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## MPA Training in a Nutshell: On the importance of reflecting on achievements great and small

**Editor's note:** This recurring column, MPA Training in a Nutshell, distills insights and lessons learned from what is likely the largest and longest-running MPA management capacity training program in the world – the [International MPA Capacity Building Team](#) (IMPACT). Run by the US National MPA Center (within NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries), the program has trained thousands of MPA managers in more than 40 countries.

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The end of a year is a great time for reflection. Often there is a slower pace and some time away from work that allows a few moments to pause and plan.

You have achievements every day in your MPAs. Yet often the challenges, threats, and constraints make us focus on what is not working instead of what is.

Take a few minutes and reflect on your achievements, no matter how small they may seem. They add up. Focus on what worked and what helped you. It refines your planning for the coming year to see how much you accomplished in the current one, and how those achievements can be built upon. For example:

- Did you make a new connection with a stakeholder, regional partner, or another MPA?
- Did one of your projects reach a milestone?
- Did a group visit your site and gain an understanding of their connection to your MPA?
- Did you contact another agency or NGO to start a conversation that you have wanted to start for awhile?
- Did you learn something new?
- Did you create a plan for the coming year?

We encourage you to share these or other achievements with your colleagues. You can use a newsletter, or awards, a staff retreat, or simply an email to your team. We also encourage you to share your positive perspective by thanking team members or partners for their part in your MPA's success.

In our MPA management training workshops, we have seen firsthand the benefits of managers' sharing their accomplishments and appreciation. What may seem the smallest of successes can, when shared, be just the spark a colleague needs to keep moving forward despite the challenges faced.

Sending thanks to all of you for all you do to protect special places. May the new year bring stronger connections, many achievements, and ample moments to be outside and enjoying our special places!

### **For more information:**

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