

MPA NEWS



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"As an MPA manager, it's nice to know I'm not alone out there": Challenges, successes, and lessons from building effective MPA management networks (Part I - The global networks)

Go to virtually any MPA-related conference around the world and you'll hear the same topics discussed. Fundraising, monitoring, enforcement, engaging stakeholders, etc. It is a truism that MPA managers face many of the same challenges, no matter their location. And there are a number of tools available to help them share solutions and lessons, from publications like this one, to reports, online discussion lists, and more.

But the most valuable way to share that knowledge is often face-to-face, peer-to-peer. When MPA practitioners are able to share their lessons in person and in detail with their fellow practitioners, the exchange is richer and more personal. It also establishes relationships and trust that can be drawn upon for future exchanges.

That is the concept behind MPA management networks. Whether at the national, regional, or global scale, such networks serve to foster knowledge exchange in ways, and at a depth, that other methods cannot.

Building effective MPA management networks requires knowledge and skill, too – particularly when networks span sometimes massive marine areas and multiple languages and cultures. Over the next two issues of *MPA News*, we will examine the challenges and successes of MPA management networks so far, and what lessons they hold for efforts elsewhere. In this issue, we examine the global MPA networking efforts: the World Heritage Marine Programme, Big Ocean, the Transatlantic MPA Partnership, and Important Marine Mammal Areas. Next month we'll go in depth on six different regional MPA networks, including CaMPAM (Caribbean), MedPAN (Mediterranean), RAMPAO (West Africa), and more.

A. The World Heritage Marine Programme's networking efforts: "We want to make real change, not just open-ended sharing"

The UNESCO [World Heritage Marine Programme](#) oversees 49 World Heritage sites across 37 countries, including some of the world's most iconic marine areas like the Great Barrier Reef. Seven years ago, the program conducted an analysis of the core challenges that its sites faced. What the program found was that the challenges all fell in a handful of categories and that the categories were common to most World Heritage (WH) Marine sites. It stood to reason that at least some sites had developed solutions to those challenges, and that those solutions could be shared. This was the origin of WH Marine's management networking efforts, which have grown to become a central focus of the program.

Feeding that networking are UNESCO's regular State of Conservation monitoring surveys of all its sites. These surveys, which track how well each site is maintaining its 'outstanding universal value', allow WH Marine personnel to compare challenges and solutions from their other sites, and foster connections as appropriate – including through twinning arrangements. WH Marine also holds a meeting of all of its site managers every three years. The next scheduled meeting is in 2019.

Fanny Douvere is Coordinator of the World Heritage Marine Programme.

MPA News: What are the main challenges you have faced in networking the WH marine sites?

Fanny Douvere: One of the biggest challenges, obviously, is that when you work in 49 different MPAs and 37 different countries, you're dealing with a lot of different cultures. So in networking these sites, not only do you need a comprehensive understanding of what management is about, but you also need to understand the different socioeconomic contexts for success stories to be replicated. It's not like you have a solution in one place and you just share a document to transfer it to another place. You need to invest in translations into local languages and think about how the culture implements new ways.

During the course of our five- to ten-day State of Conservation visit to each site, we tailor our networking component to that site so that it is meaningful. We also invest in meeting further up in each site's ministry, taking the time to share messages from agencies elsewhere facing similar challenges. This all requires a significant investment of time and money on WH Marine's part. But our network is steered and designed from the perspective of wanting to make real change at the site level, not just open-ended sharing of knowledge.

The other main challenge is securing the funding for this. Despite the fact that it should be a no-brainer to network MPA managers and share their solutions, there is really very little funding for building these sorts of networks. So we are doing all this with US \$20,000 here, \$50,000 there.

What are some of the successes you've experienced so far with networking your managers?

Douve: After six to seven years of investing in our networking efforts, it's really starting to pay off.

Glacier Bay National Park, a WH Marine site in the US state of Alaska, has a great system for dealing with cruise ship tourism. Over the past 25 years, the MPA has generated a lot of money for the park's conservation efforts through tourism fees, while at the same time reducing its air and marine pollution to near zero. So last December, the WH Marine Programme brought colleagues from Glacier Bay together with colleagues in Komodo National Park, in Indonesia. Komodo, another WH Marine site, is now identified as an area where tourism will increase – cruise ship tourism, especially. So we felt it was very opportune to bring the site's management together with Glacier Bay personnel.

