

# **West Coast and Pacific Islands Workshop: *Developing the National/Regional System of MPAs from the State and Territorial Perspective***

February 2-3, 2005  
Tiburon Lodge, Tiburon, CA.

## I. Introduction

This workshop, the first of three U.S. regional meetings, was held on February 2-3, 2005 at the Tiburon Lodge in Tiburon, CA. Twenty-four state agency representatives (including fisheries, cultural resource, and coastal and natural resource managers) from Alaska, American Samoa, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington joined participants from six federal agencies including NOAA's National MPA Center to discuss the development of a national/regional system of MPAs. The specific goals of the workshop were:

1. Initiate a dialogue among the federal MPA Center and the West Coast state and territorial decision-makers on their roles, opportunities, concerns, and considerations as it relates to participation in a national/regional system of marine protected areas.
2. Provide a forum for state managers to discuss current and future efforts, challenges, successes, and state-federal coordination in marine protected area planning and management, and to network with one another.
3. Foster a greater understanding for the development of the national/regional system of marine protected areas among the West Coast states and territorial agencies that will be part of this system.

## II. Overview of the National System of MPAs

The complexity of MPAs and their recognition as vital tools for marine conservation and management are the foundation of Presidential Order 13158 on MPAs which was signed on May 26, 2000. The Executive Order directs NOAA and the Department of the Interior to work with other federal agencies and consult with states, territories, tribes, and the public to develop a scientifically-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. The Executive Order does not create any new authority to establish or manage MPAs. As a result, the national system will rely entirely on existing MPA programs, authorities, and sites that represent the nation's diverse marine ecosystems, including marine, coastal, estuarine, and Great Lakes waters. The national system of MPAs will be

developed using three themes that will identify existing MPAs and effective regional systems:

- **Natural Heritage:** sustaining natural and biological communities, habitats, ecosystems and processes, and the ecological services, uses, and values they provide to current and future generations.
- **Cultural Heritage:** protecting, understanding, and interpreting submerged cultural resources that reflect the nation's maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea.
- **Sustainable Production:** supporting the continued sustainable extraction of renewable living resources (e.g. fish, shellfish, plants, birds or mammals) within or outside the MPA by protecting important habitat and spawning, mating or nursery grounds, or providing harvest refuge for by-catch species.

While national in scope, the system will allow existing agencies and programs at the regional level to continue to meet their specific objectives and define ecosystem goals for MPAs that are relevant to the resources and their use. The national system will help build partnerships to provide tools, technologies, and other assistance to agencies and stakeholders to enhance the stewardship capabilities of sites.

### III. State Program Summaries and Case Studies

As a means to present state MPA efforts, the following individual state MPA summaries and case studies were presented:

#### A. State Program Summaries

1. California – Marine Life Protection Act
2. Washington – MPA Program
3. Hawaii – Marine Life Conservation District
4. American Samoa – Coastal Management Program
5. Oregon – MPA Management
6. Alaska – MPA and Fisheries

#### B. State MPA Case Studies (a detailed examination of key challenges or lessons learned)

1. Channel Islands
2. Washington
3. NW Hawaiian Islands

#### IV. Primary State Issues

As a whole, the state agency representatives at the workshop concluded that the primary issues facing them in the development of a national system of MPAs were:

1. types of sites to be included in a national system
2. state decision-making process
3. how to establish new or enhance existing MPA sites
4. how to most effectively use the State Advisory Group
5. maintaining and enhancing the communication between the states and NOAA/DOI
6. how to best work with Congressional delegations
7. nexus between ecosystem management, MPAs, cultural resources and fisheries
8. how to best involve the public

#### V. State Challenges and Opportunities/Hopes and Fears

As the states, territories and commonwealths are voluntary partners in this effort, state agency workshop participants expressed a number of hopes and fears regarding the establishment of the national/regional MPA system. To summarize:

##### Hopes:

- the system will be a simplified, pragmatic approach to MPA management
- federal leadership and resources will be provided
- an increased focus and better identification on cultural and historic resources will result
- the system will capture and build on opportunities to cooperate and partner

##### Fears:

- a “national system” lacks definition
- the push for a “national” system scares the public
- federal resources and support will not be realized
- federal efforts under the Executive Order may conflict with state priorities and processes

To elaborate, the West Coast state agency representatives:

1. recommended that the term “national system” be put in quotes in the report of the proceedings. This comment reflected their confusion over what the term means, what the objectives of the “system” are, and skepticism from the

states about buying into a “national system” of individual sites around the country:

2. will continue to examine whether the potential benefits of the system warrant their participation. State decisions will likely hinge on the establishment of a clearer identification of the benefits to states and public stakeholders, and federal support for state participation:
3. believe that there needs to be a greater focus on how to build public consensus around MMA and MPA efforts from the bottom-up:
4. assert that it's important for the states to define the end product of the “national system.” These products include the potential for:
  - a) a national inventory with a standardized classification system
  - b) a clear identification of federal jurisdiction, the role of states, and the authority to establish MPAs in federal waters
  - c) the development of products to help states, e.g., information and technical services, and support for monitoring, research, enforcement and general management
  - d) the integration of the needs for various objectives: living marine resources, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, etc.
5. maintain that a regional perspective needs to include links across jurisdictions between both states and nations, e.g., U.S. and Canada, U.S. and Mexico, American Samoa and Tonga;
6. consider “cultural resources” to also include living and traditional cultures and not just sites and artifacts; and
7. believe that sustainable production needs to look beyond fishing to other opportunities for use such as tourism.

## VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

In general, both the federal and state workshop participants believed that the meeting was successful, but there was also a sense that there is still a long way to go to build bridges among the various state and federal programs to develop a true national system of MPAs that fully addresses state concerns. Obviously the states are keenly interested in how the national system will affect their authorities over areas within their jurisdictional boundaries, and impact their resources. State participants urged the MPA Center to focus more on educating stakeholders about the potential benefits of a “national system.”

There was also widespread agreement that there is a need for broader engagement by interests other than those focusing on natural resource management. This was particularly evident in the comments of the historic and cultural resource participants who felt that cultural resources were often tagged on as an afterthought.

#### A. State-Level Recommendations

1. Consider adopting legislative authorities for providing a clearer, consistent direction for state Marine Managed Area programs
2. Utilize existing state coastal policies and programs to integrate with state fisheries management and historic preservation agencies to enhance state MPA/MMA systems

#### B. Federal-Level Recommendations

1. Develop a consistent national terminology and classification system
2. Provide federal financial, technical, administrative and scientific support
3. Establish a clear process and legislative authority for federal MPA designations
4. Utilize a regional framework for the national MPA system

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