

# **Executive Summary**

## **Marine Protected Area Pilot Education Workshops**

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## **The Marine Protected Areas Education Project:**

### **Supporting National MPA Awareness and Understanding**

As concerns grow about the health of our oceans, many agencies are using marine protected areas as a management tool to protect the nation's most vital marine habitats and resources. The term "marine protected area" has been in use for over two decades, while the concept of marine protected areas has been around for centuries. MPAs are increasingly in the news. California's Marine Life Protection Act and the process to establish the Tortugas Ecological Reserve in Florida are two examples. Because of the growing visibility, it is essential that MPA coastal and marine educators are informed and able to address questions from visitors to their sites. It is also important to inform the next generation about MPAs by incorporating information into programs and activities that teach about our marine and coastal resources.

Presidential Executive Order 13158 established the National MPA Center to address needs such as these. One of the Center's first tasks was to incorporate an MPA Education Project to increase understanding and awareness of MPAs among coastal and marine educators.

### **Identified Educator Needs**

The Center held three regional workshops targeting marine and coastal educators who regularly provide programming for students, teachers, and the general public. At the workshops, experts provided background information about MPAs. Group discussions raised educator awareness about the many different educational programs and activities available about regional and national coastal resources and issues and how to incorporate MPAs into these programs. Detailed summary reports of each of the workshops are available online ([mpa.gov](http://mpa.gov)) on the MPA Center's Education Project pages.

More than 100 educators and education intermediaries attended the three workshops, held on the East and West Coasts and by the Great Lakes. The educators included representation from the following organizations: National Sea Grant College Program; National Estuarine Research Reserves; National Park Service; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; National Marine Sanctuary Program; aquaria and visitor centers; and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. At the workshops, facilitators asked the participants what educational support they might find useful from the MPA Center. Participant responses can be grouped into the following general categories:

- General and scientific information about MPAs,
- Legislative updates and news, and
- Identification of other education programs and materials

#### **General and scientific information about MPAs**

In order for the educators to be able to teach about MPAs, they need to know the latest MPA science. They also need to be able to answer general questions, such as where MPAs are located and what their goals are. With access to appropriate background

information, many of these educators would be better able to integrate MPA information into their current programs. The educators also reported that it would be easier if information could be readily incorporated into their current programs and available in boilerplate format. The following are verbatim excerpts from their comments:

- Local, specific information of issues and scientific research on those local issues
- Science studies regarding knowledge, attitudes & behaviors
- Links to current research
- Current science, social science updates
- Research & case studies local or regional that could be used with audiences
- Maps of local MPAs
- More extensive references, especially for social science initiative
- More details – where closest MPAs are, etc.
- Need for MPAs. Purpose of MPAs
- More definition of the types of MPAs
- Resources for information
- Linkage to national message for marine protected areas
- Fact sheets
- Bulletin hand-out for public dissemination (including definitions of MPA, M.Reserves, NMS & their purposes)
- Provide scientific data on MPAs in format useful to K-12 educators and students

#### Legislative updates and news

The educators identified the need to be kept current on regional MPA issues. They want to know about general MPA news of national interest, and have access to updates about local and regional political processes. Many of these educators provide professional development training to coastal decision-makers, and they said they could easily include recent reports in the training and background information they provide. Some of the direct comments from these educators requested information on:

- Status of processes that are going on in my region
- Current status of MPA political processes
- Updates on regional level
- Summaries of all MPA processes in U.S.: comment periods, meetings, links to background info. We have nationwide constituents that I need to inform about these issues
- Current issues
- “Breaking news” type information
- Highlight summary of current issues
- Late breaking news on the fight to establish MPAs.