Another example is Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in the Philippines. This WH Marine site received approval last July from the International Maritime Organization for a [Particularly Sensitive Sea Area](#) (PSSA) inside its boundaries. Applying for such a designation is a lengthy process that can take several years, but Tubbataha progressed from application submission to final approval in less than three years. That's record time, and it was because the park's management didn't start from scratch. In 2013-2014, we brought managers from the Wadden Sea WH site (in northern Europe) – who had achieved a PSSA in 2010 – to Tubbataha. They sat together and the Wadden Sea personnel explained how to manage the application process. Now we have other WH sites – Aldabra Atoll (Seychelles) and Banc d'Arguin National Park (Mauritania) – doing the same thing on PSSAs.

There is also a cooperation agreement signed between the Wadden Sea and Banc d'Arguin to which they are now on a continuous basis sharing their data on migratory sea birds, which transit both sites (they come from the Arctic with a stopover in the Wadden Sea, then go south to Banc d'Arguin.)

Aldabra Atoll also revised its management plan with the help of experts from Shark Bay, a WH site in Australia. Belize Barrier Reef is tapping into expertise from Australia's Great Barrier Reef. These are the kinds of results coming out of the networking.

What lessons have you learned?

Douve: The major lesson is that we as an ocean community are omitting some of the greatest impacts we can have by simply not sharing our best practices and success stories enough. The oceans are under such incredible threat. Everyone is doing their own thing, and all of these projects are very good and very important. But unless we're going to be able to bring it all together and align it with shared and common goals, we're not going to get outcomes that are meaningful, scalable, and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. There's no way. Management networking is an indispensable part of what we should be doing better for the oceans.

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B. Big Ocean, networking the world's large-scale MPAs: "Always prioritize building trust and solid relationships between people"

Big Ocean, the peer-learning network for managers of large-scale marine areas, includes 17 sites across 10 countries. All together, Big Ocean members cover a massive 11 million km² of marine space – over 3% of the world ocean. The sites range from the 146,000-km² Argo-Rowley Terrace Commonwealth Marine Reserve (Australia) to the 1.9 million-km² Marae Moana marine park in the Cook Islands.

Big Ocean was established in 2010 following several years in which nations designated unprecedentedly large MPAs (that trend has continued: Marae Moana was officially designated in 2017). The scale of the sites raised questions as to how their planning and management might differ from typically much smaller MPAs. Big Ocean seeks to understand the unique values of large-scale MPAs and disseminate that knowledge.

Nai a Lewis is Coordinator of Big Ocean.

MPA News: What are the main challenges you've faced in networking Big Ocean managers?

Nai a Lewis: In the early stages of planning for Big Ocean's inaugural meeting and in the two to three years that followed, trust and travel were the biggest considerations. With the mixing of government agencies, NGOs, and communities and cultures from across the globe, fostering and maintaining trust through in-person gathering was a top priority. Thus, the format of the gatherings, how to best engage new members, and how to manage travel costs were of concern.

Big Ocean's founder Aulani Wilhelm and the core development team worked to ensure that the foundation of the network was not only solid but uncomplicated. This was so that managers felt that they weren't being asked to overcommit to a network that had yet to prove itself. In turn, member sites and managers were required to "vote with their feet," which meant paying their way and committing to involvement.

Although keeping the network an informal, voluntary alliance was in some ways challenging (there have been limited fundraising options, for example), in other ways it made Big Ocean membership stronger. Today the members feel that they are part of a community of practice – a family even – rather than a network.

With our 10-year anniversary in sight, the trusted relationships built between site representatives, their teams, and partners remain a top priority. As well, members and partners have taken on more of the core responsibilities of networking. This includes developing opportunities to co-create initiatives and activities on their own, and working to leverage resources to ensure we have representation from a majority of sites at every business meeting and event. As engaged participants in our community of practice, members actively share lessons learned with those outside the network who have a common interest in improving large-scale marine conservation and helping this genre of ocean governance grow.

What have been some of Big Ocean's successes so far?

Lewis: Although the member sites of Big Ocean are vast in scale, the total number of sites is relatively small, as is the number of seasoned professionals who understand how to effectively manage very large-scale marine environments. To help grow and professionalize the field, Big Ocean started in 2012 to document and share lessons learned from the most veteran managers, practitioners, and scientists. This focus culminated in our most significant achievement to date: the publication of *Large-Scale Marine Protected Areas: Guidelines for design and management* a first-of-its-kind guidebook produced in partnership with IUCN and its Large-Scale MPA Task Force.

