

C O N N E C T I O N S
Newsletter of the National
Marine Protected Areas Center

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The mission of the National MPA Center is to provide information, tools, and strategies for the effective design and management of the nation's system of marine protected areas.

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First Year Wrap Up of Education Workshops: Lessons Learned

The National MPA Center has wrapped up its first year of workshops for educators around the country. Held in Wye River, Maryland, Morro Bay, California, and Two Harbors, Minnesota, the workshops succeeded in gathering nearly 100 representatives from aquaria, national wildlife refuges, national estuarine reserves, Sea Grant, and various educational non-profit organizations, who discussed marine protected areas regionally and nationally. The participants learned about MPAs, the Executive Order that outlined an initiative for action on MPAs in the United States, and the National Marine Protected Areas Center that was established as part of the Executive Order. They also heard about American attitudes regarding MPAs, research efforts, and the social science that impacts MPAs.

Many of the participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to network, while others were pleased with the regional focus of each workshop.

Some of the comments submitted include:

“Having little background knowledge before attending this workshop, I am now much better prepared to take the MPA message and incorporate it into our education and outreach programs.”

“MPAs are the bigger picture of what each attending organization represents. This workshop allows for an easy avenue to develop partnerships and utilize shared resources.”

“After attending this workshop I feel confident that I could call the contacts that I met to seek out answers to questions. Currently our programs address a variety of MPA themes such as habitat, pollution, resources, food web, and animal diversity, and now I feel more informed to provide MPA issues alongside this information.”

“I gathered new ideas for teaching MPA themes and messages, learned about websites I was unaware of, and heard about some Great Lakes agencies and programs that I didn’t know about before this workshop.”

“I realized that the idea of MPAs is important and needs to be addressed more. I believe I have better resources to design and implement more programming surrounding MPAs.”

“I have enough MPA knowledge, resources, and contacts to develop an online module to provide general information for K-12 students and educators, possibly with a focus on maritime / coastal heritage.”

Look for a summary of the workshops in the coming months. To view the presentations and read more about the education program and its workshops, visit http://mpa.gov/mpabusiness/mpacenter/education/sup_ed_workshops.html.

NOAA’s Online Photo Library: A Public Resource

One of the unique attributes of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s online library is its extensive and diverse photo collection, which spans five centuries. It contains about 25,000 photos capturing the work and observations of NOAA personnel chasing tornadoes, flying into hurricanes, battling stormy seas, tagging turtles or sharks, taking scientific readings at the South Pole, monitoring the health of coral reefs, or engaging in other tasks that relate to monitoring our environment and the health of our planet.

Because of NOAA's broad base of scientific inquiry, expertise, and geographic range, the NOAA photo collection includes thousands of images of weather, space, shores, coastal seas, and marine species, ranging from the great whales to the tiniest plankton.

The photo library can be viewed in several ways. By clicking on the "Collections" button, a user can select various program "albums" from which to browse, such as that of the National Undersea Research Program, National Marine Fisheries Service, and offices within the National Ocean Service, including the National Marine Sanctuary and National Estuarine Research Reserve programs, two of NOAA's MPA programs. Users may also click on the "Browse" button, and view 50 thumbnail images at a time. Finally, a search function using keywords is another effective option. Each of the photos has a descriptive caption, outlining the action and place depicted.

All of the library's photos are in JPEG format and are available as thumbnails, 700 pixel-wide, and high-resolution images. Any user, inside or outside NOAA, can download images for use in publications, presentations, or websites. A few images are copyrighted and are noted as such.

Check out the Photo Library's at <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/>. For questions, write to mpalibrary@noaa.gov.

Mapping Tool (MarIS) Nearly Ready for Piloting at Marine Sanctuaries

One of the latest products coming out of the MPA Center's Training and Technical Assistance Institute in Charleston, South Carolina, a partnership with NOAA's Coastal Services Center, is MarIS, a mapping tool developed for users with little or no experience with geographic information systems (GIS). Although MarIS functions within standard GIS software, it simplifies the format and allows the user to review data and generate standard maps for presentations, reports, or press releases. Developed in partnership with both the National Marine Sanctuary Program and the National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science, MarIS will be piloted at a few of NOAA's national marine sanctuaries sites in California in the coming months.

The sanctuaries that will pilot the product—Cordell Bank, Monterey Bay, and the Gulf of the Farallones—plan to apply MarIS data and functionality during their management plan review process. Using base MarIS data, in conjunction with more localized or sanctuary-specific data, these groups will evaluate long-term management priorities for the three sanctuary sites.

The easy-to-use mapping component within MarIS will enable less technical staff to create maps and other products for public scoping meetings or scientific advisory panels, while allowing the limited GIS staff to focus on more complex data analysis or manipulation.

The current version of MarIS contains water depth measurements, sea surface temperature, boundaries, and other data for a specific area. While MarIS' initial target audience is the National Marine Sanctuary Program, other coastal, Great Lakes, and marine management organizations or agencies may find MarIS useful once it's fully developed.

