

MPA NEWS

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MPA Perspective: Standardizing the Effective Management of MPAs in Italy

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WWF-Italy has launched an initiative to provide high-level training and practical support for the management of Italian MPAs. The project, named ISEA (*Interventi Standardizzati Gestione Efficace Aree marine protette* - Standardized Actions for the Effective Management of MPAs) aims to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the management and conservation of marine and coastal life. It focuses on five of the most representative Italian MPAs, which also happen to be recognized on the international level as SPAMIs - Special Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance, under the Barcelona Convention (see box for the participating SPAMIs).

The project will strengthen the network of Italian SPAMIs by ensuring each one meets basic requirements as called for under the Barcelona Convention:

- That the protected area must have a management body, endowed with sufficient powers, means, and human resources to prevent and/or control activities likely to be contrary to the aims of the protected area;
- That a management plan has to be in force and officially adopted; and
- That the area has to have a monitoring program that includes the identification and monitoring of a certain number of significant parameters for the area in question. This is to allow assessment of the state and evolution of the area, as well as the effectiveness of protection and management measures implemented, so that they may be adapted if necessary.

The project is also in line with commitments undertaken by Italy's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity: namely to establish by 2012 in Italy and in the Mediterranean Sea a representative network of MPAs that are effectively managed, consistent with international law, and based on scientific information.

Implementation

The project will be coordinated by a board consisting of a representative of the Ministry of the Environment, one of WWF-Italy, and the director of each participating SPAMI. In turn, this board will advise and monitor a WWF-Italy team that will provide tutoring at the MPA level and also perform project monitoring and assessment.

The project's objectives include:

- Collecting and classifying documents concerning management of the SPAMIs, with the intent of sharing common management elements;
- Standardizing the way management plans are organized and presented (to the administration, to stakeholders, and to the public);
- Producing a summary of the activities undertaken by the national network of SPAMIs, accompanied by the most appropriate management performance indicators; and
- Organizing information to assess biophysical, socio-economic, and management performance for each SPAMI and the network as a whole.

Over the course of the project, the team anticipates taking the following actions:

- Studying available tools and guidelines, including *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation*, IUCN's *How is your MPA managed?* and *How is your MPA doing?*, and UNEP's *Procedure for the revision of the areas included in the SPAMI List*;
- Organizing a training seminar on the best use of these tools, addressed to directors and staff of SPAMIs but also open to other MPAs that wish to attend;
- Providing specific tutoring to each SPAMI to help implement the chosen management tools and to suit the site's need for technical assistance;
- Involving SPAMI personnel in applying management tools that support the conservation actions required for inclusion in the SPAMI list;
- Translating and adapting MIRADI conservation planning software (<http://miradi.org>) to help MPAs draft and plan their actions for biodiversity protection; and
- Writing a manual to describe the context and development of this initiative, and the basis of its methodology on the use of available tools for managing Italian SPAMIs.

We plan to accomplish the entire project by March 2011. Ultimately, lessons learned from it will be shared through the Mediterranean Basin.

For more information:

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BOX: The participating SPAMIs

The five sites participating in this project are the 1.2-km² Miramare MPA, Plemmirio MPA (25 km²), Portofino MPA (3.5 km²), Tavolara - Punta Coda Cavallo MPA (107.3 km²), and Torre Guaceto MPA (22.3 km²).

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