

# MPA NEWS



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## MPA Training in a Nutshell: On governance

**Editor's note:** This recurring column, *MPA Training in a Nutshell*, distills advice from what is the largest and longest-running MPA management capacity training program in the world – the International MPA Capacity Building Team, or 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.

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**

Our IMPACT training team has spent a lot of time lately on building capacity for good governance. Good governance may be viewed as applying a set of internationally accepted principles for governing protected areas. These include equity, inclusivity, accountability, efficiency, responsiveness, transparency, and more.<sup>1</sup> MPAs that effectively apply these good governance principles can have sustained support and resiliency, and can meet multiple community and conservation goals.

You can see this in the [Programme of Work on Protected Areas](#) of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Programme supports integrating good governance principles in all protected area decision-making, including respect for rights and the rule of law; promotion of constructive dialogue and fair access to information; accountability in decision-making; and existence of institutions and procedures for fair dispute resolution.

Of course, the encompassing frameworks in which these principles are applied can take different forms. Some MPAs are effective with centralized governance, for example, while others feature co-management, local governance, or even private governance.

There is a lot of useful guidance available on MPA governance, including [guidelines from IUCN](#) that outline assessment mechanisms and case studies, and MPA News interviews with governance expert Peter Jones and others ([here](#) and [here](#)). Below we highlight another good source, an [issue brief on MPA governance](#) by the Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife for the Wider Caribbean Region (CAR SPAW RAC). Here we've adapted some of the brief's tips on building good governance:

- **Embrace a holistic approach.** MPAs are increasingly embedded within complex governance systems such as integrated coastal management, ecosystem-based management, or marine spatial planning processes. These larger frameworks tend to be more effective than uncoordinated or isolated efforts at facilitating knowledge sharing and cooperation among governing bodies, incorporating public interests, using science and technology, and considering the marine ecosystem as a whole, including humans.
- **Strive to achieve clarity.** A well-formulated legislative framework enhances coastal and marine policy development, management planning, law enforcement, and decision-making. Effective governance structure requires clear objectives as well as broad understanding and acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of government agencies, co-management authorities, and other interested parties.
- **Cultivate leadership and political will.** Effective governance requires strong leadership based on integrity and good faith actions, open and honest communication, long-term commitment, and the presence of supportive partners across the network of government authorities, NGOs, and stakeholders. Garnering early support among policymakers is critical, too, particularly when developing the legislative framework and any associated planning documents.
- **Involve stakeholders early and often.** Effective governance often depends on the ability of people from different backgrounds and perspectives to understand each other's needs and come to mutual agreement on a comprehensive vision that incorporates economic, social, and environmental concerns. Initiating outreach during early planning stages of an MPA is a critical first step.

<sup>1</sup> Borrini-Feyerabend, G., N. Dudley, T. Jaeger, B. Lassen, N. Pathak Broome, A. Phillips and T. Sandwith (2013). [Governance of Protected Areas: From understanding to action](#). Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 20, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xvi + 124pp.

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