For further information about MarIS, contact Kimberly Cohen at Kimberly.Cohen@noaa.gov.

DID YOU KNOW?

On the National MPA website, you can find an atlas of MPAs that have been inventoried. You can view online maps according to region (viewing actual spatial boundaries) or using locator maps (specific grouping of sites). Once map files and related data collections are complete, a thematic series of maps will be available on the website, which will allow users to see various combinations of programs, selected MPA networks, and regions of the country. To view the atlas, go to www.mpa.gov and then click on the MPA Inventory link.

States and Regions Provide Essential Guidance For Collecting Data for MPA Inventory

Much of the headway made by the MPA inventory team is because of the guidance of the state advisory group. Currently comprised of nine representatives of coastal and island regions around the country, the state advisory group was formed in April of this year.

The group, which meets via conference call on a regular basis, has assisted the MPA Center and inventory team with advice on how to coordinate data collection across multiple agencies in states and regions most efficiently and effectively. The members are sensitive to MPA issues and concerns in their states and regions, and so provide valuable insight into the data collection review and approval process.

In one instance, members of the working group helped determine the levels to which MPAs should be defined as outlined in the MPA Executive Order. The Executive Order makes specific mention of MPAs for conservation and resource protection, but many states have marine areas that are protected for other reasons. These sites may contain submerged cable corridors, or they may be set aside for swimming or military purposes, for example. With the advisory group's recommendation, the MPA inventory team decided on a phased approach to their data collection: they are first focusing on the intended definition of MPAs as listed in the Executive Order, and will consider de facto sites that are protected for other reasons in a second phase.

In another case, an advisory group member pointed out potential conflicts with tribal access issues, and urged the inventory team to consider spiritual and cultural concerns when approaching MPA inventory work.

The state advisory group has a separate and distinct role from the MPA Federal Advisory Committee. The state advisory group members provide a state perspective on MPA inventory data collection. The federal advisory committee, which is nearly in place, will be made up of representative stakeholder groups and will provide advice and recommendations to the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior on implementation of aspects of the MPA Executive Order.

As the work of the MPA inventory team progresses, it will continue to lean on the state advisory group for input and leadership. The advisory group's ability to guide the inventory team and take ownership of much of the data collection process remains a vital component of the MPA Center's work.

Members of the MPA State Advisory Group currently include:

Brian Baird, Ocean Program Manager, Resources Agency of California;
Athline Clark, Special Project Coordinator in Hawaii and Vice Chair of the Advisory Group;
Kathleen Leyden, State Planner, Maine's State Planning Office;
Susan Snow-Cotter, Assistant Director, Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs;
Catherine Cunningham, Chief, Michigan's Coastal Management Program, Department of Environmental Quality;
Daryl Jones, Office Director, Coastal Ecology Office, Department of Marine Resources, Mississippi;
Nan Evans, Coastal Ocean Program Manager, Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development;
Ernesto Diaz, Director, Puerto Rico's Coastal Zone Division; and
Jerry Davis of Guam.

For more information about the MPA inventory team and its work, contact John Lopez at John.Lopez@noaa.gov.

Regional Website on West Coast MPAs Launching Soon

In the coming weeks, the west coast will have access to a new MPA online resource developed by the National Marine Protected Areas Center's Science Institute and the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS).

In the past few years, more focus has been put on MPAs as a way to address ocean conservation needs, as more concerns are raised about the health of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. As a result, many agencies are considering using MPAs as a management tool, paired with other management approaches, to protect the nation's most

vital marine habitats and resources. Presently, over a dozen governmental MPA planning efforts are underway on the west coast. Many overlap in jurisdiction, ecosystems covered, and stakeholders affected.

The MPA Center's Science Institute and COMPASS saw a need for a simple resource that any interested party could use to keep apprised of MPA planning and objectives. This website would also connect users to the latest public discussions about how MPAs might work as one type of management tool. To this end, the new website will focus solely on factual data about each process, relying heavily on details provided by each agency. It will not address broader policy issues or advocate any particular position on MPA issues.

The new website, www.PacificMPA.org, will offer current information about federal and state planning efforts to establish new MPAs or to revise the management of existing MPAs in California, Oregon, and Washington state. This "one-stop-shopping" clearinghouse will contain summaries and timelines for all formal MPA planning processes in the region, including a calendar of events and public meetings, environmental documents for review, links to MPA agency websites, and regular email updates about upcoming events or new developments.

With www.PacificMPA.org as a model, the National MPA Center plans to seek regional partnerships over the next year to establish other online regional MPA clearinghouses. The National MPA Center expects these websites to provide stakeholders with easy access to regional information about MPA planning procedures and coordination among federal, state, and territorial agencies.

For details about [PacificMPA.org](http://www.PacificMPA.org), contact Sarah Lyons at Sarah.Lyons@noaa.gov. For more information about partnering with the National MPA Center for other regional MPA clearinghouses, contact Dana Topousis at Dana.Topousis@noaa.gov.

