

MPA NEWS



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The MPA Agency Partnership: An update on the international group of senior MPA leaders

The MPA Agency Partnership (MPAAP) — a forum of senior government officials responsible for designating and managing MPAs in their respective nations — is nearing its fourth year of operation. Launched in February 2012 ([MPA News 13:5](#)), MPAAP seeks to combine the knowledge and expertise of the world's leading MPA agencies and provide global leadership on MPA issues. The Partnership comprises 16 countries so far, and is looking to add more.

The member nations are Australia, Bahamas, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, France, Italy, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Palau, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, United Kingdom, and the US. (These countries include eight of the thirteen largest EEZs in the world.) Leadership of the group (its Secretariat) is rotating annually, from the US to France to Australia currently.

MPAAP has already published an *MPA Agencies Practical Guide*, a how-to reference for practitioners looking to establish or manage MPAs, led by the French MPA Agency (<https://oct.to/ZkN>). The Partnership met recently in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to discuss their shared agenda, and are now working to help define the marine agenda at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawaii and the 2017 International MPA Congress in Chile.

"When the (US) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries convened MPAAP in 2012, it was a bit of an experiment," says Lauren Wenzel, director of the US National Marine Protected Areas Center. "We knew there was great potential in bringing together the heads of MPA management agencies — the individuals responsible for developing the strategic vision for their countries' programs, as well as making the daily operational decisions. So it's been great to see the Partnership take hold as something that does have real, practical value for this group of extremely busy people. I think the biggest change since the beginning has been a sharpening of our goals to more clearly state them: MPA leadership, capacity development, and broader involvement of citizens, businesses, and others in MPA programs."

Growing the Partnership is another aim, although that growth is likely to be gradual. "While we want the partnership to grow, we do want to do so thoughtfully, so it can remain a manageable size and continue to foster the individual connections among individuals that is one of the great benefits of the partnership," says Wenzel. "We also want to encourage all of the current member countries to be actively engaged. My own vision of the partnership is that it will include the countries that are taking a leadership role in MPA management, and that it will be representative of the diverse conditions and challenges of different regions."

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