Our partnership with Dan Laffoley, Marine Vice Chair of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, to publish these guidelines increased the breadth of our network and provided Big Ocean with the opportunity to share the lessons of the most experienced on-the-ground managers working at such a large scale. The publication process also enabled Big Ocean to develop new and strengthen existing relationships with scientists, policy experts, and other conservation leaders that has continued to amplify the impact of our work.

What lessons have you learned?

Lewis: To date, the baseline lesson is clear. Always prioritize building trust and solid relationships between people – especially those most critical to maintaining the structural framework of your organization. When trust is maintained, goals, ideas, and initiatives can withstand times of shrinking budgets and limited resources.

Other relevant lessons are:

- (1) Patience: Don't give in to the pressure to expand or formalize your network organization unless there is a groundswell of desire from within the organization itself – and even then, take your time, be strategic, and think through all of the details.
- (2) Innovate: Think outside the box about everything from fundraising to how to develop a long-term strategic plan. Large-scale MPA (LSMPA) management is still so new, and technology and social structures are changing. So do not assume what works for everyone else will work for your LSMPA.
- (3) Diversify: From partnerships to fundraising, seek out those organizations, people, and opportunities that might seem unusual at first. LSMPAs have the potential to be significant components in any number of socio-economic and cultural initiatives, of which we will gain greater understanding as the field matures.

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C. The Transatlantic MPA Partnership: fostering twinning relationships across the Atlantic Ocean

To promote cooperation among managers of MPAs in countries and territories surrounding the Atlantic Ocean, the European Union set up the Transatlantic MPA Partnership in 2016. Centered on a new concept of *Atlanticism* that includes Africa and South America as well as Europe and North America, the Partnership is designed in particular to foster twinning arrangements between individual sites, and between regional MPA networks. The Partnership will complete its initial two-year operation in March 2018 and awaits official word now on EU funding for a follow-on project.

The Partnership has focused so far on three types of twinning arrangements: *networks twinning* to improve cooperation between networks of MPA managers; *resilience twinning* to boost resilience to coastal changes; and *marine mammals protection twinning* to promote collaboration among marine mammal MPAs in the Atlantic.

Puri Canals is Team Leader for the Transatlantic MPA Partnership. She is also President of MedPAN, the network of Mediterranean MPA managers.

MPA News: The Transatlantic MPA Partnership has been active for a relatively short time. Can you point to some of the challenges you've faced so far?

Puri Canals: There have been a few challenges in running the Partnership. These have included:

- The short timescale for setting up three twinning partnerships across the Atlantic – from defining each twinning theme, to holding two workshops per twinning, to enabling concrete results – all in two years.
- Uncertainty over what happens next after the current two-year project is done – in other words, the project's future direction, development, and funding.
- The lack of adequate data available on the Atlantic MPA system and the ocean itself. The project compiled a scoping study with a base map to address this shortfall, which provides an overview of the Atlantic space for marine and coastal protected areas. This is somewhat constrained by the data available (some of it conflicting) and a limited response to an e-mail survey sent to national and MPA authorities during 2016.
- Inevitably – but not surprisingly – the distances involved in transatlantic cooperation were always going to be a major obstacle, as were the different linguistic and organizational backgrounds, levels of MPA managers' knowledge, capacity, and funding.

Have you seen successes yet?

Canals: Strong relationships have already developed over a short time between managers from very different regions and socio-economic contexts. They have discovered how much they have in common and can learn from each other. There are already several tangible and impactful results, with more projects in the pipeline:

- Cape Verde has begun drafting a marine mammal conservation plan, working with other Portuguese-speaking partners (Azores and Brazil).
- Bermuda is also drawing on the experience of other partners for the preparation of its whale management plan.
- Iceland is planning the designation of MPAs following its hosting of a workshop on marine mammal twinning in October 2017.
- Cape Verde and Saint Martin (the latter in the French Antilles, Caribbean) intend to work together on a school twinning project, on the model of a whale conservation project run by the Agoa Sanctuary in Saint Martin with local schools.
- Following the severe impacts of Hurricane Irma in 2017 on Saint Martin, which is a partner in the marine mammal twinning via its Agoa Sanctuary, there is interest in bringing that island into the resilience twinning as well and hosting a future event there.
- There is interest in further cooperation between Brazil and Gabon to develop a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary proposal.
- The resilience twinning partners of Gabon and the US state of New Jersey are preparing to work together to develop strategies for inshore waters.