Feature: The Virgin Islands: St. Croix East End Marine Park

Earlier this year, the U.S. Virgin Islands government began examining management plans for a marine park in St. Croix. The marine park, called the East End Marine Park, was identified as part of a series of marine parks under the island's national action plan to conserve coral reefs. The long-term goal of the action plan is to ensure sustainable economic, cultural, social, and environmental uses of coral reef ecosystems.

In mid July 2002, the Virgin Islands sponsored public hearings about the East End Marine Park, particularly focusing on the creation of a management plan for the park. During the course of these hearings, several concerns were raised, which the advisory committee addressed in a revised plan. These concerns included the loss of recreational fishing from the shore, so a revision was made to begin a no-take area boundary at a minimum of 100 feet from the shoreline.

Other concerns clarified in the updated management plan included the installation, maintenance, ownership and cost of moorings, illegal fishing and/or ignoring of fishing regulations, destructive fishing practices, costs associated with the park, and the definitions of what was allowed within the park.

The East End Marine Park is about 60 square miles, with a shoreline park 17 miles long. The no-take areas provide spawning, nursery, and residence areas for various habitats and species. Swimming, diving, and boating are encouraged in these areas, but commercial and recreational fishing are not allowed.

There are several species listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act that will gain further protection within the park. These species include the brown pelican, green turtle, hawksbill turtle, humpback whale, leatherback turtle, and the peregrine falcon. In addition, various species of fish and fowl identified as threatened, along with endangered habitats, including seagrasses, mangroves, and coral reefs, exist within the marine park's boundaries.

Divers, who may damage corals and other marine organisms through physical contact using their hands, body, equipment, and fins, are one of the major negative stresses on this area. Divers who take marine organisms, such as lobsters, conch, shells, and corals, cause long-term harm to the marine environment. Small boats can also contribute significant damage to habitats and species through discharging oil and septic, causing anchor damage, leaving prop scars, experiencing groundings, and disturbing wildlife.

While the consequences of fishing in this area are complex, the most obvious effects of fishing come from the chain of events that occur as more fish are plucked from the waters. An ecosystem can change dramatically when top predators, usually the larger fish, are removed, potentially causing an imbalance in the food chain, which results in fewer and smaller fish. Removal of herbivorous fish can dramatically alter the balance between algal and coral communities. Illegal fishing tends to cause the most damage.

In the East End Marine Park area, legal, full-time commercial fishers have not been identified as the main source of this critical threat. In fact, many commercial fishers actively work to conserve the fish resources on St. Croix, in order to sustain the fishery for future use.

There are several proposed zone descriptions within the East End Marine Park, including no-take areas; turtle wildlife preserve areas; recreational areas which may allow snorkeling, diving, and boating; and open fishing areas where there are no restrictions on fishing, boating, and diving.

As the management plan for the park undergoes further revisions, there are three other ongoing components of the marine park project. These include a resource description report, a socio-economic assessment, and a management framework for a system of MPAs.

To read the St. Croix East End Marine Park Management Plan, go to <http://www.viczmp.com/>.

Question of the Month

Does the National MPA Center designate or manage marine protected areas?

The National MPA Center does not designate, create, or manage MPAs. The MPA Center does provide information, tools, strategies, and training for the effective design and management of the nation's network of marine protected areas.

Upcoming Events and Conferences

Highlight on RecFish II: Impacts of MPAs on Marine Recreational Fishing
February 23-26, 2003, St. Pete Beach, Florida

NOAA Fisheries announces RecFish II, a symposium for marine recreational fishermen and others interested to deliberate the evolving use of marine protected areas. Organized jointly with Sea Grant and the National Marine Protected Areas Center, RecFish II will bring together diverse segments of the marine recreational fishing community for a focused dialogue on MPA planning and implementation. The goal will be to produce a formal document highlighting the views and inputs of attendees, including recommendations on efficacy and equity issues. These will then be made available to marine fisheries managers, policy makers, and related advisory groups actively involved in various MPA processes. For more information about the symposium, registration, and hotel accommodations go to:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/RecFishII.html>

November 2002

11 - 15: 55th Annual Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, Xel Ha, Mexico: http://www.gcfi.org/55th_gcfi.htm

14 - 16: Fish Expo and Workboat, Northwest 2002, Seattle, WA:
<http://www.fishexposeattle.com/>

January 2003

TBD: World Wildlife Fund conference on MPAs

6-9: Coastal Geotools Conference, Charleston, SC. The goal is to promote understanding and applied uses of geospatial data and tools for studying and effectively managing the coast: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/GeoTools>

February 2003

23 - 26: RecFish II, St. Pete Beach, FL: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/RecFishII.html>

April 2003

14 - 18: George Wright Society Biennial Conference, Protecting Our Diverse Heritage: The Role of Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites, San Diego, CA:
<http://www.georgewright.org/2003.html>

May 2003

11 - 16: The Fifth Annual Science and Management of Protected Areas Association (SAMPAA) Conference, Victoria, British Columbia:
http://www.sampaa.org/sampaa_conference.htm

July 2003

13-17: Coastal Zone '03, held in Baltimore, Maryland. Theme is coastal zone management through time: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz2003>
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