

US Designates “World’s Largest” MPA in Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

US President George W. Bush has designated a giant marine protected area around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), a long stretch of coral islands, seamounts, banks, and shoals that extend westward from the main Hawaiian Islands. With an area of 139,793 square miles (362,000 km²), the NWHI Marine National Monument is being touted by US officials as the largest MPA in the world, surpassing Australia’s Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (344,400 km²). The monument holds what are considered to be the healthiest and least-disturbed tropical coral reefs under US jurisdiction, as well as thousands of marine species, including abundant populations of top-level predators.

The site will be co-managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State of Hawai‘i. All NWHI commercial fishing activity, which primarily consists of eight licensed bottomfishing operators, will be banned within five years inside the protected area. The Pew Charitable Trusts, an NGO, is negotiating with these bottomfishing operators on potential buyout payments for surrendering their permits immediately. Such payments would effectively end commercial fishing at the beginning rather than end of the five-year phaseout period. Recreational fishing — already minimal in the NWHI due to the remoteness of these mostly uninhabited islands — will also be prohibited, although the managing agencies will determine whether catch-and-release fishing methods will be allowable by permit around one atoll (Midway).

Traditional Native Hawaiian cultural practices, including fishing for pelagic species, will be allowed by permit as long as consumption occurs within the NWHI, and the monument will eventually receive an official Native Hawaiian name. Harvest by crews of research and management vessels and other permitted individuals will also be allowed. The proclamation of the monument is available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/print/20060615-18.html>.

“This protected area is important not only for the place it is protecting but also for the precedent it sets,” says Elliott Norse, president of Marine Conservation Biology Institute, which worked with other NGOs to campaign for protection of the NWHI. “The US has

been wrestling with the issue of creating either small, well-protected areas — with strict limits on activity — or large, not well-protected areas. This one is designed to be a very large, very well-protected area.”

Building on previous protection

The NWHI have been the subject of presidential interest since former President Theodore Roosevelt designated some of the islands as a bird sanctuary in 1909. In 2000, former President Bill Clinton designated a coral reef ecosystem reserve over roughly 340,000 km² of the NWHI. It contained several no-take zones but allowed fishing elsewhere by small numbers of Hawai‘i-based commercial pelagic fishermen and bottomfishing vessels, as well as sportfishermen (*MPA News* 2:6). The bottomfish fishers are the operators now negotiating for a buyout. (The pelagic fishery was only occasionally active and relatively unprofitable.)

A public process has been underway since 2002 to solicit public comments on potential site regulations, in anticipation that the coral reef ecosystem reserve would eventually be designated as a national marine sanctuary. During that process, the concept of stricter limits on activity in NWHI received substantial support from Hawaiian residents as well as national and international environmental groups, and in September 2005, Hawai‘i Governor Linda Lingle banned nearly all extractive activity in state waters of the NWHI archipelago, out to 3 nm from the shore (*MPA News* 7:4). President Bush cited the public support for strict protection in his proclamation of the new NWHI Marine National Monument. His designation of the site as a “national monument” rather than a national park or national marine sanctuary allows the protected area to take effect immediately.

There has been one strong voice of dissent: the leadership of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, or Wespac, which oversees fishing in the region’s federal waters and reports to NOAA. Kitty Simonds, executive director of Wespac, has questioned for several years the wisdom of prohibiting limited fishing by a small fleet, arguing that the council was doing an effective job of balancing conservation with sustainable fishing in the NWHI. In

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Next month

The new Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument is the world’s largest MPA. Or is it? It depends on how you define “marine protected area”. Next month, *MPA News* will introduce several contenders for the mantle of “world’s largest MPA” and ask readers for their pick.

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June 2000 upon President Clinton's designation of the ecosystem reserve, Simonds asked *MPA News*, "Why shut the fisheries down if there are no threats?" Wespac instead recommended stricter fishing regulations, including limits on bottomfish and pelagic takes, closure of other fisheries, and no-take marine reserves in 40% of the NWHI. After President Bush designated the national monument, Wespac responded, "We believe the abundance and biodiversity of the area attests to the successful management of the NWHI fisheries by the Council these past 30 years, and indicates that properly regulated fisheries can operate in the NWHI without impacting the ecosystem." Simonds says Wespac will ask Congress to allow the bottomfish fishery to operate indefinitely in the monument.


