

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 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. *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
(Second Part in a Series)**

Misconception: There is a federal mandate to set aside 20 percent, or another percentage, of U.S. waters as marine protected areas.

Reality: The federal mandate on marine protected areas, outlined under Executive Order 13158, does not include any recommendation or requirement for percentages of U.S. waters to be closed off for fishery management purposes, biodiversity or habitat protection, or for other conservation or management purposes.

The language in the Executive Order is clearly stated under Section 1, where the purpose of the Executive Order is articulated. In it, the President states that the purpose of the mandate is to:

- Strengthen the management, protection, and conservation of existing marine protected areas and establish new or expanded MPAs;
- Develop a scientifically based, comprehensive national system of MPAs representing diverse U.S. marine ecosystems, and the nation's natural and cultural resources; and
- Avoid causing harm to MPAs through federally conducted, approved, or funded activities.

To clarify, the Executive Order does not establish any new MPAs nor does it provide new regulatory or statutory authority to establish new MPAs. Rather, it calls for an evaluation, including an inventory, of the current collection of MPAs; the creation of a publicly accessible resource center on MPAs; and the establishment of an MPA Federal Advisory Committee to provide expert guidance throughout implementation of the Executive Order. New MPAs may be established consistent with public review processes specified in existing statutes, such as the National Marine Sanctuaries Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The Executive Order is available in full on the MPA Center's website:
<http://mpa.gov:80/images/frontmatter/execordermpa.pdf>

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is First in U.S. to Complete Marine Managed Areas Inventory

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is the first of the U.S. commonwealths, states, and territories to complete entering information about their marine managed areas into the national database/inventory.

Representatives from CNMI's Division of Fish and Wildlife initiated the project last July by collaborating with other environmental agencies such as the Department of Lands and Natural Resources, the Coastal Resources Management Program, the Division of Environmental Quality, and the Office of the Governor. The Local Coral Reef Advisory Committee conducted a final review of the inventory. The inventory was submitted for inclusion on MPA.gov in November 2002.

Throughout the process, the NOAA and Department of the Interior marine managed areas inventory team worked closely with CNMI's Division of Fish and Wildlife staff to gather suggestions and input about the inventory. In doing so, many problems with the data collection procedure were identified early and improved for the other commonwealths, states, and territories participating in the program.

The CNMI sites, 11 in all, are: the Northern Marianas Islands Conservation Areas of Uracas, Maug, Asuncion, and Guguan Islands, Bird Island Marine Sanctuary, Bird Island Sea Cucumber Reserve, Bird Island Wildlife Conservation Area, Forbidden Island Marine Sanctuary, Laulau Bay Sea Cucumber Reserve, Tank Beach Trochus Reserve,

Kagman Wildlife Conservation Area, Lighthouse Reef Trochus Reserve, the Managaha Marine Conservation Area, and the Sasanhaya Fish Reserve on Rota.

Each area includes a site profile page, maps, general information, legal information, site management, site resources and protections, and links and data sources. The page also includes links to each CNMI MPA's official website which will feature public outreach materials, downloadable brochures and educator packets, recent research endeavors, monitoring programs, rules and regulations, and indicators of management effectiveness once completed.

Personnel at the Division of Fish and Wildlife, along with its partner agencies, the Division of Environmental Quality and the Coastal Resources Management Program, encourage other states and territories to conduct an MPA inventory and are willing to assist as appropriate. The Division of Fish and Wildlife thanks the marine managed areas inventory team for the opportunity to participate in the program.

You can view CNMI's MPA inventory by visiting http://www.mpa.gov/mpaservices/inv_status/sup_cnmiextended.html.

MPA Technology Needs Assessment Underway

When an MPA needs assessment was conducted and published by the MPA Center's Training and Technical Assistance Institute in March 2002, a major concern that arose repeatedly in the assessment was that of technology. Specific technology issues focused on planning and siting MPAs, stakeholder involvement, enforcement, and interagency data sharing. In an effort to better define and expand upon the broad technology topics identified, and in order for the Training and Technical Assistance Institute to effectively meet those technology needs, an MPA technology needs assessment is currently underway.

In January 2003, the Training and Technical Assistance Institute gathered a group of representatives from government, industry, and academia to discuss how to go about honing in on technology needs. The meeting was held during the GeoTools conference in Charleston, South Carolina, and was attended by officials from NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program, Fisheries, and Special Projects Office, as well as officials from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Delaware Coastal Programs, Duke University, the University of Miami, and industry.

The participants discussed various aspects of technology, with particular emphasis on the technology itself, analysis of data, and the communication of results.

The group focused its attention first on the issue of existing, underutilized technology, emphasizing the need for accurate, enforceable boundaries for marine managed areas. While spatial technology is being applied to the delineation of marine boundaries, a

number of technical and non-technical issues arise that impede its overall effectiveness. There is also the need for increased use of remotely operated vehicles, global position systems, and remote sensing for bottom mapping efforts.

