MPA news

International news and analysis on marine protected areas

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OpenChannels: New Forum for Sharing Knowledge on Ocean Planning and Management

MPA News and its sister newsletter Marine Ecosystems and Management (MEAM) have partnered to build a new website to help you and your peers around the world share knowledge more easily.

OpenChannels (**openchannels.org**) is designed to become your comprehensive source for news, guidance, and community discussion on sustainable practices in ocean planning and management — from MPAs to marine spatial planning to ecosystem-based management.

Available in its experimental "beta" version, OpenChannels already offers an array of tools including:

- A searchable library of 1000+ publications on ocean planning and management
- Open discussion forums and live chats w/ experts
- Ability to comment on MPA News & MEAM articles
- "Top 10" lists of publications on MPAs and other topics
- A growing collection of instructional videos
- Job and grant listings
- And more to come, including a team of regular commentators to debut soon

We are offering a webinar on 9 October on ways that OpenChannels can serve you. To register, go to **www1.gotomeeting.com/register/912260745**

Please let us know what you think of OpenChannels. There are feedback forms throughout the site. We are learning from you what works and what doesn't and improving as we go. The next version of OpenChannels will launch in mid-October, informed by your feedback.

We look forward to hearing from you and building a site that serves your ocean planning and management needs. Thank you very much. The channels are open.

John B. Davis, MPA News Editor

OpenChannels is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

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Cook Islands and New Caledonia Declare Intent to Designate Large Multi-Use MPAs

MPAs more than 1 million km^2 each; could allow fishing and seabed mining

Two South Pacific jurisdictions have indicated their intent to plan and eventually designate MPAs that will be among the largest in the world. In September at the Pacific Islands Forum, the nation of the Cook Islands announced it would create a 1-million km^2 marine park encompassing roughly half of the country's EEZ. The French territory of New Caledonia followed with its own pledge to create a 1.4-million km^2 MPA.

To put these MPAs in context: the Cook Islands MPA will be roughly the size of Finland, Norway, and Sweden together. Add Poland to that and you'll have the New Caledonia MPA. The announced MPAs represent a rise to the challenge set by Kiribati, which designated the 408,000-km^2 Phoenix Island Protected Area in 2008 and called on other South Pacific nations to follow its lead.

Officials in the Cook Islands and New Caledonia expect the planning process for each MPA will take 2-3 years, during which time planners will decide which activities to allow inside the MPAs. Officials are leaving the option open for various extractive uses, including fishing and even seabed mining — provided such uses can be justified as sustainable.

continued on next page

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Below, officials with the Cook Islands and New Caledonia describe the planning processes ahead for their sites:

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1. Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP)

By Elizabeth Koteka, Director of Policy and Planning, Office of the Prime Minister, Cook Islands. Email: **cos@pmoffice.gov.ck**

On the timeframe:

There are a lot of activities following on from the announcement by the Prime Minister to establish the CIMP. One of these activities involves conducting a legal analysis on the best legislative fit for it. There are existing laws under which the CIMP could be legally designated, such as the Ministry of Marine Resources Act. However, following consultations, the general feeling is we should examine if that is indeed the best option or if it is better to create entirely new legislation. This legal analysis is scheduled to be undertaken within the next few months.

It is anticipated that the legal designation of the CIMP, including regulations, will be completed within two years, given the need to consult, etc. Drawing from the experiences of the establishment of other marine parks, one can appreciate that CIMP is a massive undertaking that will require a lot of consultation with impacted communities and stakeholders.

On what activities will be allowed in the CIMP:

The process to determine the areas and types of uses within the CIMP is currently underway. It will include consultation, marine spatial planning, biodiversity surveys, etc. These processes are also likely to inform the development of the management plan.

It is important to note that the CIMP covers not only marine waters but also islands and the near shore. While this adds to the complexity of the whole initiative, we see CIMP as a wonderful opportunity to address the management of the entirety of our environment in a holistic manner. There are already conservation measures in place that include no-take areas (called *raui*) in coastal waters, based on traditional methods of conservation. There is also currently a ban on commercial fishing within 12 nautical miles of the islands. Marine conservation is nothing new to Cook Islanders. The CIMP will seek to enhance existing practices.

Drawing from the experience of others — and in particular that of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park with its rezoning process a decade ago — working out these details takes time. We have given ourselves three years to have a robust management plan in place and one that has the buy-in of communities and key stakeholders.

