receives funding. The 2008 field season marks the fifth year of this mission.

What is seafloor characterization?

Seafloor characterization essentially looks at two things:

1. Bottom topography (the depth of the water column)
2. Biological cover on the sea floor-- that is to say, determining what type of habitat exists there.

For coral reefs, this can be very diverse and can include everything from coral to sand to algae. By merging acoustic information with optical data, we can effectively map bathymetry, habitat of structure and cover.

Why is seafloor characterization important?

Marine resources are spatial in nature and are hard to manage if you don't understand where animals are in both space and time. The three areas we're focusing on now (Bajo de Cico, Tourmaline Bank and Abrir la Sierra) are Marine Protected Areas (MPA) closed to fishing. It's important to determine if we see an increase in abundance of fishes in the MPA. This work also allows us to confirm and validate that these closures are indeed in the right places.

How did you start working with NOAA or other background info?

I started working with NOAA in 1984 as a Sea Grant Fellow just as the Biogeography Branch was taking shape. So, I've been here since the beginning.

How/why did you get involved in marine science?

My interest in the ocean began when I was a kid who loved to SCUBA dive. That led to an interest in research aimed at the protection of natural resources.

What do you like most about being out at sea?

I like that there is always something different to experience—everything from the weather to looking at different animals and habitats.

If you were a reef-associated animal, what would you be and why?

A shark, of course! They're top predators.

What would you like readers to know about you?

I'm an Ohio State fan! Go Bucks!



Mark Monaco on board the R/V Nancy Foster.