The remainder of the discussion focused on mapping needs. The technology for creating these maps and data exists, but it is not being used as effectively as it could be. Baseline mapping and, more specifically, benthic habitat maps were mentioned as key areas. The discussion highlighted the need for high-resolution data, both bathymetry and bottom type.

In terms of data analysis, the participants discussed three primary needs: modeling/prediction, data synthesis/integration, and personnel.

The ability to use data for ecological forecasting or predictive modeling with some level of certainty would be a great tool for managers (for example, forecasting the probability of ship/boat collisions with reefs). Although the ability to use geographic information system (GIS) tools for mapping purposes seems to be increasing within the management community, the full capacity of GIS has not been realized in terms of analytical or decision-making properties. This is largely due to the scarcity of high-quality or high-resolution data. Participants found it useful to synthesize data quickly and integrate that data into the decision-making process. It was suggested that there are not enough technical resources available at each site to complete the necessary analysis and presentation of data. Some commented that they weren't able to have a dedicated GIS/remote sensing staff, while others said that they didn't want a dedicated GIS/remote sensing staff and would prefer to use contractors instead.

The subject of delivering results to stakeholders and constituents was discussed at some length. One participant specifically mentioned the need for the 'cultural and social technology' to easily deliver key data and maps to all interested parties, calling for improved communication tools. There is a great need for tools to confidently communicate results, specifically to legislators and other decision makers.

Following the conversation, the participants prioritized issues for discussion. The top five issues identified by the group included:

1. Application of terrestrial models to the marine environment and across the land-sea interface.
2. Baseline mapping: data requirements to map or model impacts.
3. Data analysis and ecological forecasting.
4. Oceanographic modeling and high-resolution bathymetry.
5. Data sharing.

Participants received a written summary of the meetings. In addition, the results of this meeting and transcripts based on interviews with MPA managers and staff will be incorporated into the technology needs assessment final report, which is scheduled for release in September 2003.

To read the initial MPA needs assessment, or learn more about the Training and Technical Assistance Institute, visit <http://mpa.gov/mpabusiness/mpacenter/training.html>.

Saltwater Community Unites to Tackle Tough Issues on Marine Conservation and Recreation

Eighty representatives of the saltwater fishing and boating community and leaders from the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration came together for an expansive dialogue on marine conservation and recreation issues during a gathering spearheaded by the American Sportfishing Association in St. Pete Beach, Florida, February 24-25, 2003. The group laid the groundwork for collaborative approaches to marine policy-making that better represent and engage the agency's recreational fishing and boating constituency.

The Sportfishing Leadership Conference was co-sponsored by BoatUS, the Billfish Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, International Game Fish Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, and Recreational Fishing Alliance. Commerce Department leaders participating included Dr. Bill Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries; Jack Dunnigan, Director of Sustainable Fisheries for the National Marine Fisheries Service; Rollie Schmitt, Director of Habitat Conservation for NMFS; Dr. Ron Baird, Director of the National Sea Grant College Program; and Margot Jackson, Senior Policy Advisor for the National Marine Sanctuaries Program.

"We had a lot of ground to cover on several longstanding issues, yet everyone came ready to share their perspectives, expertise, and experiences with the common goal to come away with a better understanding of what we need to accomplish together in the future," said Mike Nussman, President and CEO of the American Sportfishing Association. "Saltwater anglers and boaters were well represented by this group, and we appreciated the goodwill and investment of time from Bill Hogarth and other Commerce Department leaders. Everyone demonstrated a strong commitment to work together to keep our ocean fish healthy and protect the fishing and boating experience."

A series of panel presentations prefaced teamwork to come up with resolutions for current obstacles to progress. Presenters covered topics such as catch allocations for commercial and recreational fishing, representation on the eight regional fisheries management councils with responsibility for ocean fisheries and those that migrate inland, and the role of marine protected areas in marine management.

To learn more about MPA history and various protections, visit <http://mpa.gov:80/mpadescriptive/benefits.html>

Are You Satisfied with MPA.gov?

We would like your input regarding the Marine Protected Areas of the United States website. A survey is now available on the mpa.gov home page. Developed to measure your level of satisfaction with the website, it consists of 12 questions and takes approximately five minutes to complete. Please help us improve <http://www.mpa.gov/>.

Events and Conferences

MARCH

4-5: Northeast Region, National Park Service MPA Meeting, Newport, Rhode Island.

APRIL

13-15: Restore America's Estuaries: Saving Our Coastal Heritage, Baltimore, Maryland:
<http://www.estuaries.org/>

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

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

JUNE

4-6: Oceanology International 2003, New Orleans, LA: <http://www.oiamericas.com>

8: Oceans Day

JULY

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

20-24: National Marine Educators Association, Wilmington, North Carolina:
<http://www.marine-ed.org/nmea2003>

AUGUST

10-14: American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting, Quebec City, Canada. Theme is aquatic protected areas as fishery management tools. Abstracts are due February 24, 2003; http://www.fisheries.org/apa_symposium/homepage.htm

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

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