



Ocean Doctor's Cuba Conservancy Program builds upon 15 years of successful research and conservation efforts focused on Cuba's marine ecosystems, in close collaboration with key Cuban institutions and with strong support from the Cuban government. In anticipation of an end to the 50-year economic embargo imposed by the U.S. on Cuba, Ocean Doctor's work has increasingly focused on helping prepare Cuba for the inevitable flood of tourism and business development that could rapidly undermine Cuba's natural heritage and cultural identity, a fate that has befallen many Caribbean islands. We recognize that this is a unique moment in history to help Cuba protect its green legacy and exceptionally healthy and vibrant ecosystems.

**Using Environmental Economics to Value Cuba's Natural Ecosystems.** During the 1960s it became clear that traditional economics failed to take into account factors such as social welfare and the environment. Environmental economics seeks to measure the environmental impacts or costs of economic decisions, helping to address the shortfalls of policies based on traditional economics. Robust economic valuation of Cuba's natural resources will be essential to ensure the long-term protection of Cuba's ecosystems and the "future-proofing" of its environmental laws. Ocean Doctor led Cuba's first international environmental economics workshop in September 2014. The results of this ongoing project will provide Cuban economists with the state-of-the-art methods of economic valuation tools they need to support sound decisionmaking.



**Engaging Cuban Communities on Environmental Issues.** While environmental economics will help the Cuban government make better decisions about future development and tourism, it is equally important to better engage local communities in the process. Without strong local support, pressures from local communities could push the government toward unsustainable development/tourism alternatives. Cuban communities are largely unaware of Cuba's environmental achievements and lack the perspective to understand the environmental degradation that has taken place in the rest of the Caribbean. Further, they are unaware of more sustainable alternatives to traditional development and tourism practices that could provide badly-needed income while ensuring the long-term health of Cuban ecosystems. As a first step toward better engaging Cuban communities on environmental issues they are facing, Ocean Doctor, in partnership with Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE)/the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development in the Dominican Republic, will be launching Cuba's very first environmental film festival in 2016. The festival will serve as a dialogue to discuss local environmental issues, connect Cuban citizens to their country's remarkably healthy ecosystems, and explore sustainable alternatives for the future.



**Cuba's Coral Reefs: A Blueprint for Restoring Reefs throughout the Caribbean.** A major report released in 2014 documents an average decline of coral cover in the Caribbean of more than 50 percent since 1970. However, Cuba's coral reefs have remained exceptionally healthy, providing an unprecedented opportunity as a "living laboratory" to better quantify and understand the factors responsible for ensuring the long-term health of coral reefs. There exist few undisturbed "control groups" against which to compare disturbed ecosystems and Cuba's reefs can play this important role. Ocean Doctor is leading a research effort focused on understanding why Cuba's coral reefs are so healthy toward developing a blue print for restoring the many degraded coral reefs around the Caribbean. This effort may provide new insights into the structure and dynamics of a healthy coral reef ecosystem and help prioritize management efforts. This research will also examine resilience, the capacity of an ecosystem to respond to a disturbance



*Elkhorn coral (Acropora palmata) is now 95 percent extinct in the Caribbean but thrives in Cuban waters*

through its resistance or ability to recover quickly and will assess how ecosystems with strong local conservation are more resilient to global disturbances, such as climate change and ocean acidification.

**The Cuba-U.S. Sustainability Partnership (CUSP):** The long-awaited historic December 17, 2014 announcements by Presidents Obama and Castro to normalize diplomatic relations heralds a new era of Cuba-U.S. relations. However, there are growing concerns that, ironically, the U.S. may become a greater threat to Cuba as its friend than it ever was as its enemy, spurring rapid, unsustainable growth in Cuba, threatening its pristine ecosystems. In partnership with the Center for International Policy, Ocean Doctor has formed the Cuba-U.S. Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), comprising private sector investors, corporations, entrepreneurs and NGOs that recognize that it is in their best business interests to contribute to creating a sustainable future for Cuba and committed to following guidelines for sustainable development that ensures the protection of Cuba's environment, culture and communities. CUSP will facilitate constructive engagement and information exchange between CUSP members and the Cuban community; facilitate the collaborative development of innovative solutions and initiatives focused on balancing economic development and environmental and cultural conservation; and serve as a credible body to educate the public and inform conservation policy initiatives with governmental agencies in both the U.S. and Cuba. CUSP has the opportunity to benefit a growing number of Cuban entrepreneurs as the country steadily increases small-scale privatization. In collaboration with their U.S. counterparts, members of the partnership can exchange information on a broad range of sustainable business practices. The first CUSP meeting was held in Washington, DC in May 2015.



**Environmental Diplomacy:** Ocean Doctor has been leading environmental diplomacy efforts focused on enhancing government-to-government collaboration in marine science and conservation between the U.S. and Cuba. In spring 2014, Ocean Doctor organized and led meetings among Cuban scientists, the Cuban ambassador, and the head of U.S. relations at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations (MINREX) with Members of Congress, the U.S. Department of State and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to explore collaborative projects and chart next steps. These efforts helped lay the groundwork for a recent government-to-government meetings focused on marine research and conservation.



 **About Us:** Ocean Doctor is a nonprofit organization established in 2004, based in Washington, DC, a project of The Baum Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in San Francisco. Cuba Conservancy, an Ocean Doctor program, is built on more than 15 years of work by Ocean Doctor president, Dr. David E. Guggenheim, who directs the program. Cuba Conservancy's mission is to establish sustained collaboration between Cuba and the U.S. to ensure enduring, locally-supported marine research and conservation programs in Cuba; contribute to major advances in the scientific understanding of Cuba's environment; achieve meaningful, long-lasting conservation for Cuba's marine ecosystems; develop long-term policies and solutions to environmental challenges in Cuba that support both the natural environment and local communities; forge long-term collaborative relationships with our Cuban colleagues; help train the next generation of Cuban marine scientists.

### Selected Media Coverage:

- **EcoWatch:** [What Becomes of Cuba After the Embargo Is Lifted?](http://bit.ly/1FEo4ff) - <http://bit.ly/1FEo4ff>
- **RT TV-The Big Picture:** [Cuba's Environment After the Embargo](http://bit.ly/1DKN5X9) <http://bit.ly/1DKN5X9>
- **NPR-Science Friday:** [Conserving Cuba's Coral Reefs](http://bit.ly/1AV3nwU) <http://bit.ly/1AV3nwU>
- **EcoWatch:** [OMG, I Thought You Were Dead!](http://bit.ly/1E5v7ME) <http://bit.ly/1E5v7ME>
- **CBS-60 Minutes:** [The Gardens of the Queen](http://bit.ly/uu9Dic) <http://bit.ly/uu9Dic>
- **Science:** [U.S. and Cuba Take Tentative Steps Toward Greater Marine Science Collaboration](http://bit.ly/1vozlu9) <http://bit.ly/1vozlu9>