



Towards Networks of Marine Protected Areas

The MPA Plan of Action for IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas



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<http://www.protectplanetoccean.org>

http://cms.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_work/wcpa_biomes/wcpa_marine/index.cfm

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Cover Photography

Front Cover: Increasing the number of marine World Heritage Sites is a priority for WCPA - Marine. New Caledonia's coral reef ecosystems in the Pacific Ocean is the latest site to be declared World Heritage in 2008. © Dan Laffoley/IUCN

Back Cover: Around 50% of the surface of the Earth is covered by the High Seas, the area of oceans beyond the jurisdiction of individual countries. Every week new and startling discoveries are being made about the marine life that live in these remote areas and the deep sea. They remain the largest gap in conservation action on Earth as they still lack any overall effective means by which this can be secured. © Deep Atlantic Stepping Stones Science Team IFE URI NOAA

WCPA – MARINE

WCPA – Marine is the world's premier network of Marine Protected Area (MPA) expertise.

Our role is to inspire, inform and enable people to protect Planet Ocean by promoting the establishment of a global, representative system of effectively managed and lasting networks of MPAs.

Our goals are to:

- Accelerate progress in achieving the global MPA agenda through tracking progress, quality assuring information, celebrating achievements, identifying priorities and spurring action
- Encourage, develop and share solutions on MPAs through setting of data and information standards, criteria, tools, best practice guidelines, and management effectiveness
- Increase visibility, understanding and awareness of MPAs through the application of innovative ideas, partnerships, approaches and the application of new technologies

We achieve this by:

- Convening, coordinating and networking, in order to help governments, agencies, organisations and individuals to plan, develop and implement MPAs, MPA networks, and the global system, and integrate them with all other sea and coastal uses and maritime sectors;
- Ensuring better application of the best science, technical and policy advice on MPAs, MPA networks, and the global system;
- Generating, synthesising and disseminating knowledge on MPAs, often in the form of best practice advice, to a diverse range of players;
- Developing enhanced capacity at different levels to address the variety of challenges that funding and implementing effectively managed MPAs can present; and
- Fostering innovation to come up with exciting new solutions and ideas to tackle current and future challenges.

As part of the World Commission on Protected Areas we work in partnership with IUCN's Global Programme on Protected Areas and IUCN's Global Marine programme, and have members in many of the countries of the world that border an ocean or sea.

Welcome to the WCPA - Marine **PLAN OF ACTION**

This Plan of Action has been developed by WCPA – Marine and our partners around the world as a result of an extensive consultation process. In this process we have been supported by a massive network of agencies, organisations and individuals that have helped make this happen. We are grateful to everyone and particularly the following for their significant assistance so far, and their ongoing support:

- Curtis and Edith Munsen Foundation
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Conservation International
- Google
- IUCN and IUCN's Innovation Fund
- National Geographic
- Natural England
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- The Nature Conservancy
- Worldwide Fund for Nature

This Plan of Action set out in the following pages describes the added value that WCPA – Marine brings to the global community working on MPAs. We identify the renewed need for urgent action to protect our oceans and seas, the main themes we work under and the global priorities that we believe are needed to achieve this. This is to help bridge the gap between existing work on MPAs, and what is needed in order to put in place effective and lasting networks of MPAs throughout the world. Alongside this Plan of Action is a Business Plan that sets out more about the approach and management structures we will use to take our work forward.

We will use this Plan of Action to help us more consistently identify projects and programmes undertaken by others to endorse and include as part of our global MPA mission. Following publication we will ensure that the Plan of Action is periodically updated to contain the latest developments and decisions. We recognise though that this Plan of Action can only ever be a short summary at a strategic level of much more information available through other global sources, our partners, and regional initiatives.



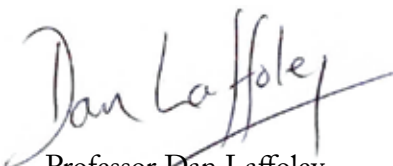


We are working with partners to focus on a small number of critical practical projects that we believe will make a significant impact on moving our shared agenda forward. The scale of what we can achieve depends on the capacity and funding that becomes available, and the enthusiasm of members, partners and regions to engage in this process. The greater the interest and commitments, the more we are able to achieve both directly and through others.

As part of this process we have developed and are now strengthening a global Regional Coordinator framework supported by country leads, and a communications structure to support our actions across the world. We have also undertaken an exhaustive one-year process with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to conduct an Organisational Review of WCPA – Marine. We have learnt much from this process, the results of which have been built into this global Plan of Action and form our underlying Business Plan. I hope that these activities and what stems from them will promote increased action on MPAs and achieve greater coherence between ourselves and our many partners.

