

Economic Important of Manta Ray Watching Tourism in Dampier Strait, Raja Ampat, West Papua, Indonesia

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Abstract : Manta ray is an icon for tourism in Raja Ampat. The tourist volume has been increased for the past ten years which up to approximately 23,000 tourists in 2017. Since 2013, Conservation International Indonesia deployed satellite and acoustic tags on manta ray in Dampier strait to track the species and identify the aggregation areas. These findings encourage the government and the local community to boost conservation through the management of marine protected areas for tourism purposes. Community in Dampier strait including the village of Arborek, Kurkapa, Kapisawar, and Sawingray involved in variety of small scale tourism business including homestay, dive shop, tour operator, and crafts. Working groups of related local businesses were established to support the local community and to ensure the sustainability of the economic viability and environmental sustainability. In order to analyze the economic benefits of manta ray tourism, this study was conducted to identify the number of local business in Dampier Strait and the economic impacts in terms of local finance security, social, humanity, individual, and physical assets. The results of this study identify 30 homestays, 2 dive shops, 10 tour operators, 30 women involved in crafts, and about 50 villagers worked for dive resorts. In addition to community assets, we confirmed the welfare of community has been improved in terms of food security, households, education for children, savings, and health insurance.

Keywords : marine wildlife tourism, elasmobranch, conservation, ecotourism, co-management, economic viability, environmental sustainability

Conference Title : ICCMT 2018 : International Conference on Coastal and Marine Tourism

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : October 08-09, 2018