On enforcement of such a large area:

Like any other marine park, monitoring is going to be a challenge. There are current monitoring measures in place through traditional methods, marine surveillance cooperation with other jurisdictions, observer coverage, Cook Islands Police patrol boats, etc. However, these efforts are not enough as it is and will obviously need to be enhanced.

We do not have all the answers at the moment. Rather than do nothing and wait until we have all answers (which will be too late), we are taking a leap of faith, and hope that as this journey progresses we will learn from it and constantly improve.

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2. New Caledonian Coral Sea MPA

By Anne-Claire Goarant, Office of Regional Cooperation and External Relations, Government of New Caledonia. Email: **anne-claire.goarant@gouv.nc**

On the timeframe:

The 1.4-million km^2 marine protected area in New Caledonia will be officially designated after a thorough, participative marine spatial planning analysis. Bearing in mind the research carried out since 1993 within the framework of the multidisciplinary ZoNéCo programme (aimed at assessing both living and non-living resources of New Caledonia's EEZ and lagoons; **www.zoneco.nc**) and the amount of scientific data that has been acquired, this work should take two to three years. We expect the New Caledonian Coral Sea MPA to be designated by 2015.

The marine protected area will include zones with different management objectives and adapted legal frameworks. The purpose is to have a multiple-use MPA where each zone is managed in a sustainable way through a management plan. This MPA will be a tool for the New Caledonian government to ensure the long-term conservation and development of its EEZ over the next 15 years and beyond.

On what activities will be allowed:

New Caledonia aims to sustainably manage its marine natural resources. This means that the future MPA will apply protection status based on several factors, including:

- Conservation targets (such as for species, habitats, and oceanographic processes) and examples of ecologically and biologically significant areas;
- Existing and potential human activities that promote best practices, including recreational

and commercial fishing as well as mining and exploration; and

- Connectivity between different zones.

Allowed fishing activity, for example, will need to be able to ensure the sustainability of the targeted fish stock.

Deep sea mining is currently in an exploratory phase in New Caledonia, although no active exploitation is planned in the near future. The marine spatial planning process will detect where the potential areas and stakes are and how to manage these areas, including potentially inside the MPA. This will be a way to strengthen the existing mining code in New Caledonia, which does not currently govern marine mining activities. The existing work by SOPAC (the Secretariat of the Pacific Community), funded by the EU under the European Development Fund, will help address the issues related to deep sea mining in the South Pacific.

On enforcement of such a large area:
The New Caledonian Coral Sea MPA will be monitored and enforced with the strong support of the French Navy, as well as other existing or potential partnerships in the Pacific region.

The establishment of a large MPA in New Caledonia with clear legal rules may be a first step toward building a multilateral commitment and partnership for MPA enforcement across the Coral Sea and South Pacific region.

To comment on this article:
http://openchannels.org/node/1711

Lessons from Planning California's MPA System: Interview with Evan Fox

In June 2012, the California Fish and Game Commission approved a plan for a systematic network of 19 MPAs and additional management areas along the north coast of the US state of California. The approval marked the completion of the open-coast portion of the state's Marine Life Protection Act Initiative: a multi-year, region-by-region process to re-examine and redesign California's MPA system (**www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa**).

The California MPA network — which stretches northward from the Mexico border to the state line of Oregon and now includes 119 MPAs, 5 recreational management areas and 15 special closures — is the first in the US to be designed from scratch as a science-based network, rather than a patchwork of independent protected areas. It covers 16% of state marine waters. Roughly half of the new or modified MPAs are multiple-use areas; the rest are no-take.

The planning process was far from easy. The state's first two attempts to implement the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) failed due to political and budgetary reasons, respectively (MPA News 9:1 and 8:11). The third, successful attempt involved dozens of regional meetings with scientists, stakeholders, and managers. Throughout, there was consistent opposition to the MPA planning from some recreational fishing associations, including lawsuits that attempted to stop the process.