The strict protection for NWHI represents a major victory for local and national environmental organizations, which employed a range of techniques to build political support. A core group of NGOs — the 'Ilio'ulaokalani Coalition (a Native Hawaiian cultural organization), KAHEA (an alliance of Native Hawaiians and environmental activists), and Hawai'i offices of two national organizations (Environmental Defense and Sierra Club) — worked for six years to ensure transparency of NWHI public planning processes, strengthen public participation, and brief decision-makers. The Pew Charitable Trusts, a national organization (formerly a foundation), launched a multifaceted campaign in 2005 to sway local and national support in favor of limits on NWHI commercial fishing, including leading the effort currently underway to craft a buyout package to retire the existing commercial fishing permits. Other organizations — The Ocean Conservancy, the Hawaii Audubon Society, and Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI) — played multiple roles in research and advocacy, including enlisting the assistance of influential celebrities and politicians. In April, a dinner for President Bush was arranged at which he viewed a new film by Jean-Michel Cousteau on the need to protect the NWHI (*Voyage to Kure*) and he discussed the film afterward with Cousteau and scientist Sylvia Earle, another proponent of protection.

Cha Smith, executive director of KAHEA, calls the national monument a milestone in marine and cultural rights protection. She adds, however, that the public should remain vigilant during the forthcoming process to refine and inform the details of the monument's management plan. "There need to be very specific criteria established for the approval of research projects," she says. "Projects must be tied directly to the needs of the resource and driven by the management goals. Right now there is a research 'gold rush'...and that must stop. The permitting process must also be transparent, with adequate opportunity for public comment and a panel of scientists representing terrestrial wildlife, ecosystem science, coral reefs, sea birds, and marine mammals." In addition, Smith wants to make sure that management agencies receive the funding necessary for effective management. Congress, which was not consulted on designation of the national monument, will have oversight of its funding.

Norse of MCBI says adequate funding will be especially critical for enforcement. Poaching of sharks in other remote protected areas of the Pacific, such as Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, has occurred in recent years. "I would like to see adequate funds established to provide Coast Guard spot checks of the protected area and passovers by satellites," he says. "I would love for there to be some creative thinking about real-time ways we could monitor movement of vessels throughout. Vessel monitoring systems [which are now required for vessels entering the national monument] are not enough, as they only monitor the vessels that obey the law to carry them." Without adequate enforcement, says Norse, the relatively pristine archipelago "will be like a supermarket with the doors open 24 hours a day and no personnel and no cameras."

Rick Gaffney, president of the Hawai'i Fishing and Boating Association, is also concerned about funding. His organization supported strict protection for the archipelago despite the fact it would limit activities of its members — recreational fishermen. "There appears to be no money attached to the proclamation," says Gaffney. "Enforcement will be very expensive, and the Coast Guard has already been scaling back its activity in the region for funding reasons."

There is concern among some environmental advocates over a provision in the proclamation to allow "sustenance fishing" there by permit. The term — not to be confused with "subsistence fishing", which is often allowed for local and indigenous groups in MPAs worldwide — is defined as allowing for the capture and consumption of fish within the monument as long as it is incidental to an otherwise-permitted activity, such as research. "It's not clear who this is meant to sustain," says Norse. "The definition of research can be so broad that presumably a ship full of tourists could be dubbed 'researchers' and they could go sustenance-fishing."

As acting superintendent of the NWHI Marine National Monument, Aulani Wilhelm will oversee the application of such terms, and says data will be kept to ensure that any sustenance fishing — or other activity — does not harm the ecosystem. "The biggest challenge we face in managing and enforcing the marine national monument is making sure that our efforts will be sufficient to implement the proclamation provisions and ensure a protection regime worthy of this special place," says Wilhelm. "NOAA, along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Hawai'i, is charged to develop a strong and coordinated management regime to cooperatively manage the area in a way that is unparalleled elsewhere in the US. Given the strong conservation provisions, relatively remote location, and enormous size of the monument, obtaining the resources and funding necessary to study, manage, monitor, and enforce the area will continue to be a challenge every year." 

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MPA Perspective MPAs in Indonesia: What Progress Has Been

Made Since 1984?