An added sense of urgency is essential if we are to make more effective and rapid progress on implementing MPAs and MPA networks. This will help achieve the formal goal of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity, endorsed by IUCN and other bodies, of establishing a global, representative system of MPAs by 2012, and will take us beyond this towards the 2020s.

The oceans of the world are the place where the biggest conservation gains have yet to be made and I look forward to working with you to make this happen.



Professor Dan Laffoley
Vice Chair - Marine
October 2008

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Introduction



It would be more accurate to say that we all live on Planet Ocean, rather than Planet Earth. Oceans make up nearly 70% of our world by surface area, over 95% of habitable space by volume, and yet less than 1% has been reserved for ecosystems and their wildlife within Marine Protected Areas, and with only a tiny fraction of that effectively protected. This means today that some of the largest ecosystems on the planet, such as the High Seas, remain largely unprotected and open to exploitation, where impacts from our activities are largely unregulated.

The World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) is one of six Commissions of IUCN (The International Union for Conservation of Nature) and is the world's leading global network of protected areas specialists. Over the past decades, and supported by WCPA, there has been significant progress on identifying and implementing protected areas on land. The success in numbers and area covered by terrestrial protected areas is not matched in marine environments where significant actions are now needed to accelerate progress.

The marine environment is a priority area for IUCN and WCPA. It represents Earth's last frontier and, as a result, the most significant gap in global protected area action. It is now under significant and increasing pressure and stress. This stems for example from the impact of extractive industries, localised pollution, and changes to its chemistry (ocean acidification) resulting from elevated carbon dioxide levels due to our emissions, thereby curtailing the efficiency of the ocean's role as climate moderator and provider of essential ecosystem services.

SOME BASIC OCEAN PROTECTION FACTS

- We live on a crowded planet – there is just 0.05km² of ocean for every man, woman and child alive today.
- Current global marine protection targets aim to protect 10 - 30% of marine habitats within the next 2 – 4 years. So far, in the region of 5000 MPAs worldwide have been created.
- Approximately 2.58 million km², 0.65% of the world's oceans and 1.6% of the total marine area within Exclusive Economic Zones, are within Marine Protected Areas – a much lower proportion are effectively managed.
- Only 0.08% of the world's oceans and 0.2% of the total marine area under national jurisdiction is 'no-take', where extractive uses are prohibited.
- The three largest Marine Protected Areas, in decreasing order of size, are the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (at 410,500km²), The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (344,400km²) and the North-western Hawaiian Islands (at 341,400 km²)
- The global distribution of protected areas is both uneven and unrepresentative at multiple scales, and only half of the world's Marine Protected Areas are part of a coherent network.
- Since 1984 the spatial extent of marine area protected globally has grown at an annual rate of 4.6%, at which even the most modest target is unlikely to be met for at least several decades rather than within the coming decade.
- An immediate global concern is the need for a rapid increase in effective marine protected area coverage alongside scaling up of ocean management. The increase required to meet the targets is equivalent to another 35 countries creating an MPA the size of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (at 410,500km²) before 2012

Sources: Author's own, and Louisa J Wood, Lucy Fish, Josh Laughren and Daniel Pauly. 2007. Assessing progress towards global marine protection targets: shortfalls in information and action. *Oryx*, 42(3), 1–12.

Significant progress is now needed in order to conserve marine biological diversity and productivity. This is to maintain but increasingly recover ecosystem structure, function and processes in

order to support the necessary economic and social values and uses of nations and regions, and deliver sustainable development. This Plan of Action is a key part of that process.

Committing to MPAs

COMMAN



Populations of larger individuals of species have plummeted in all our oceans as we have become more and more effective at fishing and at targetting particular groups. An increasing number of species and entire species groups are now under threat. The Nassau Groupers is recognised as endangered in IUCN's Red List of Species.

Photo: © Bahamas National Trust

ACHIEVING

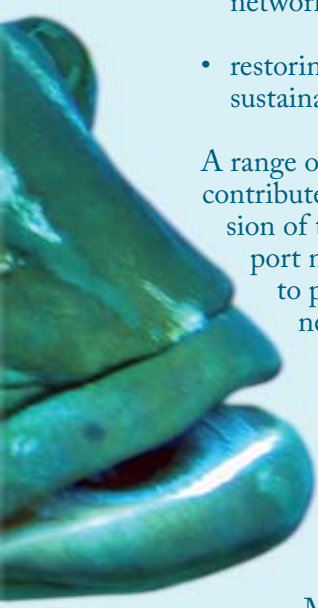
In recent decades, stimulated by a growing awareness of the continual decline in the quality of our oceans and seas, and in recognition of challenges that face us in providing effective stewardship, nations of the world have agreed a number of targets that relate fully or in part to effective implementation of MPAs. Globally these include:

- halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010;
- encouraging the application of an Ecosystem Approach in marine management by 2010;
- establishing representative marine protection networks by 2012; and
- restoring depleted fish stocks to maximum sustainable yields by 2015, where possible.

