



- ▶ CCC carried out an assessment of the reefs in the coastal waters of Santa Paz Norte between June and August 2013



- ▶ The reef is in good health generally and there is great potential for the creation of an MPA and developing the site for dive tourism



- ▶ Electronic copies of the full technical report are available from our project scientist

A REPORT BY CORAL CAY CONSERVATION

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Santa Paz Norte

AMPINGAN TA ANG KABTANGAN SA KADAGATAN ALANG
SA ATONG UMAABOT NGA PANGINABUHI

The coastal waters of Santa Paz Norte are home to a wide range of beautiful species and contain a diverse array of interesting reef structures. Known as 'Ghost Town' the area is already a popular location for dive tourists who wish to experience rare and beautiful marine creatures.

The current status of Santa Paz Norte reefs

Surveys conducted by CCC found that overall numbers of fish and invertebrates varied between different areas of the reef. There were also more fish and invertebrates at 12m than at 6m.

Crown of thorns sea stars (CoTs) were only present in low numbers and do not currently pose a threat to the reefs.

Hard coral was generally abundant across all of the area that was surveyed.

Many commercially important species

of invertebrates and fish, such as giant clams and Lapu lapu were uncommon and small in size.

Generally levels of trash and discarded fishing gear on the reef were low.

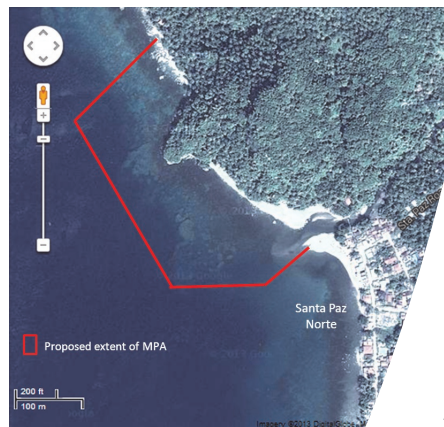
A number of areas such as the reef wall and 'muck' slope are prime sites for dive tourists

Overall the reef is in quite good health. It is an ideal site for protection and has the potential for good income generation from tourism.



Why are MPAs important?

MPAs protect areas of reefs from human impacts. Within an MPA, fish are protected and can grow larger, producing more offspring. This leads to 'overspill', increasing fish numbers outside the MPA. In the Philippines many very successful MPAs have been created including the famous Apo Island MPA. Not only do these well managed MPAs help to enhance fish stocks, they also provide income from tourism and other benefits such as protection of coastal habitats from storms.



CCC's Assessment of Santa Paz Norte

The potential for ecosystem protection, dive tourism and key recommendations for management

The reef along the entire survey area is generally in good health. However the lack of large fish like Lapu lapu suggests that fishing in the area is common.

Many species of fish grow slowly and take a long time to reach sexual maturity. In addition, larger fish produce more offspring. Removing lots of large fish means that fewer babies are produced and the population cannot recover.

If part of the area were protected then there would be a safe area for fish to live where they could grow and produce more offspring.

Another key finding of the survey was that there is very good potential for dive tourism. The interesting reef structure and rare species such as the Ornate Ghost Pipefish are very attractive for divers.

Divers will pay to dive in a well-managed MPA, and so bring income into the community of Santa Paz Norte.

Key Recommendations:

- Based purely on the findings from this study CCC suggest that the best location for a MPA would be in the area close to the northern end of the village near the river mouth

and extending north west up the coast (see map).

- Consultation should start between all members of the community regarding the creation of a MPA. This should include the local fisher-folk, Barangay Council, Municipal and Provincial Government and CCC.
- Try to secure funding to help in the establishment of a MPA. Demarcation buoys and signage are useful tools for enforcement.
- Increase promotion of the area as a dive site to increase dive tourism and raise local income.

LIFE UNDER THE WAVES...

The spooky creatures of Ghost Town!



The area known as Ghost Town in the waters of Santa Paz Norte is a very special dive site. Famed as a 'muck' dive this section of the reef has little coral and is instead almost entirely silt, washed into the sea from the nearby river.

This type of habitat is home to a range of many rare and bizarre creatures that are highly prized viewing for tourist divers. Of particular interest are the Mimic Octopus that can change the shape and texture of its body to fool predators and the Ornate Ghost Pipefish, the namesake for the site.

All of the pictures on this page were taken on the Santa Paz Norte site.

Clockwise from top left:: Mimic Octopus,; Ornate Ghost Pipefish; Broadclub Cuttlefish; Painted Frogfish; Golden Fire Worm