By Lida Pet-Soede

In 1984, a detailed plan for development of an Indonesian system of MPAs was produced for the nation's Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation. Financed by IUCN and WWF, the six-volume document supported the Indonesian government's goal of establishing and effectively managing 10 million hectares of marine protected areas. At the time, there were eight MPAs in Indonesia — nearly all of them small with little or no management. The IUCN/WWF plan offered criteria for identifying candidate sites, a list of 180 potential MPAs that met those criteria, and recommendations for improving the nation's legal framework for protected areas.

Twenty-two years later, despite substantial changes in the nation's governance (from autocracy to decentralized democracy), significant progress has been made in implementing the plan. It has helped form the basis for what is now Indonesia's increasingly robust MPA system.

The IUCN/WWF plan was written by Rod Salm, who at the time was also authoring (with John Clark) the first edition of the landmark book *Marine and Coastal Protected Areas: A Guide for Planners and Managers* (IUCN, 1984). The plan's objective was to help Indonesia "establish and manage a system of marine protected areas which functions to preserve the value of sites in each province for tourism, fisheries, research, interpretation, and education; protection of endangered species; and conservation of included biota and habitats." Among its many recommendations: that at least one marine site near each major urban center be protected for tourism, and that each MPA represent a viable management unit. (In the latter case, for example, a marine site would be viable if adjacent upland areas were managed to reduce downstream impacts.) The plan also recommended employment of individuals with marine and fisheries biology backgrounds, and translation of instructional materials into local languages.

In support of these recommendations, the plan outlined potential decrees and policies. At the time of the plan's writing, the only mechanisms for protection of marine organisms in Indonesia were two ordinances inherited from colonial times, and there were no legal categories for MPAs.

Policy and legislation


In 1990, a ministerial decree (*Act No. 5 Conservation of Living Natural Resources and their Ecosystems*) provided Indonesia with its first legal basis for designation and management of MPAs. The legislation established four categories of protected area — national parks, strict

nature reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, and nature recreation zones — each with its own regulatory and management scheme.

Many of the major MPAs that exist today in Indonesia, such as Bunaken National Park and Teluk Cenderawasih National Park, are the result of the 1984 plan and the legal framework that arose from it. There are now nearly 40 designated MPAs in Indonesia covering almost 7 million hectares in total, including six marine national parks. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Affairs continues to make strides. The designation this year of 1.2 million hectares in the Berau District is an example, as is the ministry's updated target of protecting 20 million hectares of MPAs by 2020. The ministry has also announced its intent to designate 12 million hectares in the Savu Seas region as an "ecosystem-based management unit", including a set of MPAs.

Furthermore, staff of the Indonesian Forestry and Nature Conservation Department (or PHKA, its Indonesian acronym) who work in marine and coastal protected areas now receive training in marine conservation, often facilitated by NGOs — such as from The Nature Conservancy through its Coral Triangle Center in Bali. Technical material has been translated into Bahasa Indonesia language, also with the assistance of NGOs.

Nonetheless, there is still reason for concern regarding the future of Indonesia's marine protected areas. Although Indonesia's fisheries ministry has proposed more than 70 sites for new MPAs, the nomination of these sites has been entirely arbitrary and reflects no systemized consideration of ecological criteria (biodiversity, representativeness, ecosystem status, resilience, importance for fisheries, etc.). The sites bear little overlap with the 180 sites identified in the 1984 plan.

Hopefully, a recently established MPA task force (the "National Committee for Marine Conservation") that includes representatives of PHKA, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Affairs, the Ministry of Environment, and a range of NGOs will be able to take a fresh look at the existing MPAs and their contributions to sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation. With the increased knowledge and understanding of impacts of climate change, for example, the current Indonesian MPA system needs to be checked against criteria of resilience and connectivity. Furthermore, the level of effective management of existing MPAs needs to be evaluated and enhanced where insufficient. Perhaps a first step is to revisit the list and accompanying recommendations by Salm in 1984 and combine this with current information and insights to establish a truly well-designed, well-managed, and resilient network of Indonesian MPAs. 

Editor's note

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Research Spotlight: Project Seeks Answers to What Makes an MPA Effective, Among Other Questions

An international project is underway to find scientific answers to some of the biggest questions in the MPA field. Operated by Conservation International (a US-based NGO) at its Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, the project seeks to distill the ecological and socioeconomic factors that determine MPA success or failure, among other questions (see box).