A range of regional and local commitments also contributes to these global ambitions. The mission of this Plan of Action is, therefore, to support nations in meeting these commitments to put in place effective and lasting MPA networks. WCPA – Marine, through this Plan of Action, will work to give significant added value to the global MPA community by enabling greater coherence, greater visibility to efforts, and greater celebration of successes. This is by providing global leadership, and by prioritizing our work to complement the significant actions on MPAs that are already underway.

THE GLOBAL MPA AGENDA FOR WCPA - MARINE

- Meet existing MPA commitments on time
- Address major gaps in conservation action such as the High Seas
- Better recognize and engage the broad constituency of players that can contribute to MPAs
- Provide an accurate map of MPAs and year-on-year updates on progress with associated critical analysis of next steps
- Provide the wider public with greater opportunities to engage directly with MPAs
- Ensure all MPAs are well managed and integrated into broader ocean and coastal management.
- Build a wide constituency with financial support for MPAs



A Focus on MPAs



Local communities often have a close association with the sea and the resources it can provide. By careful management Marine Protected Areas are a way of sustaining such values into the future. Two Thonga women harvest brown mussels, *Perna perna*, and the tunicate *Pyura stolonifera* on the Maputaland Rocky Shore in South Africa.

Photo: © Kathleen Reaugh

IUCN Category		Main objective or purpose
IA	Strict Nature Reserve	Managed mainly for science
IB	Wilderness Area	Managed mainly to protect wilderness qualities
II	National Park	Managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
III	Natural Monument	Managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
IV	Habitat/Species Management Area	Managed mainly for conservation through management interventions
V	Protected Landscape/ Seascape	Managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation
VI	Managed Resource Protected Area	Managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems and resources

Table 1. IUCN Protected Area Management Categories

The focus of this Plan of Action is on MPAs. As defined by the IUCN, a marine protected area is:

“A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”

Protection for MPAs can range from areas managed strictly for science or wilderness values, where extractive activities such as mining and fishing are excluded, to areas managed more broadly for the quantified sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystems. IUCN has provided a category system to differentiate the differing levels of management that such areas can be afforded (Table 1).

This Plan of Action recognises that MPAs are a tool, not an end in themselves. They are essential in order to protect marine biodiversity and achieve sustainable fisheries. They provide insurance against the common global problem of failure of conventional fisheries management based on control of fishing effort and/or take. The contrasting combination of the physical connectivity of seawater combined with the increasingly known genetic isolation of marine species means that networks of MPAs are vital tools to support marine ecosystem health. Networks of MPAs, within single ecosystems but spanning entire seas and ocean realms (such as the High Seas), are necessary to ensure that biological connections are maintained between interdependent MPAs. A common example

is where larvae from one MPA support populations of one or more species within other MPAs.

A comprehensive, adequate and representative system of MPA networks can provide protection for all major ecosystem components in conjunction with their characteristic habitats and species at an appropriate scale within and across each bioregion. It should have the required level of management to ensure ecological viability and integrity, address the full range of human activities, and be sufficiently duplicative so that a single event, such as an oil spill, would not eradicate that diversity.

Given the increasingly degraded state of the marine environment, high levels of protection are needed for marine ecosystems. This is to promote the necessary levels of recovery to re-establish the ecological values that sustain social and economic interests and regional and global ecological processes, both now and for the long term.

In many regions of the world, one of the main challenges to establishing new MPAs is to demonstrate the benefits that they can provide to maintaining and replenishing fisheries stocks. This is to better engage the fishery sector in MPA development and implementation. Implementing the 2012 target requires us to work together with the fishing communities on finding innovative solutions for sustainable use. Involving fishermen and other key stakeholders in MPA design and management, particularly at the community level, has proven very productive in several regions already.

MPAs - A Partnership with People

PARTNERS



Marine Protected Areas don't just provide opportunities for marine habitats and species to recover but they also provide economic, recreational and educational opportunities for local communities and visitor alike. Children enjoying a glass-bottom boat trip in Mombasa Marine Park, Kenya.

Photo: © Gabriel Grimsditch/ IUCN

HIP

Top: Fisherman capturing an octopus.
Bottom: Fisherman, Kenyan coast.



Photo: © Gabriel Grimsditch, IUCN

Establishing MPAs and building MPA networks is as much about people as it is about nature. For millennia people have lived at the coast. They established their major settlements alongside sheltered bays and estuaries where conditions provide opportunities to forage for food and for safe haven for their ships and boats as early trade routes developed. In many parts of the world communities are still strongly linked to the sea and traditionally depend on it for food and their livelihood. In developed countries this type of dependency has radically altered to focus on large-scale commercial extractive operations, and an extensive diversity of leisure pursuits ranging from sailing to recreational fishing.

