

Gaps to Be Addressed in Management: Advice from Caribbean MPAs

Last November at the 54th annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, scientists and MPA practitioners convened a workshop to discuss the role of socioeconomic concerns in successful MPAs. Titled "Human System Connectivity: A Need for MPA Management Effectiveness", the workshop addressed gaps in the management of Caribbean MPAs, namely in the development of manager and stakeholder capacity and inter-group communication. Participants, including resource users and NGOs, said filling these gaps would help MPAs to achieve their goals of protection and sustainable resource use.

The workshop report provides a list of tips for how practitioners can fill such gaps. In light of the list's potential usefulness to practitioners both inside and outside of the Caribbean region, MPA News has adapted its highlights below.

1. Improve managers' communication skills and knowledge of tools for coordination/participation:

- Train managers in communication skills, business operations, conflict management, facilitation, and community participation through workshops and training courses, such as those offered by the United Nations Environment Programme and other institutions. This is particularly necessary for managers with natural science backgrounds.

2. Strategize MPA issue awareness programs in a proactive manner:

- Develop a regional database of managers and decisionmakers.
- Invite decisionmakers to special events to get them personally involved.
- Develop basic education materials targeted for specific audiences like fishermen, divers, developers, and high-level policymakers.

3. Build stakeholder analysis skills:

- Understand stakeholder needs - such as the continued ability to derive a livelihood from the protected area, if possible - via improved stakeholder assessments.
- Train managers in how to conduct stakeholder analyses themselves.

4. Provide incentives for community representatives participating in the planning process to report back to their constituencies:

- Clarify representatives' responsibilities and publicize their identities.
- Select effective representatives by having clear criteria for selection and a transparent selection process based on understood roles and responsibilities.
- Build capacity of representatives (e.g. how to conduct meetings) and provide them with necessary tools, equipment and rewards.

5. Provide innovative economic incentives and opportunities for resource users:

- Use an eco-enterprise fund to develop new businesses/cottage industries to generate income for the MPA and alternative livelihoods for community members based on local experiences and skills.
- Develop an eco-labeling system for marine products, such as fish and lobster "sustainably" harvested from the MPA.

6. Engage more fishermen and other resource users in research and monitoring programs to foster their interest in conservation:

- Employ resource users as data collectors and analysts wherever feasible.
- Allow users to design their own data-collection programs within guidelines.
- Publicize research results in ways to reach the widest possible audience.

7. Enhance communication between natural and social scientists:

- Educate natural scientists on the need to link and work with social scientists.
- Promote interdisciplinary work and hold interdisciplinary workshops to share information, with attendance as a funding or permit clause.
- Require natural and social scientists to meet together with the community in the beginning to understand needs and share perspectives.

8. Improve practical experience exchanges for MPA managers and resource users:

- Clarify the goals of experience exchanges and study four projects.
- Show benefits of exchanges based on experiences that worked and compile testimonials of success for future proposals.
- Work with stakeholders to develop exchange proposals. Major NGOs can help prepare successful funding proposals for site managers and local conservation NGOs.

9. Expand coordination and communication among sites using different mechanisms and vehicles, both national and international:

- Focus on a few networks to improve coordination rather than start new ones.
- Establish region-wide planning for site selection to ensure better coordination.

For more information

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BOX: More on the "Human System Connectivity..." workshop

The workshop "Human System Connectivity: A Need for MPA Management Effectiveness" was managed by Patrick McConney of the Caribbean Conservation Association; Leah Bunce of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and Georgina Bustamante of The Nature Conservancy. Roughly 25 participants contributed to the outputs of the workshop. The workshop report is available from Patrick McConney at ccacamp@caribsurf.com.

The GCFI symposium also featured a workshop on MPA science, titled "Improving Applications of Science in MPA Design and Management". The report for this workshop is available on the GCFI website (www.gcfi.org) in Microsoft Word format. Spanish translations of both workshop reports will soon be available.

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