The Marine Management Area Science, or MMAS, Program is designed around two central goals: to assess

if marine management areas (a term that encompasses MPAs) are working, and to use science to improve site effectiveness. The program is ambitious. Not only does it seek to answer some of the main questions challenging the field, but the program has also outlined more than 30 specific research activities, from establishing baseline monitoring programs at project sites, to measuring larval spillover and gene flow, to studying MMA cost-effectiveness.

If it succeeds, the MMAS Program will be invaluable. Leah Bunce is senior director of the MMAS Program, and oversees the team of Conservation

International staff, university researchers, and NGOs working together on it. Below, she discusses the program with *MPA News*.

MPA News: Why is the MMAS Program focusing on marine *management* areas rather than marine *protected* areas?

Leah Bunce: “Marine management areas” implies a more holistic and comprehensive set of areas. The term “MPAs” allows us to include a wider breadth of sites established for protection reasons or otherwise. We are also able to avoid political implications of the often-controversial term “marine protected areas”.

MPA News: The program will be focusing on four priority sites — in Brazil, Fiji, Belize, and the Eastern Tropical Pacific — all of which happen to be tropical. Do you anticipate that the lessons learned from the program will also apply to temperate sites?

Bunce: Tropical developing nation sites were selected as the focal areas because they generally face the most urgent threats, have highest marine biodiversity, and are in greatest need of research assistance to assess and improve MMA effectiveness. About two-thirds of the studies will be conducted in the four priority sites. The other third of the studies are global studies that will be based on tropical cases worldwide. For example, we will be assessing alternative enforcement technologies used around the world to determine which are most effective under which conditions.


That said, the MMAS Program was established and designed to address questions critical to MMAs worldwide, and the research — both the protocols and the results — should be applicable across a range of habitats, both tropical and temperate. The insights on different enforcement technologies, for example, will be applicable to more than just tropical sites.

MPA News: Your program emphasizes the importance of science in site planning and management. One of its secondary goals is to establish the capacity for scientific research as the basis for adaptive management — in other words, to help sites conduct research that informs management over time. What happens if site management does not have the capacity to perform such scientific research?

Bunce: Building scientific capacity in-country is one of the central goals of this program. We are placing a major emphasis on working with local communities to appreciate what good science can and cannot do to address their needs and interests. We are also building local teams to conduct this science and interpret and communicate the results to decision-makers and other stakeholders.

For all research activities, we have prioritized engaging local managers, fishermen, and other stakeholders in the science, such as including fishermen or other “stakeholder scientists” on the local research teams. We have also prioritized hiring, training and/or mentoring in-country scientists. In terms of long-term capacity building, we are interested in establishing networks of colleagues, interactive discussion-oriented websites, and MMA science centers of information, among other efforts.

MPA News: What is the timeline of the MMAS Program?

Bunce: We have four years of funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (GBMF) to achieve the 31 specific research activities. However, the GBMF support is only the beginning, and we are currently fundraising for additional support to continue and expand this program as a permanent function within Conservation International’s marine conservation program. 

Questions addressed by the Marine Management Area Science (MMAS) Program will include:

- How do different types of MMAs affect socioeconomic and ecological conditions, and how do these conditions in turn affect MMA success?
- What role do MMAs play in making ecosystems resilient to local and global threats?
- How can functional links between different habitats — such as deepwater and shelf — be incorporated in MMA design?
- What are the values of marine goods and services provided by MMAs?
- What are the financial costs of MMAs?
- How and when are financial incentive programs for stakeholders effective in furthering MMA goals?
- What are the most effective community enforcement programs?

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A fact sheet on the MMAS Program is available in PDF format at http://portals.conservation.org/downloads/storedfile/Document/mmassheet_Mar31.2006.pdf.

Notes & News

Vanuatu waters designated a sanctuary for marine mammals, sea turtles

The government of the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu has designated all waters of the nation as a sanctuary for marine mammals and sea turtles, in which non-traditional hunting, harassment, or holding of these animals in captivity is banned. Customary harvesting by local tribes using traditional methods is still allowed, as is the export (with government permit) of marine mammals to public aquaria or swim-with-marine-mammals programs. Violators will face fines of up to Vt50 million (US\$440,000) and two years in prison.

Formal designation of the sanctuary occurred in May 2006, following an amendment of Vanuatu's Fisheries Act. Vanuatu first indicated its intent for its waters to be a sanctuary at the 2003 meeting of the South Pacific Forum, when 11 Pacific nations pledged to create a multinational, 28.5-million km² whale sanctuary in the region. The countries involved were Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Niue, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Three attempts since then by these nations to have the International Whaling Commission formally recognize the region as a whale sanctuary have been unsuccessful, falling short of the three-quarters majority needed for endorsement.