Any and all of these dependencies mean that any efforts to establish MPAs and MPA networks should, from the outset, involve communities and interested parties in a meaningful way. A major thrust of the development of WCPA – Marine and the Plan of Action is to bring a more even regional representation to the fore across the world, and a more even recognition that MPAs established through a full range of governance types that conform to the IUCN definition of a protected area - recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means (such as by local communities) - are all equally important in making global progress to protect our oceans and seas.

An important result of this Plan of Action will be to open-up how we are protecting our seas to the public, so they can see what who is doing what, where, and why, in a free and easy-to-access manner.

Governance by government	Institutions at federal and state level (ministries, agencies etc.)
	Institutions at sub-national level (regional agencies, municipalities, etc.)
Shared Governance	Decision-making bodies that include a variety of concerned parties (formal pluralist government bodies)
	Decisions taken through processes of prior informed consent and active engagement (e.g. development of a charter)
Private Governance	Not-for-profit landowners (NGOs, individuals, universities, research institutions etc.)
	For profit landowners (individuals, corporations, businesses etc.)
Communal Governance	Community Conserved Areas – declared and run by local communities and traditional peoples
	Indigenous bio-cultural areas and territories – declared and run by indigenous peoples

Table 2. Different Governance styles that can apply to Protected Areas

Photo: © Gabriel Grimsditch, IUCN



Our Evolving Global Agenda

Major global conferences and events provide impetus and direction towards building networks of Marine Protected Areas, such as the World Parks Congress held in Durban in 2003. Greater continuity is now needed between these events to maximise marine conservation progress throughout the world.

Photo: © IUCN



The work of WCPA – Marine, undertaken through the leadership of our previous Vice Chairs, Graeme Kelleher, Nancy Foster and Bud Ehler, provides an important context for this Plan of Action. Over the years the focus has shifted from the initial position of providing a global review of MPAs to working on distinct projects related to defining and testing application of global best practice guidance, or in support of regional initiatives. For example such regional projects have been implemented in Samoa, Tanzania and Vietnam.

A further shift in emphasis is now needed in the work of WCPA – Marine. This is to acknowledge that most countries of the world are now working to establish MPAs or MPA networks and that a considerable body of experience is developing on such matters. No longer is it the case that WCPA – Marine should just focus in on one or two topics but rather we need to return to our earlier values. This is to work in a truly global fashion, championing the cause and providing added value to our partners, helping link experience and foster new opportunities, as well capturing such experience for the wider benefit of others.

Previous World Parks Congresses, and more recently the 1st International Marine Protected Area Congress held in Geelong Australia in 2005, along with numerous other regional conferences, have provided milestone opportunities to review progress and set new agendas. Such gatherings will be even more important in the future as the scale and pace of action on MPAs increases. We need to work hard to ensure that there is greater continuity between events so that we view them as stepping stones to delivering effective marine conservation measures, rather than discreet isolated meetings with marginal effects. We still need such events to take stock of progress, but we need to radically increase their role in implementation and moving the global agenda forwards.

This Plan of Action, together with a strengthened WCPA – Marine membership and enhanced global and regional communication systems, will help ensure continuity between such events and help the planning and development of new ones. WCPA – Marine will ensure that MPAs are a prominent component of future global conferences and events.

Connecting Globally – Engaging Regionally and Locally



Effective mobilisation of action for MPAs means developing a more coherent communication framework to bring the global community together – linking individual sites to regional actions and global achievements.

© Jerker Tamelander

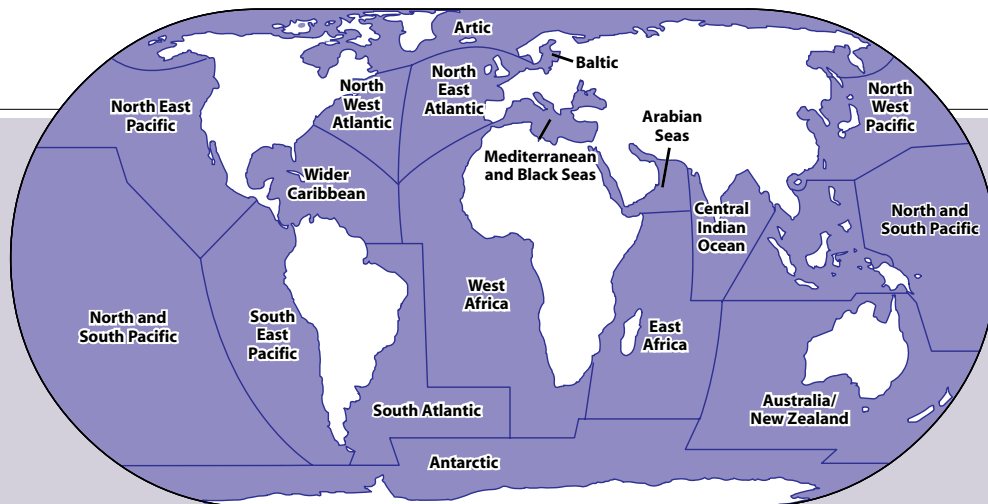


Figure 1. The 18 WCPA – Marine regions covering the world's oceans and seas

Redrawn from Kelleher *et al*, 1995.

