

Communicating with Stakeholders and Communities: Specialists Offer Their Advice to MPA Managers

The long-term viability of a protected area depends on public support for it. Without broad-based backing of its goals, the protected area will have trouble meeting those goals. Building a base of support, whether from specific stakeholder groups or the community at large, requires MPA practitioners to be able to communicate effectively with their audiences. This involves not only what the practitioners say but how they say it, and especially how they involve the community in a dialogue.

This all takes some skill, and the growing number of publications on how to communicate on MPAs is evidence of the need for guidance on this subject (see box on p. 3, “More guidance on communications for protected areas”). This month, *MPA News* asked a question to four communications specialists with experience in MPA planning:

If an MPA practitioner came to you for advice on how to communicate effectively with stakeholders or the general public, what advice would you give?

Here are their responses:

Be clear, specific, and creative

- **Liza Eisma-Osorio**
- Executive Director, Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation (CCEF), Philippines

[Note: CCEF is a Philippine NGO that assists MPA-planning processes. It was profiled in our February 2007 issue on educating stakeholders about MPAs (*MPA News* 8:7). The CCEF website is www.coast.ph.]

“First, make your message clear and specific. Even in cases where my organization, CCEF, is concerned with the protection of a large area and a host of issues, it is better to focus initially on one particular issue that the public or the stakeholders can easily relate to. This provides us with the opportunity later on to expand the message to include other significant issues in our coastal areas.

“We found, for example, that our campaign that focused specifically on mangrove conservation — which we called ‘One Million Mangroves for Cebu’ — got a lot of support from ordinary folks from all walks of life, as well as civic and private sector organizations. Although

the project is focused for now on mangroves, its ultimate objective is to develop a collaborative spirit for protecting the coastal zone in general.

“Second, when creating information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, use local language as much as possible. It is also helpful to use popular education materials such as comic strips, which tell a story with implicit messages.

[Editor’s note: An example of how CCEF has used local language and comics to build support for MPAs is at <http://depts.washington.edu/mpanews/CCEFposter.pdf>.]

“Third, be creative and informative at the same time. Use entertaining events to communicate the message effectively. We use what we call ‘the fishing game’ to demonstrate the concept [and potential drawbacks] of open-access fishing. There are pictures of fishes posted in the room — under tables and chairs, behind curtains, on the walls, etc. The group is instructed to ‘go fishing’ and that those who catch the most fish will win. Usually, there is a fishing frenzy as a result. Afterward we process our observations with the group and explain the real objective of the game.”

Science-based information can help address misconceptions about MPAs

- **Kirsten Grorud-Colvert**
- Project Director, *The Science of Marine Reserves*, PISCO, and Marine Reserve Science Coordinator, COMPASS, U.S.

[Note: *The Science of Marine Reserves* is an educational booklet and video that provides up-to-date scientific information about no-take areas in an accessible format (www.piscoweb.org/outreach/pubs/reserves). It was produced by the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO).]

Reminder: Please participate in our reader poll for the chance to win an *MPA News* tote bag.

Have you participated yet in our quick online poll on the relationship between MPAs and ecosystem-based management, announced in last month’s issue? Three respondents will be picked at random to win an official *MPA News* canvas tote bag.

To participate, please visit www.mpanews.org. Poll results will be reported in next month’s *MPA News*. Thank you to all who have responded so far.

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“When a planner or manager approaches an audience to talk about MPAs, it is probably not the first time the audience has heard of marine protected areas. People have likely heard a wide range of promises and warnings [about what an MPA will do]. There are many misconceptions about MPAs, which is why it can be beneficial to bring science-based information to the discussion.

MPA Tip: On building public support for an MPA

Below is advice adapted by *MPA News* from the book *Managing Protected Areas: A Global Guide* (IUCN, 2006). The advice is on how MPA practitioners can build effective partnerships with the general public:

Tip: Managers need to get better at harnessing public support to improve investment in, and commitment to, protected areas. To build that support, managers may benefit from employing these techniques:

- Have a clear message that is consistent at all levels of the organization;
- Ensure that any staff members who communicate daily with the public are good communicators;
- Celebrate successes widely and loudly (cultivating relationships with local and national media can help here);
- Keep in touch with supporters and let them know how much they are appreciated;
- Provide opportunities for people to be involved in protected area operations through volunteer programs, joint management with local communities, and “Friends of the Park” groups; and
- Be honest and realistic. This builds trust. 

