

MPA NEWS



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MPA Training in a Nutshell: On building relationships with stakeholders

Editor's note: This 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 is sharing quick and useful tips – best practices gathered by IMPACT from MPA managers worldwide.

By Anne Nelson and the IMPACT team

Relationships built on trust between MPA management and stakeholders can strengthen community support for MPAs. By fostering such support, these relationships can help MPAs meet their management goals.

Ideally the relationships extend broadly through local communities, resource users, and MPA managers and related agencies. Building relationships early and consistently across these groups can be a relatively simple, productive, and positive experience. Here are useful strategies we've observed from managers:

1. Build and expand the community's knowledge of why the MPA was established, its target resources, and its benefits. In effect you are telling the MPA's 'story'. This is a community effort: partner with schools, community organizations, and other groups that already actively share information with the community and resource users. They can amplify your message.
2. Examine and understand how people seek out trusted information in your community. For example, is the best source of information for locals the post-fishing conversations at the dock? If so, consider how you can share information through those conversations to build understanding of, support for, and participation in your MPA activities.
3. Host a coffee session with informal discussions sharing the successes of your MPA activities over the last year. For example, this could feature monitoring results that are shared in a lively non-technical manner, and connected to particular interests of your community.
4. Recognize that the relationship-building strategies that work best in each region may be unique to that region. Always look for ways to connect your MPA's story to the communication style and outlets of your community.

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