

# MPA NEWS



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## MPAs that lack adequate management plans get assistance from regional program

As part of a program to help address the management capacity needs of Caribbean MPAs, priority sites that lack adequate management plans are receiving hands-on planning assistance. The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), with support from the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is aiding MPAs that either have no management plans in place or have plans that are significantly out of date.

So far several sites are benefiting from this assistance, including the Point Sable Environmental Protection Area in Saint Lucia and the Abaco Marine Parks in the Bahamas, both of which identified management planning as their highest priority capacity-building need. Emma Doyle of GCFI manages this program.

**MPA News:** How common is it for MPAs to have no management plan, or to have one that is so outdated it is functionally useless?

**Emma Doyle:** In 2011 we surveyed managers at about 30 Caribbean MPAs on the subject of management capacity. One of the questions we asked was whether or not each MPA had a management plan in place. Just over half said they had an approved management plan that was being implemented. One quarter had a draft management plan and said they were implementing some management activities. The remaining MPAs did not have any management plan in place. While it is hard to say whether the group was representative of all MPAs, these sites were priority ones, selected according to criteria that included high biological value and high conservation viability. The survey and results are described at [campam.gcfi.org/CapAssess/CapacityAssessmentReport2011/index.html](http://campam.gcfi.org/CapAssess/CapacityAssessmentReport2011/index.html).

**MPA News:** What are some of the reasons that MPAs lack management plans?

**Doyle:** Developing a management plan from scratch can seem overwhelming, especially to staff who are already over-burdened. This is particularly so where the perception is that a management plan has to be a weighty document full of detail and narrative. Add to this that best practices demand that multiple stakeholder meetings are part of the planning process. It is often also a requirement to pass the management plan through higher levels of government for it to be officially approved, which can be a lengthy process that is outside the control of the MPA manager.

**MPA News:** How were you able to assist the MPAs and relevant agencies to make progress in management planning?

**Doyle:** GCFI and CRCP is providing tailored assistance to these MPAs. This assistance has variously involved helping MPA managers with:

- Securing expert technical reviews of draft versions of management plans;
- Updating stakeholder information and analyses; Facilitating consultation meetings with national agencies and with stakeholders;
- Assisting with travel costs to stakeholder consultation meetings at remote MPAs; Providing assistance with drafting management objectives;
- Prioritizing actions based on threat assessments;
- Determining indicators of management effectiveness; and
- Helping to build partnerships with other collaborating organizations.

**For more information:**

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