Four companies to halt high-seas fishing in southern Indian Ocean

Four major fishing companies have announced a voluntary halt to trawling in 11 deep-sea areas of the southern Indian Ocean. The companies — Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd (Australia), Bel Ocean II Ltd (Mauritius), Sealord Group (New Zealand), and TransNamibia Fishing Pty Ltd (Namibia), which comprise the newly formed Southern Indian Ocean Deepwater Fishers' Association (SIODFA) — are the main trawling operators in the region. IUCN has called the voluntary closures “a global first” for the high seas. The IUCN press release, including details and locations of the specific sites, is available at http://www.iucn.org/en/news/archive/2006/07/2_pr_fishing_high_seas.htm.

In all, the voluntary protected areas total 309,000 km² and consist of seamounts, knolls, banks, ridges, and deep-sea coral reefs. The sites were selected by SIODFA using its own mapping of the seabed, in consultation with staff of the Fisheries Department of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. SIODFA describes several of the sites as “pristine”, and says their protection will help ensure the long-term sustainability of regional fish populations. “By setting aside an area almost equal to Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, these businesses are sending a clear signal that they want to keep fish on people's plates for generations to come,” said Graham Patchell, a SIODFA scientist, in a press

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Palau's plan to build a self-funding network of protected areas

Government leaders in the Micronesia region joined together in March 2006 to announce the “Micronesia Challenge” — pledging to protect 30% of their nearshore marine ecosystems and 20% of terrestrial ecosystems by 2020 (*MPA News* 7:9). In addition to the political challenges inherent in reaching such a goal, the financial cost of managing such an expanded system of protected areas could be substantial.

In May 2006, the government of Palau announced how it anticipates paying for its protected area network under the challenge. The plan involves two components: a trust fund built from private and public donations, and a new tourism user fee. Larry Goddard, senior legal counsel to Palauan President Tommy Remengesau, describes for *MPA News* how this will work:

“Palau plans to establish a US\$12 million trust fund from various sources. Currently, Palau has a firm commitment from The Nature Conservancy for \$2 million and a less-firm promise from Conservation International for \$2 million. These will serve as a match

to a commitment by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of \$2 million. (The GEF funding is a portion of Palau's available \$3.5 million under various environmental conventions — climate change, biodiversity, etc.) The intent is to use this \$6 million to leverage funds from public and private partners over the next year to reach our \$12 million goal. We are currently having discussions with numerous countries (including Japan and European Union members) and various private NGOs to raise the remaining amount.

“In addition to the \$12 million, we are seeking to establish a tourism user fee that will also go toward our protected area network. We have had preliminary discussions with both houses of our congress to establish this fee. Together, these two funding sources will make Palau the first self-funding protected area network in the world.”

For more information

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release. To secure compliance, the companies will track their vessels' locations and activities via a satellite-based monitoring system. SIODFA has four vessels active in the southern Indian Ocean region.

"These voluntary closures are a unique innovation for effectively managing and conserving deepwater biodiversity of high-seas areas where there are no regional management arrangements in place," says Graeme Kelleher, chair of the High Seas Task Force of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas. At this time, there is no Regional Fisheries Management Organization active in the southern Indian Ocean. Says Kelleher, "It is recognized that voluntary actions of this kind are extremely valuable and should be complemented by enforcement arrangements that apply to other fishing companies."

Some environmental organizations that would prefer a United Nations-imposed moratorium on all deep-sea bottom-trawl fishing on the high seas have responded with skepticism. The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (<http://www.savethehighseas.org>), representing several dozen environmental NGOs, calls the voluntary trawl closures a "half measure" designed to forestall more comprehensive and legally binding regulations.

Grants available for coral reef projects

Pre-applications are due 13 November 2006 for the NOAA International Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, operated by the International Program Office of the (US) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The program provides grants to international, governmental (except federal US agencies), and non-governmental entities working to conserve coral reefs. Grants for fiscal year 2007 are available in four categories:

- Promoting watershed management;
- Regional enhancement of MPA management effectiveness;

- Encouraging development of national MPA networks; and
- Promoting regional socioeconomic training and monitoring in coral reef management.