Evan Fox worked for the MLPA Initiative from 2005-2010; this included three years as principal planner, when he led a team of consultants who assisted stakeholder groups in developing MPA network proposals. With other central actors in the MLPA Initiative, Fox has co-published a paper in the journal *Ocean & Coastal Management* on the conditions that allowed the planning process to be successful (**www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569112001640**). According to Fox and his co-authors, these six conditions were:

(1) A strong legal mandate that provided guidance and flexibility;

(2) Political support and leadership that enabled the process to overcome political challenges and opposition;

(3) Adequate funding that ensured sufficient staff support and facilitated innovative approaches to a public MPA network planning process;

(4) An aggressive timeline with firm deadlines that propelled the process forward;

(5) Willingness of civil society to engage in the process, which provided for better informed and broadly supported outcomes; and

(6) An effective and transparent process design, which optimized contributions from stakeholders, scientists, and policy makers.

Below, MPA News speaks with Fox about these conditions and about lessons for MPA planning processes elsewhere.

continued on next page

In your opinion, are these six conditions universally necessary to enable successful MPA network planning, including outside the US?

Evan Fox: The conditions outlined in our paper are universally important for successful MPA network planning through a public process. Although it is possible to complete MPA network planning without one or more of these conditions, their absence will create difficulties for adequately achieving process objectives. Furthermore, these six conditions do not represent a comprehensive list. Unique characteristics of a given planning region may present additional conditions that must be met in order to successfully design the MPA network, beyond those in the paper.

Opposition to MPA planning from the recreational fishing sector was consistent throughout the MLPA process. In retrospect, could the process have been designed or implemented differently to achieve greater buy-in from the recreational fishing sector?

Fox: The MLPA Initiative went to great lengths to engage the recreational fishing sector. While there are certainly improvements that could have been made to the design process (as indicated in our commissioned reports on lessons learned; reports for the Central and North Central regions, for example, are at **www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/documentsmain.asp**), it is my opinion that it would have been difficult to achieve greater buy-in from the recreational fishing community.

It is important to clarify that the MLPA Initiative process did effectively engage individual recreational fishermen who provided important input into MPA designs. Recreational fishing representatives participated in each of the regional MLPA Initiative processes, and collaborated across interest groups to not only comment on MPA designs designed by others, but to create alternative MPA designs that their constituencies could support. Recreational fishermen were among the most adept at using our technical decision support tools and thoroughly scrutinized our datasets. Ultimately, this participation allowed the knowledge and concerns of recreational fishermen to inform the MPA network adopted in California. The MLPA Initiative facilitated this participation with extensive outreach, a collaborative process design, and *de novo* data collection efforts to identify areas of importance for recreational fishermen.

In my opinion, opposition to implementation of the MLPA Initiative by recreational fishing groups was fundamentally driven by general disagreement over use of MPAs as a management tool. This concern may have arisen from a number of factors: beliefs about the health of marine ecosystems; non-fishing impacts to marine ecosystems (e.g., land-based marine pollution); effectiveness of fisheries management; and concerns over potential socioeconomic impacts. This general opposition to the use of MPAs was difficult to mitigate with modifications to process design (although education efforts and joint fact-finding were used and may have helped).

Additional opposition from recreational fishing groups may have been generated by disappointment with process outcomes and the MPAs that were ultimately implemented by decision-makers. Although the final designs reflected input from the recreational fishing community, they necessarily represented a compromise among a variety of interest groups, causing dismay for some groups. This also would be unlikely to change with a different process design. In a few cases, recreational fishing groups did raise concerns relating to the process itself, specifically relating to transparency and funding of the process. In both cases, the MLPA Initiative made great efforts to help assuage concerns of process participants. Thus, primary sources of opposition to the MLPA Initiative process from recreational fishing interests were either addressed by the process already, or outside the scope of what could be effectively addressed with changes to process design.

In the initial attempt to implement the MLPA (2000-2001), MPA network designs were created by a panel of scientists and agency staff. But public reaction was strongly negative due to a lack of stakeholder input in those designs, and the designs were scrapped. Has anyone compared those original network designs to what emerged from the final attempt to implement the MLPA? In other words, did the heavy stakeholder input make a difference in the actual designs?

Fox: I am helping to lead an effort to conduct this analysis. Preliminary results seem to indicate broad similarities in geographic areas addressed in designs generated during the 2000-2001 process and those generated as a result of the recently completed MLPA Initiative. However, the detailed boundaries and regulations of these designs vary significantly. Thus, process participants in both efforts seem to have identified similar areas along the California coastline with a high degree of ecological importance, but differed in the specific MPA design utilized to protect those resources.

