

# MPA NEWS



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## MPA Training in a Nutshell: On building MPA social networks

**Editor's note:** This new recurring column, *MPA Training in a Nutshell*, distills advice from what is likely the largest and longest-running MPA management capacity training program in the world – the [International MPA Capacity Building Team](#) (IMPACT). Run by the US National MPA Center (within NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries), the program has trained thousands of MPA managers in more than 40 countries. *MPA News* profiled IMPACT in our [July 2015 issue](#).

Anne Nelson co-leads IMPACT. In these columns, Anne will share quick and useful tips – best practices gathered by IMPACT from MPA managers worldwide.

**By Anne Nelson**

The effective management of MPA networks requires an array of elements. These include having adequate technical capacity of site managers, good science, committed leadership at multiple levels (sites, agencies, and policy makers), shared goals among MPAs, and monitoring of the network's ecological effectiveness.

Importantly, it also requires good connectivity among site managers – in other words, a social network.

Whether created at the regional, national, or local level, a strong social network helps managers to share technical resources and lessons learned, and collaborate on decision-making. It empowers them to keep each other motivated and inspired, and feel part of a community. And ultimately it sustains and strengthens the conservation and governance of the component sites.

As such, creating effective MPA social networks is a key part of building management capacity for networks. If you are including a capacity-building program as part of your MPA management planning, or simply looking to strengthen the existing social network among a group of managers, here are some quick tips:

- Build in time and ways to establish trust among managers, and to create a collaborative and supportive environment among them. Building trust can be a time-intensive process, and I will explore some helpful shortcuts in a future column.
- Encourage collaborative partnerships among sites through joint efforts on needs assessment, program planning, objective setting, and long-term implementation.
- Plan for an annual (or more frequent!) gathering to share accomplishments, and make plans together to continue strengthening the social network.
- Create other long-term opportunities for MPA managers to gather face-to-face, including through site visits and ongoing professional development opportunities.

**For more information:**

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