

MPA CONNECTIONS

Newsletter of the National Marine Protected Areas Center

September 2003

The mission of the National Marine Protected Areas Center is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas. *MPA Connections* was launched to meet continuing calls by agency and external stakeholders for information about MPA Center activities.

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Clarifying Misconceptions about Marine Protected Areas (Sixth Part in a Series)

Misconception: Marine protected areas are strictly an American concept.

Reality: While marine protected areas have been used as a management tool in the United States for decades, many other countries are also focusing on the effectiveness and use of MPAs.

Here are a few international examples.

--In Australia, the government is developing a national system of marine protected areas, and in the last decade alone, has declared more than 78 marine protected areas. The

government's goal is to create a system that is comprehensive, adequate, and representative.

--Canada is also working on developing a network of MPAs. Under its Oceans Act, it has identified 13 areas of interest across the nation. By identifying these key areas, the Canadian government hopes to facilitate the evolution of the national process for establishing MPAs, to protect certain areas that need early protection and management, and to evaluate and demonstrate the effects of MPAs in marine conservation and protection. Canada designated its first MPA, the Endeavour Hydrothermal Vents located southwest of Vancouver Island, in March 2003.

--In Southeast Asia, increasing threats to biodiversity come from coastal development, collecting of endangered species, ornamental trading, overexploitation, pollution, and tourism. Countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam each have an MPA system, and are evaluating their respective MPA status, threats, and management.

--South Africa and Mozambique just this month announced four new MPAs that include mangroves, coral reefs, estuaries, and hundreds of fish species. With MPAs already established in Kenya and Tanzania, an MPA network is underway in the region to protect coastal biodiversity and help alleviate pressure on declining fish stocks. And in West Africa, Senegal's fisheries minister announced the creation of four MPAs in the country's coastal zone to sustain fisheries and protect biodiversity.

--In July, European environment ministers announced that a network of protected areas to safeguard sea fish and coral from the northeast Atlantic Ocean to the Baltic Sea was needed by 2010.

While marine protected areas are gaining a new emphasis as a resource management tool in the United States, they are also garnering strong notice internationally. The World Parks Congress, a symposium of 3,000 representatives from land and marine protected areas around the globe, gathered in South Africa this month for 10 days. One of the congress's recommendations calls on governments to increase the amount of protected marine and coastal areas in their waters.

To read more about marine protected areas in the U.S., visit <http://mpa.gov>.

MPA Social Science Research Workshop
Held for Caribbean and South Florida Region

Last month, the MPA Center's Science Institute convened its first regional workshop based on the Institute's recently developed national strategy on MPA social science research. The workshop was held on St. Croix, part of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and

helped establish regional MPA social science research priorities for South Florida and the Caribbean.

The national social science research strategy is the culmination of expertise that the MPA Center's Science Institute pulled from several agency and nongovernmental partners and its social science planning team in 2002 and 2003. The strategy recommends practical ways to meet priority research needs, address issues that cut across social science disciplines, and build national capacity through coordination, partnerships, and agency expertise in and commitment to the social sciences.

The strategy outlines six social science research themes that encompass a broad range of disciplines and address pressing social science needs in the planning, management, and evaluation of MPAs. The six themes are:

- governance, institutions, and processes;
- use patterns;
- attitudes, perceptions and beliefs;
- economics of MPAs;
- communities; and
- cultural heritage and resources.

Participants at the St. Croix regional workshop identified local research needs based on these six social science themes.

One outcome of the workshop is the development of a research program for South Florida and the Caribbean. In addition, the attendees will be able to target social science needs and fill key information gaps through the planning processes of existing programs.

The gathering in St. Croix brought together social scientists and MPA practitioners from around South Florida and the Caribbean. The group included representatives from the Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Puerto Rico, the University of the Virgin Islands, the University of Miami, the University of Puerto Rico, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Biscayne National Park, Buck Island Reef National Monument, the Nature Conservancy, the Ocean Conservancy, the state of Florida, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, Sea Grant, and NOAA's National Ocean Service and National Marine Fisheries Service. Representatives from the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the Puerto Rico Tourism Council were also invited.

This was the first in a series of regional workshops that the Science Institute has planned through 2005.

For more information, or to receive a brochure about the Social Science Research Strategy, contact Sarah.Lyons@noaa.gov.

News from the National Marine Protected Areas Center

--The Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee is planning to meet in San Francisco from November 17-19, 2003, at the San Mateo Marriott Airport Hotel. The hotel is located seven miles south of San Francisco International Airport and 15 miles from downtown San Francisco. It is accessible via public transportation. More information about the meeting agenda and other details will be posted on mpa.gov soon.