Integration of a wide range of stakeholder input during the MLPA Initiative process may have contributed to these design differences, as well as differences in public perceptions of the processes. My team's current analysis will help to assess whether these design differences resulted in MPAs that are more likely or less likely to achieve the goals of the MLPA.

For more information:
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To comment on this article:
http://openchannels.org/node/1712

MPA Perspective: United States Proposes MPA in Antarctica's Ross Sea Region

By Evan T. Bloom

[**Editor's note:** Evan Bloom is the Director of the Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs at the US Department of State, and is the US representative to CCAMLR.]

As one of the nations with vital and active interests in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic, the United States is an active member of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources (CCAMLR), the international body responsible for managing marine living resources in the waters around Antarctica. On 7 September 2012, to advance marine conservation, protection, and scientific research in one of the last great ocean wilderness areas on the planet, the United States submitted a proposal to CCAMLR to establish a marine protected area in Antarctica's Ross Sea Region.

The Ross Sea: one of the last great ocean wilderness areas

The Ross Sea Region is an area of significant, long-term scientific investment by the United States and other countries, revealing a tremendous base of knowledge about the region's ecosystems, as compared to other Antarctic marine areas. The Ross Sea continental shelf is known to encompass the most productive ecosystems of the Southern Ocean, supporting abundant marine life and, unlike most places on the planet, retaining its full community of top-level predators.

Long-term datasets on the region's geology, oceanography, climatology, and biology provide a robust characterization of a region with astounding ecological value, biological productivity, and biodiversity. For example, the Ross Sea is home to over one-third of the world's Adélie penguins, one-quarter of the world population of Emperor penguins, half of the Southern Pacific population of Weddell seals, and half of the world's Ross Sea killer whales.

These remarkable scientific, biodiversity, and ecosystem characteristics make the Ross Sea Region an area of tremendous conservation and scientific value for current and future generations, and an exceptional candidate for the establishment of an MPA. A science-based MPA would protect these ecosystems and safeguard this extremely valuable scientific reference area for research and monitoring, particularly related to long-term climate and environmental change. Furthermore, the Southern Ocean is one of the best places to promote the establishment of MPAs beyond national jurisdiction because, compared to most other areas on the planet, it has very limited vessel traffic and other human impacts.

Proposal for a Ross Sea Region Marine Protected Area

After extensive scientific analysis and consultation with stakeholders and other CCAMLR Member countries, the United States submitted a proposal to CCAMLR for an MPA in the Ross Sea designed to balance ecosystem protection, scientific research, and commercial fishing interests in the region. The proposed MPA would encompass roughly 1.8 million km^2 (700,000 square miles), which would be one of the largest MPAs on Earth, and include areas that support essential ecosystem processes and are critical to whales, seals, penguins, commercially valuable and other fish stocks, and the species they feed upon.

Designed to achieve protection and scientific objectives while allowing some fishing to occur in certain areas of the MPA, the MPA would consist of three zones. A large area of the Southern Ross Sea — covering approximately 800,000 km^2 — would be established as a fully protected no-fishing zone to preserve the ecosystem and serve as a scientific reference

Could competing proposals for a giant MPA in Antarctic waters cancel each other out?

Officials from the US and New Zealand governments spent the past two years developing a proposal for an enormous MPA to cover the Ross Sea in Antarctica. The joint plan was to be submitted to the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), where it would have required unanimous approval of the 25 member states to take effect.

However, in September 2012 the New Zealand government backed away from the joint plan and instead introduced its own proposal to CCAMLR. Without a compromise proposal, the US submitted *its* own proposal as well, which is described in the essay by Evan Bloom on this page. Although the two plans are similar in terms of total area covered, they differ in the area they protect from fishing. The US's proposed no-take area would protect key habitats in some of the main toothfish fishing areas, thus displacing that fishing to other parts of the Ross Sea. In contrast, New Zealand's proposed MPA would allow current toothfish fishing activity to continue where it is. (New Zealand has a toothfish fishing fleet; the US does not.)

With competing proposals now before CCAMLR, the requirement for unanimous consent by its membership is likely to present more of a challenge. The Antarctic Ocean Alliance, a consortium of major conservation NGOs, says the dueling proposals pose the threat of a "train wreck" at CCAMLR negotiations in October (**http://antarcticocean.org/critical-habitats-missing-from-nz-ross-sea-marine-reserve-proposal**).