Effective mobilisation means effective communications. A key aspect of this is building the fit-for-purpose communications framework through which WCPA – Marine can achieve its goals. The shift in emphasis for WCPA – Marine calls on the need to have a global network that is second to none in terms of its country reach and also the depth of expertise it can call on. This is both from within the IUCN Membership but also in a wider circle of specialists and enthusiasts.

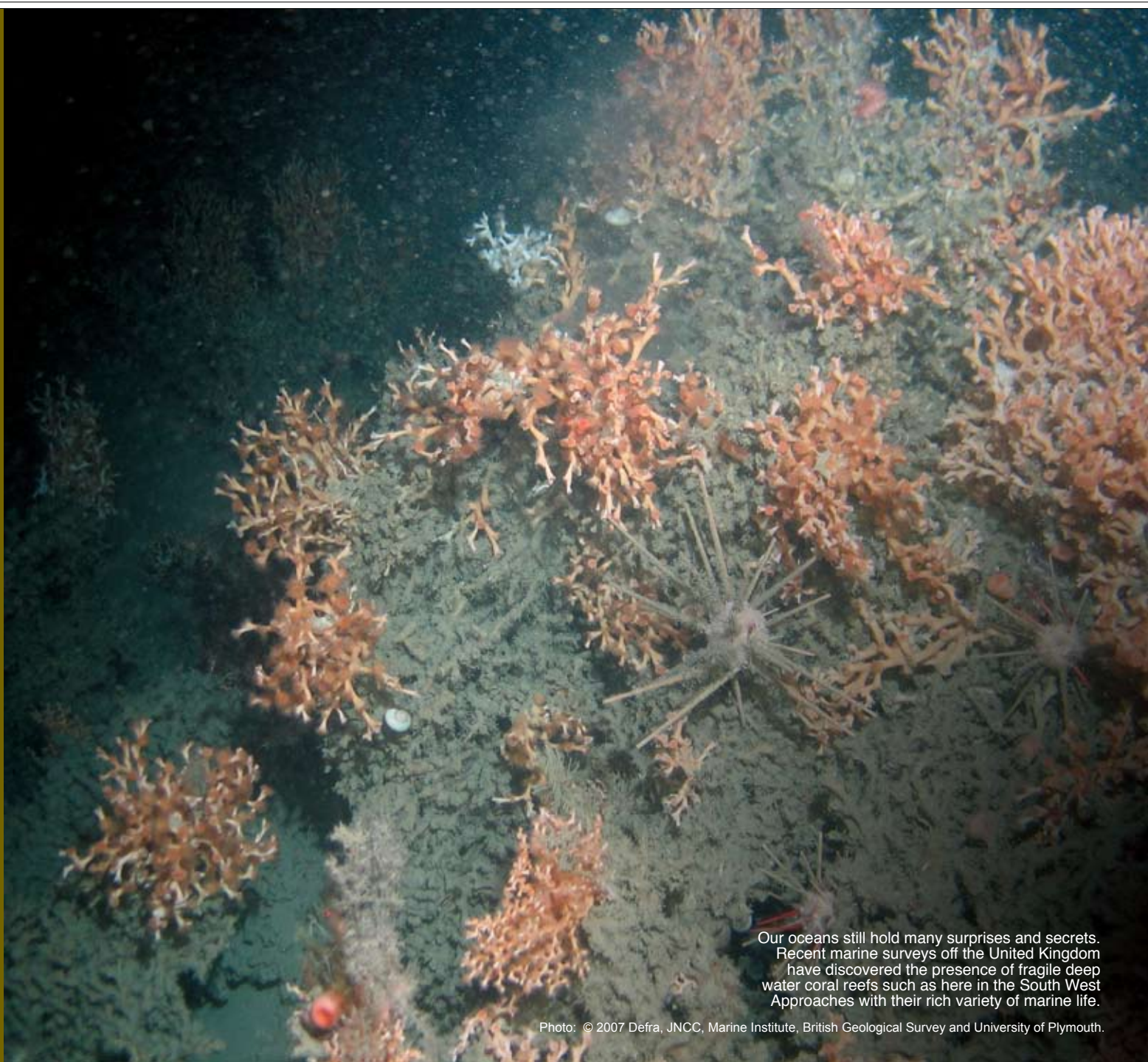
This is being achieved by WCPA – Marine taking a comprehensive regional approach to structuring its communications work. To do this we are using the ecosystem-based regional framework that was previously employed by WCPA – Marine and the then Vice Chair Graeme Kelleher in the 1990s. Working with colleagues, the marine areas of the world, including the High Seas (areas beyond national jurisdiction) together with national waters,

were divided into 18 regions, largely on the basis of biogeographic criteria, but for practical reasons also considering political boundaries (Figure 1).