--Several pages have been updated or expanded on <http://mpa.gov>. The education pages now include full reports and presentations from the MPA Center's three regional workshops held in 2001 and 2002. In addition, 144 new records were added to the MPA library database, including 127 new publications in the bibliography, seven conferences/workshops, two institutions/organizations, and eight websites. The Federal Advisory Committee pages include a transcript of the inaugural meeting of the committee last June, background documents, presentations, and public comments. Finally, past issues of *MPA Connections* are archived on the website.

--The National MPA Center is planning a redesign of mpa.gov. An internal web development team has been established, and the MPA Center is seeking input from users on information needs. Please take our user survey, available at <http://mpa.gov/backmatter/survey.html>, and tell us how you would like to use the website, what information might be useful to provide, or how the current information might be better organized.

--NOAA and the Department of the Interior have published a Federal Register Notice requesting public comment on the marine managed areas inventory criteria, definitions, and data fields that will be used in the development of an inventory of U.S. marine managed areas (MMAs). This is the first step leading to the list of MPAs called for in Executive Order 13158 and to support state, regional and national analyses of federal, state and tribal MMAs. The deadline for comments was September 22, 2003. Late comments will be accepted through October 3 for this non-regulatory action. The notice is available at:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2003/pdf/03-18733.pdf>

Marine Managed Areas Inventory Helps NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Assess Status of Coral Reef Ecosystems

The National Marine Protected Areas Center is assisting the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program in its assessment of the state of marine managed areas (MMAs) established to protect coral reefs and associated ecosystems in U.S. waters.

Using the MMA inventory database that is currently in progress, the Coral Reef Conservation Program plans to summarize the management status, goals, and challenges of existing coral reef MMAs, identify possible solutions to these challenges, and document the status of MMA efforts relative to the goals of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, which includes strengthening the network of coral reef marine protected areas. The Coral Reef Conservation Program is also working with state data collectors, hired by the MPA Center, to address specific questions while local inventories are collected.

With this collaboration, the Coral Reef Conservation Program can better understand MMA goals, general policies, types of MMAs, extent of MMAs, and efforts to establish networks. The program also plans to study MMA management status, management and regulatory measures, constituent involvement and support, MMA infrastructure, and effectiveness. The Coral Reef Conservation Program will also highlight success stories, which may assist other areas in resolving management issues.

The MMAs under state-level jurisdiction that have been inventoried by the MPA Center to date, and that the Coral Reef program is particularly interested in, include American Samoa, Hawaii, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. An inventory of MMAs within Florida and Puerto Rico waters is underway.

The Coral Reef Conservation Program plans to present preliminary results from the assessment at the 10th meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, set for October 3-6. A final report will be released in 2004.

To learn more about NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, go to <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

Question of the Month:

Where can I find the latest research, studies, publications, and websites on marine protected areas?

Whether you're a researcher, student, decision maker, or scientist, the marine protected areas virtual library contains a wealth of resources that expands every month. You will find links to articles and books, institutions involved in marine protected areas research and management, pertinent websites, and conferences and workshops. The materials focus on national programs and national and regional MPA systems. The library welcomes suggestions for additions to the library. You may write to mpalibrary@noaa.gov with your recommendations.

Visit the library at http://www.mpa.gov/mpaservices/mpa_library.html.

Events And Conferences

September

8-17: World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa; <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/>

14-18: Estuarine Research Federation's 17th Biennial Conference: "Estuaries on the Edge: Convergence of Ocean, Land and Culture," Seattle, Washington; <http://fish.washington.edu/news/erf>

October

3-6: 10th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting, co-hosted by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam; <http://coralreef.gov/meet.cfm#tenth>.

7-11: North American Association for Environmental Education, Anchorage, Alaska; <http://naaee.org/>

18-22: Coastal States Organization, 33rd Annual Meeting, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

25-30: National Estuarine Research Reserves System (NERRS) and the National Estuarine Research Reserves Association (NERRA) Annual Meeting, Charleston, South Carolina

November

2-5: Eighth Estuarine and Coastal Modeling Conference, Monterey Hyatt, Monterey, California; <http://www.oce.uri.edu/ecm8/>.

8-12: National Association of Interpretation, Reno, Nevada; <http://www.interpnet.com/niw2003/>

13-15: Managing Our Nation's Fisheries: Past, Present and Future, Washington, D.C.; <http://www.managingfisheries.org/>

17-19: Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee meeting, San Francisco, California

17-20: Joint Ventures: Partners in Stewardship, Los Angeles, California; <http://www.partnerships2003.org/home.html>

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