The New Zealand proposal is at **www.mfat.govt.nz/ross-sea-mpa/docs/New%20Zealand's%20full%20proposal.pdf**

The US proposal is at **www.state.gov/documents/organization/197887.pdf**

area for studying the ecosystem effects of fishing and climate change. In the other two zones, some fishing would be allowed with restrictions on species, gear type, and season to protect critical habitat and spawning fish stocks. Fishing activities outside the MPA would continue as currently permitted.

CCAMLR's commitment to a representative system of Antarctic MPAs

CCAMLR was formed in 1982 with the objective of conserving Antarctic marine life, and its 25 members, including the US, make conservation and ocean management decisions through unanimous consent of all its members. The US delegation to CCAMLR, led by the Department of State, also includes representatives from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Science Foundation, and the US Marine Mammal Commission, and is advised by non-governmental representatives from the fishing industry and conservation organizations.

CCAMLR is often viewed as a leader among regional marine resource management organizations for its precautionary, ecosystem approach to management. In 2010, the Commission officially recognized the important role that MPAs should play in conserving Antarctic marine biodiversity and endorsed a work program to develop a representative system of Antarctic MPAs. Through robust scientific analysis the Commission subdivided the Convention Area into eight subareas for planning and reporting on the development of MPAs, one of which is the Ross Sea Region.

CCAMLR will consider the US and other member proposals at its next meeting in October 2012 in Hobart, Australia. In order for proposals to be approved, all CCAMLR members must agree. The United States intends to engage with all CCAMLR Members to consider our proposal and advance meaningful protection for one of the last unspoiled marine ecosystems on the planet.

To comment on this essay:
http://openchannels.org/node/1714

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Letters to the Editor

MPA community continues to reinvent tools rather than seek consistency

Dear MPA News:

I read with interest your most recent edition (MPA News 14:1). What was particularly interesting to me was the juxtaposition of two of the articles. The first was the report of the work of the Marine Reserves Coalition on the new calculations of the coverage of MPAs worldwide, followed by the announcement of the new **MPAtlas.org** database by the Marine Conservation Institute. Taken together, these articles point to another example of how the MPA community has — instead of seeking consistency and building on foundations that have been provided to us — reverted yet again to reinventing these important tools.

"We seem, as a community, to lack the capacity for embracing only one way of doing things that could offer greater clarity and utility, and that would make what we do more transparent and understandable....

It is no wonder that our ability to determine something as fundamental as the global coverage of MPAs is so compromised that we cannot accurately determine what it really is."

The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) offers the opportunity for MPA systems from around the world to share their information in an accessible and transparent database. This database is, indeed, incomplete (as mentioned in the first article) and while updated as frequently as the limits of resources allow, does not serve effectively as the comprehensive source of MPA data it was designed to provide. However, instead of populating this database with new information, the community creates new ones.

The WDPA is constructed to encourage submissions of new data, and this is not a complicated or burdensome process. However, for some reason, we consistently redirect our collective efforts to creating other mechanisms that have varying and often conflicting criteria. While offering additional important information, these new tools do so at the expense of having a central clearinghouse of data from which global trends in MPA designation and management can be analyzed and evaluated. It is no wonder that our ability to determine something as fundamental as the global coverage of MPAs is so compromised that we cannot accurately determine what it really is.

While we can debate the value of the 10% target [i.e., that 10% of global oceans should be protected in MPAs by 2020], the fact is that the target does exist, and knowing more precisely where we are in reaching that goal is pretty important, for obvious reasons. The task at hand — achieving the 10% target — is a challenging one. The public constituencies of support needed for this cannot be effectively created when we announce that, "No, in fact we have double the area covered than previously calculated (but we're not really sure about this number either)." As scientists, we have a better grasp of uncertainty, and its implications, than the general public, and one has only to look at the debate over global climate change to see what not understanding "uncertainty" can lead to. It would be entirely understandable if the public (including the government decision-makers who fund and support MPA designation and management) might very well conclude, "Well, if they think it's double what they

thought it was, how sure are we that we're not much closer to the target?" Even with a more comprehensive, centralized global database there will always be uncertainty, but at least with better data, progress toward the target can be calculated more robustly, and the uncertainty measured and explained.