“Research published in peer-reviewed journals illustrates the measurable effects of MPAs. These studies are conducted to address a hypothesis and not to support a specific advocacy position. They provide detailed methods for critique, and they are reviewed by scientific peers.

“However, simply handing audiences a journal publication is not an effective way of communicating this sometimes complicated information to non-scientists. To provide science-based educational materials on MPAs to laypeople, it is helpful to think about giving four different levels of information. Each level builds on the last by offering more detail:

“1. First, and often most effective, is to present information through engaging pictures and graphics — pictorial representations of data that communicate a concept without using words.

“2. If the user wants to learn more, summarize the main messages of the study or concept in talking points that are two to three sound-bytes long. This short format helps to articulate the main messages clearly and concisely.

“3. If the user wants more information, expanded text can tell a story about the effects of MPAs, providing more details but still avoiding technical minutiae.

“4. Finally, citing and providing the original source allows the user to consult the technical literature for fact-checking.”

To build a campaign, start where your audience is

• **Chris Rose**

• President, Campaign Strategy Ltd., U.K.

[Note: Campaign Strategy Ltd. conducted a study for Natural England in 2007-2008 measuring English public perceptions of the marine undersea environment. That research has informed Natural England’s campaign to raise public awareness of the marine environment and MPAs.]

“Do not assume there is one ‘message’ that will work for ‘the public’. People are different. The tools you need depend on whom you need to convince and what you are trying to convince them about.

“Step 1: Decide who you need to talk to, and what you would like them to do. Effective communications has a purpose.

“Step 2: Start from where your audience is, not where you are. Get your organization to spend some money on doing qualitative research: uncover how people think about the subject and the sort of thing you want them to do; how you might inform them; what they might need to see, feel, touch, hear, experience; who might be the best messenger; and what might be the best channels and contexts to use.

“Step 3: Go out and organize this campaign. In other words, be proactive. Do not wait for a self-selected sample of community members to come to you.

“For Natural England we divided people up psychologically to study how they thought about the undersea landscape. All of them had no real idea what was there. Many assumed it was like the surface — ‘featureless’...only slimier, colder, more dangerous. Looking for a common denominator, we found that while some loved the mystery of the sea (ignorance was no barrier), two other groups found that troubling. Instead, the two concepts that appealed to all groups were the undersea landscape’s dramatic topography and living communities. For a description of the research for Natural England, go to www.campaignstrategy.org/newsletters/campaignstrategy_newsletter_43.pdf.”

Use real-life examples to make points

• **Toni Parras**

• Communications Officer, The Locally-Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Network


[Note: The LMMA Network is a group of practitioners — traditional leaders, conservation staff, university researchers, and others — working to improve locally-managed marine areas in the Indo-Pacific through the sharing of experiences and resources (www.lmmanetwork.org).]

“Communicating with stakeholders is very different than communicating with the general public. But if I had only one piece of advice on communicating with

either group, it is this: Use real-life examples from people on the ground, so your audience can learn from their experiences. In my involvement with the LMMA Network, I have found that narratives from the field, using pictures and interviews with site-level people telling their story in their own words, are a very compelling and effective way to communicate to everyone — MPA managers, communities, the public, and donors alike.

“It is people in the field — and especially communities who are directly involved with and seeing the effects of MPA work first-hand — who have the richest lessons to share about what works and what does not, and possible input to solutions that are realistic for their sites. Using

this approach, we have had excellent feedback from our Stories from the Field efforts (www.lmmanetwork.org/Site_Page.cfm?PageID=21) and our Lessons Learned video (www.lmmanetwork.org/Site_Page.cfm?PageID=67).

“Avoid using jargon, technical terms, acronyms, or too much theory and concept. Get down to real-life lessons using conversational speech. Pretend you are chatting with your grandmother or neighbor. The best way to communicate is to touch your audiences’ heartstrings. You want the issue to resonate with them, to make them care about MPAs, and the best way to do that is to make it intimate, make it visual, make it compelling.” 

