

Workshop Results: Tips from Scientists on Improving Science in MPA Management

Scientists and managers from more than 20 countries gathered in July to share information on the role of science in MPA management. In a workshop held prior to the Coastal Zone '01 conference in Cleveland, Ohio (US), attendees discussed ways to improve coordination of science and management, including through the enhanced participation of local stakeholders.

The three-day international workshop -- directed by the US National Ocean Service and sponsored by several organizations -- culminated in a brainstorming session to provide advice on improving the conduct and use of MPA science. The workshop participants and their results were divided into two general groups -- scientists and managers.

MPA News has excerpted below the advice of the scientist group, which had members from eight countries on four continents. The group included both natural and social scientists. (Advice from the managers will be printed in the next issue of MPA News.)

The advice from scientists:

On how communication could be improved between scientists and managers...

First there has to be a willingness to communicate.

There need to be partnerships and linkages, including technical advisory boards for MPAs that include both scientists and managers. On research, education, and extension, managers and scientists should work together at all times.

Managers should be trained to ask scientific questions, and scientists should be trained to think in terms of management.

It would be good if, after setting up a management process, managers then came to scientists and told them what they needed and how they would use that information. Conversely, scientists should be more open and available to managers and stakeholders. In some cases, managers should not be able to move forward without technical approval and support from scientists.

In terms of global communication, there is a need for the creation of international research and management networks for MPAs, as well as electronic discussion groups.

On how traditional knowledge can be woven into science and management discussions...

Scientists and managers should treat communities as peers -- listening to them, getting instructions from them, and involving them in some of the data collection. Locals should be involved as translators between the community and scientist/manager team. Scientific information should filter back to the communities so that local stakeholders can see that their involvement in the science has formed a contribution.

Scientists and managers should live in the community for an extended time, allowing for their gathering of first-hand information.

Each group in the community -- categorized by gender, age, employment, etc. -- should be spoken to individually so that all voices are heard. Politicians should also be involved in the scientific dialogue

On how stakeholders can play roles in MPA science...

Involve and motivate all stakeholders throughout the policy and management process, including through voluntary monitoring efforts, education, data collection, and self-reporting.

Scientists and managers must maintain stakeholder interest and long-term commitment to the site's protection. One way this can be done is through annual festivals of monitoring that include training and data collection.

Provide incentives for community participation without being paternalistic.

For more information on the international workshop:

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Source URL: <https://www.openchannels.org/news/mpa-news/workshop-results-tips-scientists-improving-science-mpa-management#comment-0>