

# MPA NEWS

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## MPA Profile: The Seaflower MPAs, Colombia: Cooperative, Consensus-Based Planning with Stakeholders

**Designated:** 2004

**Description:** These are three adjoining, multiple-use marine protected areas, totaling 65,000 km<sup>2</sup>, in waters of Colombia's San Andres Archipelago in the southwestern Caribbean. The archipelago as a whole is a UNESCO biosphere reserve (designated 2000), and comprises 300,000 km<sup>2</sup> of marine area.

**Legal status:** The three MPAs are the first official "Marine Protected Areas" under Colombian law. Other types of protected marine sites also exist in Colombian waters, although primarily as part of otherwise terrestrial national parks.

**Planning:** The four-year process of mapping and zoning the Seaflower MPAs has been cooperative, involving local stakeholder groups (fishers, dive tourism operators, and others) and CORALINA, a regional Colombian government agency with oversight of the natural resources and sustainable development of the San Andres Archipelago. Decisions are based on consensus (see box, below).

**Management:** A co-management structure will be responsible for day-to-day decisions. In the process of being established, the structure will include CORALINA officials, community commissions, and scientific advisory committees. Regional management offices will be located on the inhabited island nearest each of the MPAs.

### Types of zones:

- No-entry - use is restricted to research, monitoring.
- No-take - allowing a variety of non-extractive uses.
- Artisanal fishing - for use by traditional fishers only.
- Special use - for specific uses identified during MPA planning, particularly where there is high potential for conflicts, such as ports, marinas, or heavily used recreation areas.
- General use - where minimal restrictions apply to protect water quality and preserve MPA system integrity.

### Objectives of the MPAs:

- Preservation, recovery, and long-term maintenance of species, biodiversity, ecosystems, and other natural values.
- Promotion of sound management practices to ensure long-term sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.
- Equitable distribution of economic and social benefits to enhance local development.
- Protection of rights pertaining to historical use.
- Education to promote a sense of stewardship and community involvement in management.

**Habitats:** Barrier and fringing reefs, patch reefs, atolls, seagrass beds, mangroves, deep water.

## BOX: Insights on the Seaflower MPA zoning process - Marion Howard

Marion Howard is former coordinator of the MPA project of CORALINA, the regional Colombian government agency that oversees natural resources and sustainable development of Colombia's San Andres Archipelago. Now an MPA advisor to the agency, Howard describes the process of zoning the Seaflower MPAs, below:

"The community has had final decision-making authority on zoning. To allow for this, CORALINA designed a flexible process that was carried out for each of the three MPAs. First we met with user groups, which had already been involved in mapping the MPAs and had been identified through a stakeholder analysis. Each group produced zoning plans based on its knowledge and needs, and CORALINA entered these maps into a GIS, overlaid them, and produced alternatives. The agency's MPA project team evaluated and fine-tuned each alternative to ensure it was faithful to community planning and zoning criteria.

"CORALINA also gathered information on the value that each stakeholder group placed on the various kinds of zones, another factor in evaluating alternatives. This work, funded by the European Union, was done simultaneously for the Galapagos Marine Reserve by the Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS). CDRS and CORALINA supported each other. (There was temporary zoning in place in the Galapagos, and CDRS was evaluating how effectively it served users' values and priorities.)

"Next, the alternatives were reviewed by CORALINA's MPA international advisory board, primarily for conservation effectiveness. This board consists of planners, managers, social and biological scientists, and legal and policy experts from around the world, volunteering their time to the project (*MPA News* 5:2). Members have an advisory role but are not involved in decision-making. CORALINA made adjustments and produced final alternatives consistent with the board's recommendations without compromising the objectives, criteria, or participatory process, and while implementing ongoing input from the community. Finally, CORALINA took the alternatives back to the user groups in plenary. Plenary meetings continued until an alternative for each MPA was chosen by consensus."

### For more information:

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