This framework continues to meet the requirements of WCPA – Marine, and has the added advantage of being sufficiently broad that it can encompass subsequent classification systems that have arisen. These all have a more detailed focus and can 'nest' within this framework, such as Large Marine Ecosystems, Marine Eco-Regions, Seascape and Marine Biodiversity Hotspot initiatives. Using such a framework to take forward WCPA – Marine priorities requires regional leadership, and enhanced communications within IUCN/WCPA and with partners, to support information handling within such a broad framework.

Further details on the regional framework and management of WCPA – Marine are provided in our Business Plan.

Focussing Our Actions



Our oceans still hold many surprises and secrets. Recent marine surveys off the United Kingdom have discovered the presence of fragile deep water coral reefs such as here in the South West Approaches with their rich variety of marine life.

Photo: © 2007 Defra, JNCC, Marine Institute, British Geological Survey and University of Plymouth.

“*Behaviourally modern humans have been around for no more than about 0.0001 per cent of the Earth’s history... We are really at the beginning of it all. The trick, of course, is to make sure we never find the end. And that, almost certainly, will require a lot more than luck breaks.*”

– Bill Bryson

Over the next few years an enormous increase in the world’s marine protection efforts is going to be needed. Such an increase will require that many more MPAs are not only created but also effectively managed, and that a significantly larger area of waters, including in the High Seas, comes under protection as part of integrated ocean and sea management.

A wider range of ecosystems, ecological processes, habitats, and species will need to be represented and replicated within protected areas and effectively networked with one another. In short we need to get better value out of our current MPA actions, improve coverage and effectiveness of MPAs, and sustain efforts into the future.

To address these needs, WCPA-Marine is structuring and tightly focussing its efforts to where its input can really make a difference. The simple framework we are using to set out our priorities falls into three main but strongly inter-related areas. Our goals are:

- Accelerating progress in achieving the global MPA agenda
- Encouraging, developing and sharing solutions for creating and managing MPAs and MPA networks
- Increasing visibility, understanding and awareness of MPAs and MPA networks

The global agenda for each of these areas, which we are implementing with partners, is outlined in the following pages.

ACTION

Accelerating Progress In Achieving The Global MPA Agenda

Despite global agreements on establishing MPAs, progress is falling well behind what is needed to meet our targets and to secure improved conservation of our oceans and seas. We must pick up the pace by a combination of rationalising our current actions and stimulating new ones.

The priorities we have set to improve on this situation are:

- Generating the political conditions to achieve new commitments to establishing MPAs, MPA networks, or significant scaling-up of actions to ocean basin scale – this means working at all political levels to foster opportunities and engender a greater sense of ambition and urgency to realise new commitments and actions.
- Championing aspects of the global MPA

agenda to move it forward – this means strategically identifying gaps and levers such as the High Seas and Marine World Heritage Sites and taking specific actions as WCPA – Marine with partners to significantly advance the agenda in these areas – for example many more new sites and, in addition for World Heritage, effective management of those we already have.

- Being clearer on what the challenges are to better implementing MPAs and MPA networks – this means better understanding the conditions across all regions and ensuring that such information is effectively and efficiently fed back into global conventions and gatherings. It also means recognising that one solution does not fit all circumstances and enabling regional voices to be better heard at the global scale on what is now needed to move forward year-on-year.

