MPA Training in a Nutshell: On the MPA Rapid Vulnerability Assessment Tool

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. MPA News profiled IMPACT in our July 2015 issue.

By Anne Nelson, Lauren Wenzel, and Gabrielle Johnson (IMPACT Team)

Kudos to the examples of proactive climate management in last month's MPA News coverage. The examples from colleagues in Hawaii, Caribbean / Gulf of Mexico, Mediterranean, and Madagascar provide important lessons to consider with your MPA team as you move through your own climate assessment, adaptation planning, and plan review. Discussing these examples with your team can be a good way to start, restart, or reevaluate your climate planning process.

One tool to consider for your MPA or MPA network is the Rapid Vulnerability Assessment Tool developed by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) for North American MPAs. (The tool works for MPAs outside North America, too.) It is a good complement to MPA management planning and adaptation efforts.

Prepared for CEC by EcoAdapt, the tool allows managers to conduct a relatively quick assessment of their site's vulnerability to climate change. A basic assessment can be done in just a day. The process provides valuable insights into how non-climate stressors could interact with climate impacts, and how to identify resources likely to be most affected by climate stressors.

The assessment can be adapted to each site's needs and circumstances. For example, it can account for how much information you have available to review and integrate, and whether you are engaging external stakeholders or conducting an internal assessment.

The tool includes a user guide, worksheets, and examples of completed worksheets. It is available in Spanish, French and English. An hour-long webinar earlier this year walked users through the tool; a recording is here.

Please feel free to share your experience with the tool in the MPA discussion list (MPA List) to inform other MPAs in using it.

For more information:

Anne Nelson, on contract to NOAA National MPA Center. Email: anne.nelson@noaa.gov; Web: marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov/nationalsystem/international/