- RAPAC – the Central Africa protected areas network, which has been largely terrestrial up to now – is drawing on the experience of regional networks in the Partnership to develop its own MPA network.
- And perhaps most significantly, there has been a boost to advocacy efforts by speaking with one voice. This has included a joint presentation at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, including a statement in the closing plenary, and the [Call for Joint Action](#) among regional MPA networks that was launched at the International MPA Congress last year in Chile.

What lessons have been learned?

Canals: At the final conference for the two-year project this past January, there were several thoughtful remarks by participants. One was from Ben Haskell, who manages Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary in the northeastern US, a partner in the marine mammals twinning [described below in case D]. Whether this is technically a lesson or not, he had an important message: “As an MPA manager,” he said, “it’s nice to know I’m not alone out there in the world, that there are commonalities across the Atlantic and that we’re all working together. It’s also nice to see other people developing solutions we didn’t think of. This is a valuable aspect of this partnership.”

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D. Building a global network of Important Marine Mammal Areas: “Management networks are a necessity”

The IUCN [Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force](#) exists to encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing on marine mammal protected areas worldwide. Over the course of five years (2016-2021) the Task Force is holding a series of regional workshops, focused mostly on the southern hemisphere, to identify [Important Marine Mammal Areas](#) (IMMAs). These are areas with important marine mammal habitat that can be used to zone, modify, monitor, or assist with management of existing MPAs and MPA networks. IMMAs can help in creating new spatial solutions, whether MPAs, marine spatial plans, or IMO ship-strike directives. Workshops for the Mediterranean (2016) and Pacific Islands (2017) have occurred already, with the North East Indian Ocean and South East Asian Seas coming up in March 2018.

The IMMA effort is identifying the building blocks of a marine mammal network one region at a time. The task force hopes that, through the regional workshops and regional IMMA groups being set up, this will start to build a network for spatial management – people sharing knowledge, building institutional capacity, and engaging managers of existing MPAs, including through exchanges.

Erich Hoyt is Co-Chair of the Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force.

MPA News: What are the main challenges the Task Force has faced so far in building networks of IMMAs?

Erich Hoyt: The Task Force has now, in effect, directed the [creation of two networks](#) of IMMAs, in the Mediterranean and in the vast Pacific Islands region. Over the next 15 months, we will extend this across the Indian Ocean. IMMAs are not marine mammal protected areas – MMPAs – but they are already stimulating proposals for various spatial conservation measures.

In October 2017, for example, I joined a small Task Force group working on the water with the Palauan government and conservation people to start to put protection for a dugong IMMA on the agenda there. Palau will need to learn from other dugong MPA managers, and their remoteness even from other Pacific Islands makes that challenging. We’re helping to devise a research and conservation roadmap to stimulate exchanges, which offer the essential advantages of being in a network.

Task Force members have also been involved in the Transatlantic MPA Partnership (case C, above), which focuses in part on twinning arrangements for MMPAs. What successes have you seen there in terms of MMPA twinning?

Hoyt: The Transatlantic MPA Partnership project aiming to twin marine mammal protection efforts has focused in particular on networking to manage protected areas with humpback whales. This strand builds on existing [“sister sanctuary” relationships](#), forged at the Second International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas in 2011, to connect humpback whales on their feeding grounds in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (US) with their breeding grounds in the Caribbean – initially with the Marine Mammal Sanctuary of the Dominican Republic and then joined by the Agoa Sanctuary (French Antilles) and Dutch sanctuaries in the Caribbean. Through the Transatlantic MPA Partnership, the Azores, Cape Verde, and Bermuda joined in. The advantages are being able to share research and monitoring results and methods (such as photo-ID), discuss tools for managing whale watching, and explore common issues such as entanglement, ship-strikes, and global warming.

What lessons have you learned from these networking efforts?

Hoyt: We can see that the need for networks is clear if we’re going to (1) attempt to address threats to highly migratory whales and other marine mammals, (2) solve MMPA management issues efficiently, and (3) have an influence on government policy, which thus far in many countries has marginalized concerns about the ocean and how to manage it, and has been slow to fund MPA management in an adequate way.

Management networks aren’t just a nice thing. They’re a necessity.

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