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Dear Editors,

I am pleased to submit our manuscript “Experience with formal access regime policies influences compliance and enforcement behaviors of common-pool resource users” for consideration as an article in *Conservation Biology*.

The overexploitation of common-pool resources is a major threat to biodiversity. This challenge is intensified in many settings for which central effective management is limited. Governance regimes that assign exclusive access to support collective action are increasingly promoted to foster local environmental stewardship and consequent sustainable use. However, empirical evidence shows mixed results about the relationship between formal access regimes and local environmental stewardship.

Using the opportunity provided by overlapping access policies in small-scale fisheries we tested how users’ experience with exclusive access relates to compliance and peer-enforcement. We conducted lab-in-the-field experiments with small-scale fishers. Fishers’ compliance and peer-enforcement decisions were compared in a common-pool-resource game. Treatments differed in framing to represent exclusive access and pseudo-open access regimes, both of which these fishers face in real life. Our experimental approach takes care of confounders that are likely to affect previous studies such as lack of counterfactuals, selection-biases, and biases related to the self-reporting of sensitive behavior. The evidence we present supports the premise that collective exclusive access policies can foster the internalization of key stewardship behaviors, such as compliance and peer-enforcement.

Our work significantly contributes to advancing common-pool resource management by providing experimental support to collective resource governance under exclusive access. Our findings should be of interest to environmental and sustainability scientists as well as to managers and policymakers working towards the sustainability of natural common-pool resources. Given the broad readership and impact of *Conservation Biology*, we consider it to be the best journal to feature our work.

Thank you for your consideration.   
Sincerely,

Maria Ignacia Rivera-Hechem on behalf of all co-authors

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