PROGRESS



Photo: Claire Fackler, ONMS

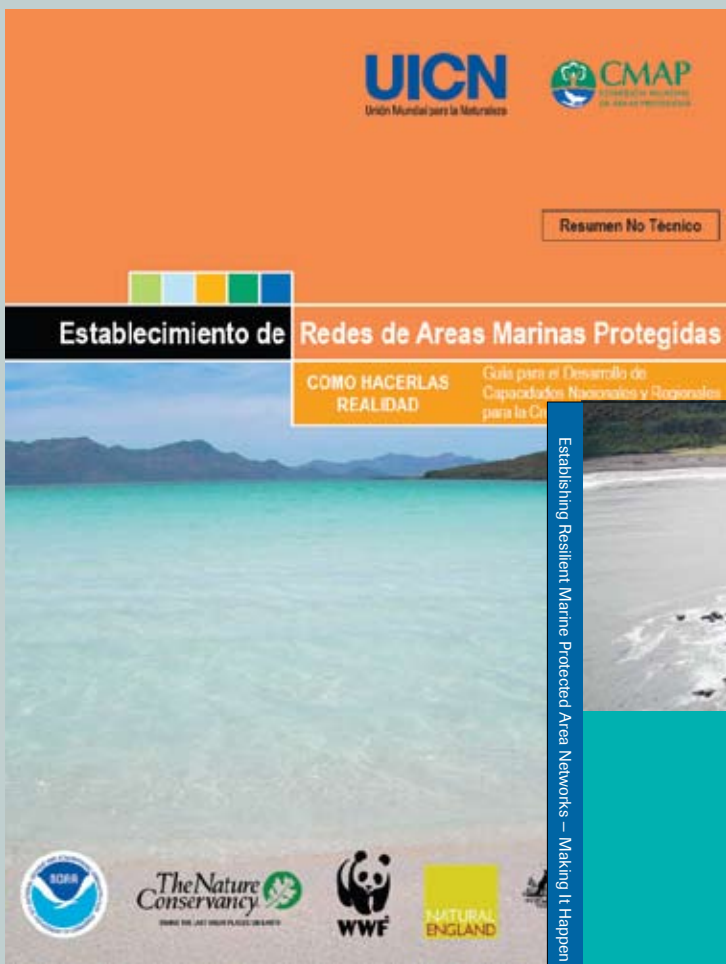
“Designating Marine Protected Areas, such as the North Western Hawaiian Islands, is a major achievement. We need better ways of recognising such achievements around the world so the work of those involved is widely recognised and we build up a good picture globally about which sites are being added year-on-year”

Some species groups, such as sharks, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of human activities, especially fishing. Marine Protected Areas can provide them with safe havens free from such activities.

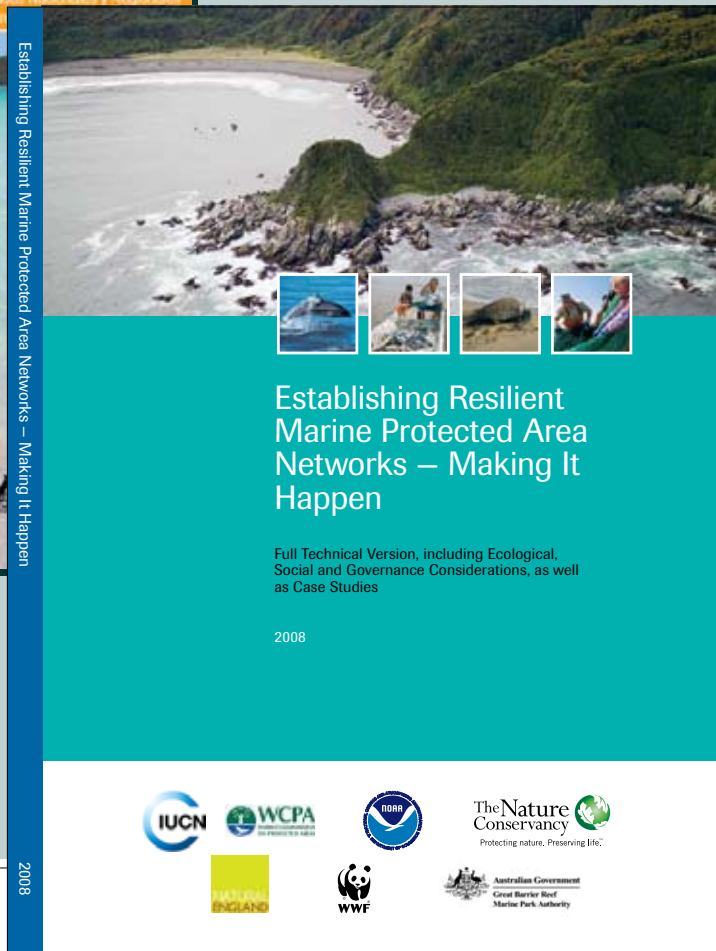
Photo: (c) Jerker Tamelander

- Engaging with current sectors and ‘new sectors’ – this means expanding the breadth and depth of our current communications to better encompass marine species experts, the fishing communities and industries, but also opening dialogue with new sectors ranging from deep sea mining through to marine energy and carbon sequestration interests.
- Communicating efficiently as a coherent MPA community across all regions and throughout the world – this means developing an effective global and regional communication framework that overcomes shortcomings in the current systems and enables better communications within the 18 regions and across the world.
- Ensuring that information on MPAs is accurate and up-to-date – this includes generation of an accurate picture of where all the MPAs are in the world, through better quality assurance of information and also ensuring that all new information is quickly streamed into the World Database on Protected Areas.
- Tracking progress on implementing MPAs and MPA networks – this means moving to a situation where we know what sites and networks are being added, and effectively managed, year-on-year.
- Enthusing countries, regions and sectors to establish more MPAs - this means better celebrating all current successes year-on-year through widespread recognition of such achievements, specific events, encouraging the twinning of MPAs and networks between countries, and the appointment of celebrities and leaders as popular champions - ‘WCPA – Marine Global Ocean Ambassadors’.