Perhaps those responsible for the WDPA should undertake an evaluation of why the community does not believe this database is worthy of their time and efforts to achieve its full potential. Perhaps the global MPA community should take a hard look at itself to find out why we choose to reinvent rather than build upon these important foundations. Perhaps the MPA networks and systems around the world should think about revisiting the WDPA in terms of making certain the information it contains about their respective networks and systems is complete and accurate. I am not sanguine we will do any of these things. But something should be done to harmonize these sources of information, to better address our data needs and requirements with regard to the global status of MPAs.

Kudos to both the Marine Conservation Institute and the Marine Reserves Coalition for their hard work in helping to expand our knowledge of global MPA coverage — offering critical information not only to evaluate progress toward the target but, perhaps more importantly, helping to define how these sites are managed, and ultimately their contribution to effective marine conservation. However, it would have been better, in my view, to build on the foundation created by the WDPA than to create yet another global MPA database. If we are truly a community of practice, we should be able to agree on one tool and throw all our energies into making it the most useful one it can be.

Like my previous comment on MPA terminology (MPA News 12:3), we seem, as a community, to lack the capacity for embracing only one way of doing things that could offer greater clarity and utility, and that would make what we do more transparent and understandable. Unless we find this capacity to act as a community, we have only ourselves to blame for the slow pace of progress toward these goals to which we are all deeply committed.

The opinions expressed here are entirely my own, and do not reflect in any way the views or positions of any agency or organization with which I am affiliated.

Brad Barr
Brad Barr is Senior Policy Advisor, US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US. Email: **brad.barr@noaa.gov**

To comment on these letters:
http://openchannels.org/node/1713

Responses to Brad Barr

Dear MPA News:
Thank you for the opportunity to reply to Brad Barr's thoughtful letter. He is correct in many ways about what needs to happen to improve MPA information, and we do agree with many of his thoughts. First, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the WDPA team in helping us develop the **MPAtlas.org** website, as we do indeed use their database. While we have developed a new website, we are not trying to reinvent that tool but expand it in new ways useful to the MPA community.

MPAtlas.org is working with ProtectedPlanet.net and the WDPA team to keep data synchronized between the two projects wherever possible. MPAtlas.org uses the WDPA as its base information, but has updated and incorporated new information from many other sources. We are working to make sure our new research and changes make their way back to the WDPA. This month the MPAtlas.org and ProtectedPlanet teams are finishing development of features on MPAtlas.org where user edits and contributions to information about MPA sites will be submitted directly to ProtectedPlanet. This insures that we're all working from the same core data and that any changes are immediately reflected by both online applications. To facilitate this data-sharing, MPAtlas.org has also updated its user authentication to automatically login existing ProtectedPlanet users.

Staying on top of changes to MPAs and calculations regarding national and international MPA targets is a huge effort. In fact this is the primary reason we are developing MPAtlas.org. First MPAtlas.org is an MPA-centric tool unlike ProtectedPlanet/WDPA, which include all protected areas on land or the water. Second, MPAtlas.org is striving to provide more features and analyses that pertain specifically to the MPA landscape, both for conservation in the water and politics in national and international arenas. The MPAtlas.org team is developing a basic MPA classification with its online maps and database that will show MPA coverage amounts in high (e.g., largely no-take), moderate, low, and unknown protection levels for major political and biogeographic areas. This should show a clearer picture of MPA coverage and distribution rather than a catch-all total coverage as presented by the Marine Reserves Coalition.

Finally, we wholeheartedly agree that we as a community need more engagement in getting more complete and accurate information on MPAs in all regions of the world ocean. We encourage MPA News readers to sign on as editors to MPAtlas.org and help us update information. We gratefully accept suggestions or help through our website or directly.

Lance Morgan & Russell Moffitt
Lance Morgan is president (**Lance.Morgan@marine-conservation.org**) and Russell Moffitt is ocean conservation analyst (**Russell.Moffitt@marine-conservation.org**) for the Marine Conservation Institute, US.

Dear MPA News:
Thank you for the engaging debate and for the opportunity to contribute. IUCN and UNEP (WCMC) jointly enable the WDPA as the sole resource on protected areas that is mandated by the world's governments (it serves as the UN List of Protected Areas).

