

# MPA NEWS



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## Achieving conservation objectives and social equity goals: An interview with Peter Jones on MPA governance

The new book *Governing MPAs: resilience through diversity*, by Peter Jones of University College London, explores the factors that contribute to effective and equitable governance of MPAs. Drawing on case studies from around the world, the book concludes that MPAs require a diversity of governance approaches and incentives to be successful. (The book is available at <http://bit.ly/GoverningMPAs>. By using the discount code DC361, the price is lowered to £40 [US \$67.50].)

MPA News speaks with Jones about his research, below. The full, unabridged interview with Jones, in which he identifies MPAs that he considers well-governed, is available [here](#).

**MPA News:** A key takeaway from your book is that MPA managers should ask themselves, "Is my site achieving its conservation objectives and distributing benefits and costs fairly within the community?" But what if an MPA's official goals focus only on conservation objectives and say nothing about distributing benefits and costs fairly?

**Peter Jones:** The bottom line for the book is that effectiveness, in terms of marine conservation outcomes, must be the variable that MPA governance is evaluated against. It is also clear, however, that MPAs that inequitably attempt to impose restrictions on certain sectors of society for whom there are few if any alternative areas or livelihoods will fail. This is because displaced people become desperate enough to try to breach MPA restrictions and/or because the MPA will be deemed a failure from a socio-economic and political perspective, potentially undermining support for other MPAs. So whilst the effective fulfilment of conservation objectives may be the most important "end", promoting socio-economic equity in fairly distributing costs and benefits must be seen as an important "means".

Several of the case studies indicate that an ideal way of converging such ends and means in MPAs is to ensure that they protect local users from incoming users, be these fishermen from other areas or commercial tourism developments that incur local costs but provide few local benefits. This is an example of how MPAs can effectively achieve conservation objectives and social equity goals, rather than it being a choice between the two. It must also be remembered that long-term sustainability through promoting social-ecological resilience is essential for conservation objectives and social equity goals, a short-term focus on over-exploitation serving only to undermine both.

**MPA News:** Do you view participatory MPA governance as always being preferable to, and more sustainable than, governance that is not participatory?

**Jones:** The book likens different categories of incentives in social systems to trophic groups in ecosystems. Building on this analogy and the evidence from the case studies, it is argued that trying to work out which group of governance incentives is most important in social systems related to MPAs is like trying to work out which functional group of species is most important in marine ecosystems - i.e., it is pointless as they are all important! On this basis, it is not appropriate to identify participatory incentives as being preferable to economic, interpretative, knowledge, or legal incentives as they all have important roles in the governance approach for any given MPA.

Having said that, the case studies do indicate that legal incentives play a particularly important reinforcement role in governance frameworks - such top-down incentives "with teeth" and important regulatory roles perhaps being analogous to apex predators. But such incentives must be combined with other categories of incentive, with no one approach alone being able to provide for the building of social-ecological resilience.

**MPA News:** What do you see next for the study of MPA governance?

**Jones:** The knowledge base to inform and support the designation of MPAs needs to be extended to support their effective management, and the MPA governance analysis framework on which this book is based provides for this. It can be used both as a framework for meta-analyses of MPA governance case studies (for which we are seeking further case studies and funds) and as a means of identifying examples of good practice in terms of effective combinations of incentives that can be transferred between MPAs. This approach allows debates to move on from which governance approach (top-down, bottom-up, market, awareness-raising, or knowledge-sharing) is "best" or "right", towards how these different governance approaches can be combined to promote resilient marine social-ecological systems in the face of increasingly strong driving forces.

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