

Notes & News

This month: Second International MPA Congress

The Second International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC2) will be held 20-24 May in Washington, D.C. (U.S.) in conjunction with the International Marine Conservation Congress. The joint conference website is www2.cedarcrest.edu/imcc/index.html. Many workshops, sessions, and posters on topics of interest to MPA practitioners will be presented, including on MPA design, management, governance, effectiveness assessment, capacity building, climate change, and cultural and socioeconomic factors.

MPA News and its sister newsletter *Marine Ecosystems and Management* (MEAM) will both be there to report on the events and outcomes. If you see *MPA News* editor John Davis, MEAM editor Tundi Agardy, or other editorial board members walking by, please stop us and say hello. We look forward to seeing you there.

U.S. announces charter system of MPAs

The U.S. National Marine Protected Areas Center has announced its charter list of 225 existing MPAs as the first to join the National System of Marine Protected Areas. Comprising MPAs across all levels of government, the system is intended to enhance collective efforts to protect the nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and to foster sustainable fisheries production.

This is the first time the U.S. has had an overarching mechanism for coordinating management of its MPAs. There are roughly 100 agencies at various government levels across the country with management responsibility for marine protected areas.

"This new national system provides a mechanism for all levels of government to work together to leverage resources, coordinate regional planning, and manage MPAs as a system," said Jane Lubchenco, Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "We will continue to work with federal, state, tribal and local governments and stakeholders to share best practices for effectively achieving common marine conservation goals."

The national system does not bring state, territorial, or local sites under federal authority, nor does it restrict or change the management of any MPA. At present it is more of an institutional network than an ecological one, although the intent is to build toward the latter.

Here are figures for the national system:

- It covers 10% of all U.S. waters.
- However, most of the system (78%) is contained within a small number of very large MPAs in Hawai'i and other Pacific Islands - notably the 366,000-km² Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- About 25% of the national system's total area is considered no-take, due mostly to the Papahānaumokuākea site, in which commercial fishing will be banned in 2011. By itself, Papahānaumokuākea accounts for nearly all of the area considered no-take in the system.

The National MPA Center will begin work this year to identify gaps in the national system to inform future MPA planning. The gap analyses will progress on a region-by-region basis, and will be conducted with institutional partners and stakeholders ("U.S. Releases Final Framework for National MPA System", [MPA News 10:6](#)).

Existing MPAs were invited in November 2008 to nominate themselves for inclusion in the system. To be eligible for inclusion, each site had to meet a set of criteria, including that the site had a management plan and that it contributed to at least one priority conservation objective - such as protecting key nursery grounds or ecologically important geographic features. Cultural, natural heritage, and fishery MPAs were accepted.

A second round of site nominations will begin later this year. There is room for growth in the system: the 225 charter members

represent just one-eighth of the nation's approximately 1800 designated MPAs. For more information on the national system, including a list of the 225 charter sites and maps of where they are located, go to http://mpa.gov/national_system/national_system.html.

In conjunction with the announcement of the national system, the national MPA Federal Advisory Committee released two sets of recommendations. The first, "Ecological Resilience and Gap Analysis of the National System of Marine Protected Areas", explains the importance of resilience for meeting the goals of the national system, and provides guidelines on applying resilience thinking to a gap analysis of the system. The second set of recommendations, "Guiding Principles for Ecological Gap Analysis of the National System of Marine Protected Areas", builds on the first set, with principles for gap analysis and guidance on assessing different types of gaps in a protected area system. The sets of recommendations are available at www.mpa.gov.

British man wins "Best Job in the World" contest

A 34-year-old project manager from the U.K. has won the so-called "Best Job in the World" - a six-month position as island caretaker in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In an online contest for the position, Ben Southall beat out more than 34,000 competitors from over 160 countries. The job, devised by Tourism Queensland as a unique way to market the region internationally, will pay Southall AU \$150,000 (US \$100,000). His responsibilities will primarily involve exploring the marine park and surrounding islands, then describing those experiences on the internet ([MPA News 10:7](#))

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority (GBRMPA), which manages the marine park, worked with Tourism Queensland to coordinate an introduction for the winning applicant, including a tour of GBRMPA facilities and briefings with key park staff. For more information on the "Best Job in the World" contest or to view Southall's blog postings and video reports, go to www.islandreefjob.com.

Course available on Caribbean MPAs

Students and practitioners interested in MPAs in the Caribbean region are invited to enroll in an international course to be held from 24 June to 3 July 2009 at the Academic Unit of Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo, Mexico. The course "Marine Protected Areas for the South Florida, Mexican Caribbean, and Mesoamerican Region" analyzes ecological and socioeconomic aspects of MPA design and management, and will be co-led by researchers from the National University of Mexico and Florida International University. Fellowships for the course are available for Latin American students. For more information, e-mail Ligia Collado Vides at colladol@fiu.edu.

First conference held on marine mammal MPAs

More than 200 people from 40 countries attended the First International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA), held in late March and early April in Hawai'i. The meeting aimed to network marine mammal scientists, MPA managers, and conservationists from around the world.

One action item that emerged from the event is to create a central website with management plans for all marine mammal protected areas worldwide. The conference also called for urgent research to define and map important marine mammal habitats, for the purpose of planning relevant MPA networks in national waters and the high seas. The event was hosted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS).

The meeting also marked the opening of discussions to explore a trilateral "sister sanctuary" arrangement among HIHWNMS, Glacier Bay National Park (U.S.), and the Commander Islands State Biosphere Reserve - Russia's largest MPA. Humpback whales migrate between the three sites. For more information on the conference, go to www.icmmpa.org.

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