AIDA OPPOSES TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS NEAR THREATENED CORAL REEF

Nestled at the tip of Baja California Sur, the Cabo Pulmo coral reef is an ecological jewel. One of just three of its kind on the Pacific coast of the Americas, the 20,000-year-old reef is home to over 800 species of marine animals.

Coral reefs are notoriously fragile – Cabo Pulmo was pushed to the brink in the 1980s by overfishing, but the Mexican government intervened in 1995 and declared the reef a national park. Since then, the reef has flourished.

But now a series of large-scale tourism developments threaten to irrevocably alter the environment of the coastline and jeopardize the delicate ecological balance that sustains the reef. Mexican developers plan to build three large resorts called Cabo Riviera, Cabo Cortes, and El Anhelo Resort, adding up to a total of over 10,000 hotel rooms, three marinas, and at least three golf courses.

These developments would disrupt the sediment structure of the coastline, pollute the waters, bleach the coral, choke off the rich biodiversity of the reef, and profoundly impact the economic viability of the small communities that depend on the ecosystem services that stand to be disrupted.

Unfortunately, even though Mexico intervened to protect Cabo Pulmo from overfishing, the country’s environmental laws and development standards are not strict enough to shield the reef from these types of developments. AIDA has been working with local organizations in Baja California to file a request that the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention (SRC) – an international treaty designed to conserve threatened wetlands – conduct a formal assessment of the proposed projects and recommend specific measures to protect Cabo Pulmo.

Time is of the essence – Mexico’s environmental authority is in the final stages of reviewing the impact assessment for the El Anhelo development. “Unfortunately,” says AIDA legal advisor Sandra Moguel, “the environmental authorities do not take into account the economic value of the ecosystem services supplied by the reef.”

In the coming months, AIDA will evaluate other international legal recourses and continue to pressure the SRC to intervene. Visit our website for the most up-to-date information about the fight to protect the reef. [Your contribution](http://www.aida-americas.org/en/donate) will support our work to ensure that these rash developments don’t wipe out 20,000 years of precious ecology at Cabo Pulmo.