Country eligibility varies by grant category, and proposed work must be conducted at non-US sites. For details on categories and eligibility, go to <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>.

Greenpeace releases proposal for Mediterranean network of marine reserves

A new report from Greenpeace proposes the establishment of a network of marine reserves across the Mediterranean Sea, listing 32 sites that together would cover roughly 40% of the sea. The sites comprise representative examples of the region's habitats, as well as areas known to be spawning and nursery grounds. Selection was based on a manual analysis of data gathered from a variety of sources and feedback from scientists.

"Because it is virtually enclosed and its habitats interconnected, the Mediterranean Sea is a prime example of why marine management must take account of whole ecosystems, not single species or areas," states the report. "A marine reserve network will create a sound basis upon which to build sustainable, precautionary, and ecosystem-based management of the Mediterranean's marine resources." The report is available in PDF format at <http://www.oceans.greenpeace.org/med-marine-reserves-report>.

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Conference Calendar, August 2006

2-3 August — **Parks and Protected Areas Management Congress**. Queanbeyan, Canberra, Australia. <http://www.pparamcon.com.au/index.html>

2-19 August — **International Seminar on Protected Area Management**. Missoula, Montana, USA. <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/is/ispam/welcome.htm>

7-10 August — **First International Environmental Best Practices Conference**. Olsztyn, Poland. <http://www.uwm.edu.pl/wosir/EBP>

14-18 August — **Coastal Zone Canada 2006**. Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada. <http://www.czc06.ca>

22-26 August — **1st European Congress of Conservation Biology**. Eger, Hungary. <http://www.eccb2006.org>

29-30 August — **8th Annual BIOECON Conference on Economic Analysis of Ecology and Biodiversity**. Cambridge, UK. http://www.bioecon.ucl.ac.uk/04_8_ann-conf.html

29 August - 2 September — **Third Coastal Zone Asia Pacific Annual Conference**. Batam, Indonesia. http://cdc.fish.ku.ac.th/czap_06/index.htm

For a list of MPA-related conferences through 2007, go to <http://www.mpanews.org>.

Recent Developments toward a System of High-Seas MPAs: An Interview with Kristina Gjerde

As recent as 2000, there was little discussion within international government on the concept of protecting high-seas ecosystems with MPAs. Despite concern that deep-sea habitats outside national jurisdictions were threatened by largely unregulated human activities, the lack of a dedicated legal framework for applying MPAs in international waters was a major obstacle to addressing the problem.

Now that is beginning to change, thanks in part to the work of Kristina Gjerde. As high seas policy advisor to the IUCN Global Marine Programme and coordinator of the High Seas MPA Task Force for the World Commission on Protected Areas, Gjerde has spent much of the past few years building support among scientists and policy makers for high-seas protection. The result: major intergovernmental institutions, including the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN General Assembly itself, have now taken up the issue. This month, following Gjerde's release of two publications on high-seas protection (see box), *MPA News* talked with her about recent progress toward a system of MPAs on the high seas.

MPA News: In your essay in the June 2006 edition of *PARKS* magazine, you write about some of the recent progress that has been made in favor of high-seas protection. What are some examples?

Kristina Gjerde: I'll note three areas. First, due to the promptings of scientists and others, the United Nations convened a working group in February 2006 to study issues related to high-seas biodiversity. The meeting was useful in building consensus toward action, but it is clear that further discussions and concrete proposals are necessary. It is hoped that another working group will be convened in 2007 to provide an opportunity for discussing a range of options for immediate and longer-term action.

Second, a formal UN process has been established to review actions taken by nations and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to protect vulnerable high-seas ecosystems from destructive fishing practices. This review, required under a 2004 resolution by the UN General Assembly (UNGA), will also determine whether further actions — such as an interim prohibition on high-seas bottom trawling — are warranted. A report will be released on July 14 that describes actions taken, and the official UNGA review will occur in October 2006.

Third, the FAO convened a workshop in June 2006 on preparing guidelines on the role of MPAs in fisheries management. This was in response to a 2005 decision

by the FAO Committee on Fisheries that the organization should assist members in meeting the 2012 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) goal for representative MPA networks. The results of the workshop will help pave the way for governments and RFMOs to more fully understand the benefits and roles of MPAs as both fisheries management and biodiversity conservation tools.

MPA News: What potential development, if it were to happen, would have the greatest positive effect on high-seas protection?