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More guidance on communications for protected areas

- *Guidance For Good Practice For Communicating With Stakeholders On The Establishment & Management Of Marine Protected Areas* (OSPAR, 2008)

www.ospar.org/documents/DBASE/DECRECS/Agreements/08-02e_MPA%20stakeholder%20communication.doc

- *Stakeholder Participation: A Synthesis of Current Literature* (U.S. National Marine Protected Areas Center, 2004)

www.csc.noaa.gov/mpa/Stakeholder_Synthesis.pdf

- *LIFE-Nature: Communicating with Stakeholders and the General Public – Best Practice Examples for Natura 2000* (European Commission, 2004)

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/nat.htm#communicating>

- *Workshop: Communications Skills for MPA Practitioners*, 17-19 May 2009, International Marine Conservation Congress, Washington, D.C., U.S.

www2.cedarcrest.edu/imcc/MPA_U.html

Notes & News

This month: Second International MPA Congress

The Second International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC2) will be held 20-24 May in Washington, D.C. (U.S.) in conjunction with the International Marine Conservation Congress. The joint conference website is www2.cedarcrest.edu/imcc/index.html. Many workshops, sessions, and posters on topics of interest to MPA practitioners will be presented, including on MPA design, management, governance, effectiveness assessment, capacity building, climate change, and cultural and socioeconomic factors.

MPA News and its sister newsletter *Marine Ecosystems and Management* (MEAM) will both be there to report on the events and outcomes. If you see *MPA News* editor John Davis, MEAM editor Tundi Agardy, or other editorial board members walking by, please stop us and say hello. We look forward to seeing you there.

First conference held on marine mammal MPAs

More than 200 people from 40 countries attended the First International Conference on Marine Mammal

Protected Areas (ICMMPA), held in late March and early April in Hawai‘i. The meeting aimed to network marine mammal scientists, MPA managers, and conservationists from around the world.

One action item that emerged from the event is to create a central website with management plans for all marine mammal protected areas worldwide. The conference also called for urgent research to define and map important marine mammal habitats, for the purpose of planning relevant MPA networks in national waters and the high seas. The event was hosted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS).

The meeting also marked the opening of discussions to explore a trilateral “sister sanctuary” arrangement among HIHWNMS, Glacier Bay National Park (U.S.), and the Commander Islands State Biosphere Reserve — Russia’s largest MPA. Humpback whales migrate between the three sites. For more information on the conference, go to www.icmmpa.org.

Compensation Plan Proposed for MPA-Affected Fishers in Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

The U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has proposed a plan to provide financial compensation to bottomfish and lobster-fishery permit holders affected by the designation of the 362,000-km² Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. All commercial fishing in the MPA, located in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, will officially end in 2011. By buying up permits from existing permit-holders, the compensation plan would essentially speed up that phaseout of fishing. Former President George W. Bush designated the MPA in 2006 (*MPA News* 8:1).

The proposed compensation plan is available online at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-7860.pdf>, and was open for public comment from April through 4 May. It identifies eligible permit holders affected by the MPA designation and provides a mechanism to compensate them for the economic value of their permits, based on a mathematical formula. The proposal also would allow eligible participants to receive additional compensation in return for giving up their fishing vessel and gear, provided such vessels and gear would no longer be used for fishing.

Once finalized, the plan will be voluntary for permit holders to accept. NMFS is authorized to spend US \$6,697,500 on the program.

The region is not heavily fished. There are just eight remaining permit holders for bottomfish in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). And the lobster fishery has been closed by federal fishery managers since 2000 — six years before the MPA was designated — due to low lobster populations and potential impacts of the fishery on endangered seals.

Toby Wood of NMFS justifies the buyout of lobster permits despite the lack of activity in that fishery. “While the lobster fishermen have been held to a zero-harvest guideline in the NWHI since 2000, the permits still exist,” he says. “The potential of re-opening the NWHI lobster fishery has continued to be the hope of many fishermen who still hold their permits.” Wood points out that the federal law authorizing NMFS to draft a compensation plan (*The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008*) specifically stated lobster permit holders would be eligible, as well as bottomfish permit holders.

Previous effort to compensate NWHI bottomfishers


This is not the first attempt to set up a compensation program for bottomfish permit holders affected by the Papahānaumokuākea designation. Upon establishment

of the marine national monument in 2006, the Pew Charitable Trusts took responsibility for negotiating and funding a buyout plan with bottomfishers. The goal of that effort, similar to the current NMFS proposal, was to speed the phaseout of fishing and smooth the fishermen’s transition to retirement or alternative employment.