Encouraging, developing and sharing solutions for creating and managing MPAs and MPA networks



Bringing together existing experiences on implementing MPAs and MPA networks into best practice guidance is one way by which we can help countries to develop and accelerate their programmes.



PLUTONIUM

In recent years an increasingly large body of experience has developed on how to put in place effective MPAs and meaningful MPA networks. The challenge is effectively sharing that experience, helping avoid duplication of effort, thereby accelerating progress and providing greater value for money. A key role WCPA – Marine plays is providing the forum and framework to lever greater value out of the body of this body of emerging experience.

We have a strong history of action in this area but we need to sustain and increase our achievements if we are to effectively support nations and regions in their efforts to scale-up their work on MPAs.

To further develop this area the priorities we have set are:

- Being clear on the minimum level of information we need for every MPA to do a better job – this means providing high visibility minimum data and information standards for MPAs agreed with UNEP WCMC, and achieving these standards for all MPAs throughout the world and for every new MPA.
- Providing clear guidance on classification of MPAs – this means being clear on what contribution every MPA makes to conservation as well as livelihoods by providing a clear definition of a protected area, as well as better guidance on how to apply the IUCN Management Categories to marine sites.



Photo: © Jerker Tamelander

Achieving effective management of MPAs is critical in order to sustain the wildlife interest of the site. Manta Ray

- Providing best practice guidance and tool kits for MPAs and MPA networks – this means developing our existing series of best practice guidelines and tool kits through wide consultation to capture new best practice and keeping the focus of guidance under review, adding further topics as the needs arise.
- Working to increase the proportion of MPAs under effective management – this means helping governments, agencies, organisations and individuals to implement effective strategies and regimes for their sites that address current and future management challenges. As part of this we will explore the introduction of certification schemes with interested countries in order to implement practical international benchmarks for effective management.
- Providing regional and global opportunities to share solutions – this means working with others at global and regional scales to deliver conferences and events that help share solutions and that collectively and progressively implement the global MPA agenda.

Increasing Visibility, Understanding and Awareness of MPAs and MPA Networks

INCREASING



A variety of marine habitats act as carbon sinks, such as mangroves. Marine Protected Areas can help deliver the effective management needed to retain their habitat quality and species diversity. This 'carbon' role needs to be recognised as another reason why we should better value and protect such habitats for future generations.

© Jerker Tamelander



Photo: © National Geographic



Photo: © Corey Jaskolski National Geographic

New innovations such as underwater camera systems remotely operated by the public via the internet will open up marine sites to the public. National Geographic's Belize WildCam

To most people oceans are remote, seldom visited and not often thought about – they are virtually ‘invisible’ to them in their day-to-day lives. This is a major problem in moving the MPA agenda forwards. It is resulting in consequentially lower than desirable understanding and awareness of the role and importance of oceans, and the urgency and ambition needed for the protection of them in the coming years using MPAs.

This is a key issue that must change if we are to successfully drive forward with improved conservation of our oceans and seas. We will do this by using innovative ideas, partnerships, approaches and the application of new technologies. The priorities we have set are:

- Ensuring that oceans and MPAs have the ability to be visible on every computer desktop and suitably equipped handheld device in the world – this means taking the global MPA community into the digital entertainment and communications era using technology that capitalises on new approaches such as 3D virtual worlds, virtual communities, file sharing, handheld devices and, in effect, moving MPAs and oceans into ‘the cloud’ (the virtual world where comprehensive information is free for all to access, 24 hours a day).
- Enabling the public to directly connect with oceans from wherever they live and outreach and share their experiences with a global audience – this means the application of existing and new IT technologies to engage people with oceans and MPAs, and to provide the connectivity that makes live access to oceans from your home available across the internet.
- Providing a new ‘ultimate access’ web facility to massively outreach information on MPAs – this means working with our partners to create the ultimate MPA portal to share information in a highly user-orientated manner across all regions and the world.
- Ensuring that oceans and MPAs are significantly better engaged with the climate adaptation and mitigation, with the human health and well-being, and with the food security agendas – this means working in innovative ways, leveraging and championing science and evidence to ensure that MPAs feature in these overall agendas and have their importance and relevance recognised as we transit to a low carbon economy between now and the 2050s, with all the associated social, economic and food security impacts and issues.



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