Gjerde: A resolution by UNGA calling for a temporary prohibition of high-seas bottom trawling would provide the greatest positive benefit. It would reflect that governments have acknowledged their responsibility to protect high-seas biodiversity and their obligation to reign in destructive fishing practices. This would set an important precedent for ensuring that States and RFMOs are held accountable by the full global community for actions impacting high-seas biodiversity.

MPA News: At the World Parks Congress in 2003, a target was set to have at least five ecologically significant MPAs designated on the high seas by 2008 (*MPA News* 5:4). Will that target be met?

Gjerde: There is a realistic chance. The Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission could in 2007 decide to provide permanent protection to five areas — four seamounts and part of the Reykjanes Ridge — that were granted interim, three-year protection from bottom fishing activities in 2004. Some members of the

New publications on protection of high-seas biodiversity

In June 2006, three publications were released on the topic of protecting high-seas biodiversity. The first one provides a broad overview of the scientific, economic and legal aspects; the second focuses on the use of MPAs for this purpose; the third addresses more broadly the use of ecosystem approaches:

Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas

Authored by Kristina Gjerde and published by the Regional Seas Programme of the UN Environment Programme in cooperation with IUCN.

http://www.unep.org/pdf/IUCN_Report_16June06.pdf

PARKS magazine, Vol. 15, No. 3, special issue on high-seas marine protected areas

Co-edited by Kristina Gjerde and Graeme Kelleher and published by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/pubs/pdfs/PARKS/15_3_lowres.pdf

Implementing the Ecosystem Approach in Open Ocean and Deep Sea Environments: An Analysis of Stakeholders, Their Interests, and Existing Approaches

Authored by Marjo Vierros, Fanny Douvere, and Salvatore Arico and published by United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies.

http://www.ias.unu.edu/binaries2/DeepSea_Stakeholders.pdf

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OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Northeast Atlantic have already expressed an interest in including these five areas as part of the OSPAR network of MPAs, so through cooperation between the two regional organizations, these five areas could become effective high-seas MPAs.

Progress is also underway in the Southern Ocean. The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in June agreed to work with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) to develop a comprehensive system of MPAs for the Southern Ocean. Although the development of biogeographic classification systems for a representative network of MPAs may take a while to develop, the process could start to identify priority areas for protection by 2008.

MPA News: What are your thoughts on the announcement by four major fishing companies to refrain from bottom trawling in parts of the southern Indian Ocean (see news brief on p. 5)?

Gjerde: I am pleased that the leaders in the deepwater fishing industry have recognized the need for protecting

benthic habitats from the impact of bottom trawling and have acknowledged that adequate enforcement mechanisms exist that can monitor their own compliance.

However, there is still a need for governments and RFMOs to speedily adopt and implement legally binding mechanisms both in the southern Indian Ocean and throughout the high seas to conserve deep-sea biodiversity and to ensure ecologically sustainable fisheries. An immediate interim prohibition on high-seas bottom trawling in areas where there are no RFMOs would buy the time necessary to adopt such legally binding measures and to prevent fishing from spreading into new and possibly more sensitive areas. 

For more information

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Letter from the Editor: Thank you for your feedback

Dear Reader,

This issue of *MPA News* marks the beginning of our eighth year of publication. Launched in 1999, *MPA News* now has nearly 4000 official subscribers in 108 countries. Each edition is a tribute to the skills and experience of the MPA practitioners interviewed and profiled in its pages. Thank you to all those who have generously taken time to share their knowledge with their peers through *MPA News*.

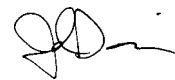
Thanks also to the many readers who participated in our recent subscriber survey. You offered many useful suggestions for ways we could improve our service, and we will be incorporating your suggestions in the coming months. You also provided some very positive feedback:

- Nearly all readers (95%) consider *MPA News* to be credible and useful (the remainder were neutral).
- Almost three-quarters of readers (73%) say it has helped them to do their job more effectively.

- More than half (53%) have used it to get in touch with experts.
- More than half (51%) forward it to friends or colleagues.

These figures are heartening; they show we are helping to build a network among MPA practitioners. Enabling peers to learn from each other has been our goal from the beginning. On behalf of the *MPA News* team, thank you for allowing us to serve you. We look forward to continuing to do so for years to come.

Sincerely,



John Davis
Editor-in-Chief