Most bottomfishers did not participate in those negotiations, however, and Pew withdrew in late 2006. “We were sincere in our pledge to offer fair compensation based on the historic value of the permit to the fisherman,” says Jay Nelson of Pew. “We withdrew our offer when it was clear that a majority of the fishermen were holding out for a potentially more lucrative federal buyout.”

While Pew still supports the concept of a compensation program for the bottomfish permit holders, it does not support the lobster-permit buyout in this case. “Almost a decade after the lobster stocks collapsed, and in light of the absence of their recovery, it would be hard to argue that the remaining lobster permit holders deserve compensation as a consequence of the monument designation,” says Nelson. “Even the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended in early 2006 [prior to monument designation] that the lobster fishery be permanently closed.”

Compensation of fishers affected by closed areas is more common in other nations than in the U.S. Australia paid tens of millions of dollars to fishing-license holders through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Structural Adjustment Package, in response to the creation of large new no-take zones in the marine park (*MPA News* 7:7). Other MPA-related compensation programs for affected fishers were described in our June 2002 issue (*MPA News* 3:11). Prior to the current NWHI compensation plan, the main U.S. program of its kind involved Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska. Most commercial fishing in the park was phased out beginning in the late 1990s. In response, the U.S. Congress — prompted by an influential Alaskan senator — allotted US \$23 million to compensate fishing-permit holders, crew, processors, and local communities expected to suffer lost income due to the closure.

Wood of NMFS says he does not expect the NWHI compensation program, in its final form, to serve as a model for other MPA situations. “By nature, MPA designations and any resulting compensation programs involve many unique, and often complex, sets of considerations that should be addressed on a case-by-case basis,” he says. 

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Financing Spotlight: Funding Fijian MPAs through Resource “Adoption” Programs

In March, a new Web-based tool to raise funds for Fijian MPAs was launched, enabling people to pay online to “adopt” corals, reefs, and mangroves in the Pacific island nation. The NGO behind it — Sustainable Fijian Reef Resources, or *Sasalu Tawamudu* in the Fijian language — was founded by faculty members of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and the Georgia Institute of Technology in the U.S. The organization’s goal is to help conserve Fiji’s reefs and forests while promoting sustainable development in local Fijian communities.

The three resource-adoption programs — Adopt-a-Coral, Adopt-a-Reef, and Adopt-a-Mangrove — are available on the *Sasalu Tawamudu* website at <http://sasalutawamudu.org>.

The bulk of funds raised via each program is transferred directly to the Fiji Locally-Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA). This is a Fijian network of traditional leaders, conservation staff, and others working on community-based marine conservation projects. The FLMMA Network won the UNDP Equator Prize in 2002 for its work to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and is a national initiative within the Indo-Pacific regional Locally-Managed Marine Area Network. It has worked with communities to develop management plans and monitoring results in more than half of the fishing areas of Fiji.

The FLMMA Network uses the funds from each of the three adoption programs for different purposes, says Kirk Bowman of *Sasalu Tawamudu*. The Adopt-a-Coral program, for example, plants several species of coral nubbins on racks, and when the nubbins have

grown, they are transplanted to a reef in the village of Votua, on the Coral Coast of Fiji.

“The community has an MPA and is developing a snorkeling trail within it,” says Bowman. “The Adopt-a-Coral program provides the money to add both diversity of coral and a greater quantity of coral to the snorkeling trail, and provides education to the local community about corals and the reef.” *Sasalu Tawamudu* staff also provide scientific expertise to Votua on a range of issues, including which seaweed species are most damaging to the corals, and how local fishers can aid coral health by not harvesting certain fish species that consume those seaweeds.

In return for a US \$30 donation to the Adopt-a-Coral program, donors are allowed to name their coral fragment. They also receive an electronic certificate with GPS coordinates of the planting location.

Funds generated by the Adopt-a-Reef program go toward work by the FLMMA Network to increase the number of MPAs in Fiji and to enhance and assess the country’s existing MPAs. Adopt-a-Mangrove funds are used to plant red mangrove trees, including employing village youth to prepare the young mangrove propagules.