We are especially grateful for the support for the WDPA from Brad Barr of NOAA. We note that although the WDPA is far from perfect, over the last seven years we have managed to raise around US $400k per annum to continually improve the information and the ease with which it is made available – and it is good to receive recognition for our efforts!

continued on next page

Brad makes salient points regarding the potential for duplication of, and competition with, the WDPA, and this seems especially acute amongst the marine community. In recent years we have seen MPAGlobal.org, ProtectPlanetOcean.org and most recently, MPAtlas.org, all seeking to address perceived shortcomings in the WDPA and the marine data it holds. Clearly there are problems with the offering we make in this regard. But we are quite aware of these, and we are very capable of addressing any shortcomings if the community can be marshalled to get behind us.

We are delighted to be working with the MPAtlas.org team, which has incorporated the marine elements of the WDPA into their site. They are helpful and collaborative, and their initiative should – as they point out – ultimately benefit the quality of the data in the WDPA. Still, it is hard not to wonder if their original investments couldn't have been more focused on building the WDPA's marine data and strengthening ProtectedPlanet.net, perhaps with a dedicated marine component, rather than building something completely new….

No database of protected areas will ever be complete or totally accurate because the global protected areas network is in constant flux. In many parts of the world the boundaries of individual areas are not adequately described. However, the solution is for the community to support IUCN and UNEP by encouraging data flows to the WDPA to fill the gaps they have identified. If we want to see improvements in the WDPA at a faster rate of uptake, we need a broader base of support and contributions from the conservation community.

In closing, we also need the conservation community to coalesce around agreed statistics on protected area coverage, such as those produced by IUCN and UNEP for UN Millennium Development Goal 7 and Aichi Target 11. If these are not as good as they should be, by all means let's work together to fix the problem. The creation of competing analyses has the potential, as Brad has pointed out, to create utter confusion among policy and decision-makers as to what to do next.

We welcome official updates to the WDPA as seen on **www.protectedplanet.net** . For more details, please contact us at **protectedareas@unep-wcmc.org** .

Siobhan Kenney and Amy Milam
WDPA team, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK

Highlights from 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress

The 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress, held 6-15 September in Jeju, Korea, was the launch site for several new reports and initiatives related to marine protected areas. Among the highlights:

• **New guidelines on applying protected area management categories to MPAs**
With a goal to make it more difficult for fisheries agencies to categorize area mechanisms that exploit fish as being MPAs, IUCN has produced a new set of guidelines for applying its protected area management categories. The guidelines clarify that if marine areas involve extractive use and have no defined long-term goals of conservation and ocean recovery, they should not be considered MPAs.

"It is time to stop pretending more of the ocean is protected than it actually is," said Dan Laffoley, Marine Vice-Chair of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas**,** in a press statement. The guidelines also suggest pipelines and offshore wind farms should not be considered MPAs unless they are set up specifically with clear long-term conservation objectives in mind.

IUCN concludes that of the MPAs that have been categorized worldwide, about 50% have been wrongly allocated; this is typically because the name of the MPA (e.g., National Park, Sanctuary, etc.) was used to determine the category, rather than the management objectives. *Guidelines for Applying the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories to Marine Protected Areas* is available at **https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_categoriesmpa_eng.pdf**

• **IUCN to create Green List of Well-Managed Protected Areas**
To recognize protected areas that are meeting conservation goals and to act as a benchmark for progress toward effective management, IUCN is developing a "Green List" of sites that have satisfied a threshold of agreed criteria. Advantages of inscription on the Green List are anticipated to include greater international recognition for the protected area and increased political support. Pilot projects to test the Green List concept are underway in Korea, Colombia, and elsewhere. A press release on the Green List is at **www.iucn.org/?uNewsID=10914**

• **New biannual report on global protected area coverage**
The first edition of what will be a biannual report on global progress toward protected area coverage goals was released at the Congress. The *Protected Planet Report 2012* determines protected areas cover 12.7% of the world's terrestrial area but just 1.6% of the global ocean area. Compiled by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, and several other organizations, the 68-page report is available at **www.iucn.org/pa_protectedplanet**

• **Guidelines on ecological restoration of protected areas**
Modeled on Canada's national approach to ecological restoration, a new set of guidelines is available on restoring ecosystems in protected areas. The Canadian approach integrates habitat restoration with meaningful visitor experiences and learning opportunities. Co-produced by Parks Canada, IUCN, the Society for Ecological Restoration, and other institutions, the report *Ecological Restoration for Protected Areas: Principles, Guidelines, and Best Practices* is available at **www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAG-018.pdf**

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