

MPA NEWS



Published on *MPA News* (<https://mpanews.openchannels.org>)

Mentorship program in Caribbean is pairing up MPA managers across region

A program is underway in the Caribbean to build MPA management capacity through mentor relationships. The program is pairing senior MPA professionals with less-experienced practitioners in the region, and providing a small grant to each pair to support geographic exchanges and knowledge-sharing between them.

Initiated in 2013, the program is managed by the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP) and the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Caribbean region (SPAW-RAC), as part of the activities of the Caribbean MPA Management Network and Forum (CaMPAM). It receives financial support from Italy's development cooperation program.

The mentorship is an outgrowth of CaMPAM's Training of Trainers in MPA Management program - a two-week regional course (plus local training activities) that has been held ten times in the region since 1999. Over the years, senior marine resource professionals approached CaMPAM about developing a mentorship program, aimed at supporting professional development of the next generation of MPA managers across the wider Caribbean.

The program offers eight available mentors, possessing unique sets of expertise and hailing from different areas of the Caribbean. There are currently three active mentor/mentee pairs working together:

- Mentor at Reef Check Dominican Republic; mentee at Guanahacacibes National Park in Cuba
- Mentor at Bonaire National Marine Park; mentee at Caye Caulker Marine Reserve in Belize
- Mentor with CARIBSAVE (<http://caribbean.intasave.org>) in the Eastern Caribbean; mentee at Barbados Coastal Zone Management Unit

"We are very excited about this program, as the concept is many years in the making," says Georgina Bustamante, CaMPAM coordinator.

Below, MPA News talks about the mentoring program with Rich Wilson, executive director of Seatone Consulting, which provides program coordination support.

MPA News: How did CaMPAM develop this program?

Rich Wilson: Senior marine resource professionals from around the Caribbean collaborated closely with the CaMPAM project team to develop strategic lines of action, a program framework, and a work plan to guide the program's early development. Six of these professionals were alumni of the Training of Trainers, and two were close collaborators. We then asked for expressions of interest from junior MPA managers around the region.

The core project team - UNEP-CEP Senior Program Officer Alessandra Vanzella Khouri; CaMPAM Coordinator Georgina Bustamante; former SPAW-RAC Director Helene Souan; and I - analyzed mentee applications to determine appropriate matching of mentees to mentors. Once two professionals were paired, they worked jointly to develop a mentoring agreement to guide the relationship. The mentoring agreement outlines goals of the relationship; specific activities that build mentee knowledge, skills, and competency; methods for ongoing communication and information sharing; and reporting commitments. We now have three agreements guiding the mentor/mentee pairs, and each pair is expected to collaborate for a period of two years or more.

MPA News: What kinds of activities does a mentor/mentee relationship involve?

Wilson: Each relationship is unique and so each mentor/mentee pair has flexibility to manage the relationship. Most pairs engage in some kind of geographic exchange - either the mentee visiting and learning at another site, or the mentor visiting the mentee to bring knowledge, skills, and professional development opportunities. For example, our Bonaire pairing involved two mentees spending a week at the Bonaire National Marine Park in summer 2014 learning about sustainable finance, education and outreach, mooring buoy program development, and enforcement. Whereas the Cuba pairing involved an exchange that focused on community involvement in MPA management, reef monitoring, and lionfish control. Since that time, two of the mentees have been provided additional small grants to apply new knowledge and lead capacity-building activities at their local MPAs.

All mentor/mentee pairs are in regular communication via email and Skype. Mentors regularly support ongoing mentee work and monitor performance improvements based on the goals of the mentoring agreement. All parties are required to participate occasionally in check-in calls with the project team.

MPA News: How much does the program cost for mentees?

Wilson: Mentees do not pay for mentoring. UNEP-CEP covers all expenses with resources attracted from government and NGOs and, in the last year, from the Italian Agency for International Cooperation. Mentors receive a small honorarium at the outset of the relationship.

For more information:

Georgina Bustamante, CaMPAM. Email: gbustamante09@gmail.com

Rich Wilson, Seatone Consulting, US. Email: rich@seatoneconsulting.com

BOX: Study of Caribbean MPAs finds most are making progress toward their goals

An assessment of whether MPAs across the Caribbean are meeting their stated objectives has concluded that most are making progress. The study, which analyzed 31 sites, examined progress toward ecosystem and/or social goals, depending on each site's mix of objectives. Several sites were making significant progress toward ecological and social objectives, while other sites were exhibiting more progress toward one type (typically ecological) than the other (social).

The authors, led by Tracey Dalton of the University of Rhode Island (US), write, "As large-scale regional efforts promote the establishment of additional MPAs, it is useful to know that most of the existing MPAs seem to be working, at least in terms of achieving their goals and objectives, but there is still room for improvement." The study "Are Caribbean MPAs making progress toward their goals and objectives?" appears in the journal *Marine Policy*; the abstract is at www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X14003467

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