Bowman says the main challenge for the adoption programs so far has been reaching their target audiences — mainly tourists. “We recently had a gala event in Fiji with the U.S. Ambassador and local dignitaries to launch the programs,” he says. “We are using this as a springboard to distribute materials to tourists who visit Fiji. We are also developing stories for in-flight magazines.” Hotel workers in areas participating in the program also give out postcards describing the project to tourists. 🌊

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Notes & News

U.S. announces charter system of MPAs

The U.S. National Marine Protected Areas Center has announced its charter list of 225 existing MPAs as the first to join the National System of Marine Protected Areas. Comprising MPAs across all levels of government, the system is intended to enhance collective efforts to protect the nation’s natural and cultural marine heritage and to foster sustainable fisheries production.

This is the first time the U.S. has had an overarching mechanism for coordinating management of its MPAs. There are roughly 100 agencies at various government

levels across the country with management responsibility for marine protected areas.

“This new national system provides a mechanism for all levels of government to work together to leverage resources, coordinate regional planning, and manage MPAs as a system,” said Jane Lubchenco, Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “We will continue to work with federal, state, tribal and local governments and stakeholders to share best practices for effectively achieving common marine conservation goals.”

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The national system does not bring state, territorial, or local sites under federal authority, nor does it restrict or change the management of any MPA. At present it is more of an institutional network than an ecological one, although the intent is to build toward the latter.

Here are figures for the national system:

- It covers 10% of all U.S. waters.
- However, most of the system (78%) is contained within a small number of very large MPAs in Hawai'i and other Pacific Islands — notably the 366,000-km² Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- About 25% of the national system's total area is considered no-take, due mostly to the Papahānaumokuākea site, in which commercial fishing will be banned in 2011. By itself, Papahānaumokuākea accounts for nearly all of the area considered no-take in the system.

The National MPA Center will begin work this year to identify gaps in the national system to inform future MPA planning. The gap analyses will progress on a region-by-region basis, and will be conducted with institutional partners and stakeholders ("U.S. Releases Final Framework for National MPA System", *MPA News* 10:6).

Existing MPAs were invited in November 2008 to nominate themselves for inclusion in the system. To be eligible for inclusion, each site had to meet a set of criteria, including that the site had a management plan and that it contributed to at least one priority conservation objective — such as protecting key nursery grounds or ecologically important geographic features. Cultural, natural heritage, and fishery MPAs were accepted.

A second round of site nominations will begin later this year. There is room for growth in the system: the 225 charter members represent just one-eighth of the nation's approximately 1800 designated MPAs. For more information on the national system, including a list of the 225 charter sites and maps of where they are located, go to http://mpa.gov/national_system/national_system.html.

In conjunction with the announcement of the national system, the national MPA Federal Advisory Committee released two sets of recommendations. The first, *Ecological Resilience and Gap Analysis of the National System of Marine Protected Areas*, explains the impor-

ance of resilience for meeting the goals of the national system, and provides guidelines on applying resilience thinking to a gap analysis of the system. The second set of recommendations, *Guiding Principles for Ecological Gap Analysis of the National System of Marine Protected Areas*, builds on the first set, with principles for gap analysis and guidance on assessing different types of gaps in a protected area system. The sets of recommendations are available at www.mpa.gov.

British man wins "Best Job in the World" contest

A 34-year-old project manager from the U.K. has won the so-called "Best Job in the World" — a six-month position as island caretaker in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In an online contest for the position, Ben Southall beat out more than 34,000 competitors from over 160 countries. The job, devised by Tourism Queensland as a unique way to market the region internationally, will pay Southall AU \$150,000 (US \$100,000). His responsibilities will primarily involve exploring the marine park and surrounding islands, then describing those experiences on the internet (*MPA News* 10:7)

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority (GBRMPA), which manages the marine park, worked with Tourism Queensland to coordinate an introduction for the winning applicant, including a tour of GBRMPA facilities and briefings with key park staff. For more information on the "Best Job in the World" contest or to view Southall's blog postings and video reports, go to www.islandreefjob.com.

Course available on Caribbean MPAs

Students and practitioners interested in MPAs in the Caribbean region are invited to enroll in an international course to be held from 24 June to 3 July 2009 at the Academic Unit of Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo, Mexico. The course "Marine Protected Areas for the South Florida, Mexican Caribbean, and Mesoamerican Region" analyzes ecological and socioeconomic aspects of MPA design and management, and will be co-led by researchers from the National University of Mexico and Florida International University. Fellowships for the course are available for Latin American students. For more information, e-mail Ligia Collado Vides at colladol@fiu.edu.

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searchable back issues, MPA-related conference calendar, and more