#### Identification of other education programs and materials

The workshops provided an opportunity for the educators to share some of their education and outreach programs. With programmatic budget constraints, demand for new programs, and the need to fit program schedules to their audience availability, there is less opportunity for travel to meetings and to exchange program ideas. They identified the need to learn about other education programs and to have different MPA-

related materials readily available, so they won't need to develop them themselves. Here are some of the direct comments about their needs:

- Programs that work & are developed
- New published materials / tools
- New & well-received activities developed that emphasize MPAs
- Effective education programs
- Need for educational information suitable for all age levels
- If products are adaptable to other regions – perhaps templates or source materials that can be converted for use in my geographical location
- Age-appropriate materials / activities / videos (elementary and middle school)
- I need MPA material – guides, posters, movies, activities
- More information on what other educators are doing (sharing resources, ideas)
- A list of educational resources that are available
- Web directory of graphic resources
- Pictures related to MPAs
- Access to ready-made text and images that can be cut and pasted into our specific materials
- MPA specific Educator Network

## **Responding to their needs**

### Information

We have used these comments to help shape the Education Project for 2003. First and foremost, we will continue development of a series of briefing sheets or short background papers about various MPA issues. These will include definitions and terms, scientific concepts, and program examples. The series, with graphics and professional design, will be written for a general audience and available for downloading from [mpa.gov](http://mpa.gov). These will be supplemented by a growing collection of MPA case studies.

In addition, the MPA Center publishes a newsletter, *Connections*, every month; it provides updated information about the Center's resources and opportunities, including updates on training, research, management tools, publications and studies, and frequently asked questions. The newsletter shares best practices from around the country, events of note, and MPAs in the news. It has added a series of articles called "Clarifying Misconceptions about MPAs" which addresses a different MPA-related issue or misconception every month. *Connections* is distributed to more than 1,000 people, including educators from MPA programs.

The Center's website, [mpa.gov](http://mpa.gov), is a leading source for various resources about MPAs. In addition to basic background information, the Center's Education pages online include presentations from the educator workshops. Users can view the slide presentations and read presenters' comments. The presentations are available in Adobe Acrobat, easily downloadable and printed for educators to use for their own presentations.

Also on [mpa.gov](http://mpa.gov), the Inventory section provides maps showing the location of MPAs across the nation. The federal sites are complete and data collection on the individual states, commonwealths and territories is progressing; data for the Commonwealth of the

Northern Marianas Islands was first to complete and post their sites. In addition to maps, the inventory team is gathering and posting information on site description, legal protection, threats, and the purposes and restrictions of management zones.

The Library section of mpa.gov is comprised of four collections:

- Bibliography,
- Institutions and organizations,
- MPA web sites, and
- Conferences and workshops.

Each collection may be browsed separately, or the entire collection may be searched. In addition to citations to articles, books, manuals, handbooks, research papers, reports, and workshop and conference proceedings, abstracts and full-text are included when available.

### Legislative processes

The growing number and increasing complexity of MPA planning processes pose serious challenges to anyone attempting to effectively track and engage in resource conservation decisions. Each planning process has its own unique timeline of meetings, review documents and other official events, many of which are crucial to the ultimate decisions made by the managing agencies. Through a partnership between the National MPA Center and the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS), the first regional clearinghouse for tracking these legislative processes is available at [www.pacificmpa.org](http://www.pacificmpa.org). This website for the west coast tracks MPA planning processes in California, Oregon and Washington. Additional web-based clearinghouses are planned for each region of the country. In addition, the mpa.gov website will add a section in 2003 that will provide information about state legal authorities as well as information about statewide MPA initiatives.

### Education networking

Coastal marine educators working or interested in MPAs come from many different governmental, non-governmental, private agencies, and organizations. Many share a commonality of programs and activities, but networking and information sharing among the different programs is difficult for various reasons. To address this, the MPA Center will support a monthly email update for educators that includes items of interest, such as funding, calls for education abstracts, and other opportunities. In addition, it will highlight both an educational program and an educational website.

The Center has agreed to act as an issue editor in 2004 for the National Marine Educators Association magazine, *Current: The Journal of Marine Education*. Articles about MPAs and MPA issues will be solicited by the Center, and will include related activities for classroom teachers and their students

The MPA Center will continue to network at national educator meetings and deliver presentations on our work. These presentations will also highlight the numerous MPA educational and outreach programs available, including those that support coastal

stewardship and education. The annotated presentations will be available on [mpa.gov](http://mpa.gov) for a wide audience.

## **Summary**

MPA education is vital to informed and effective MPA management. It is a significant management tool that increases public understanding and support for both the sites and the values they protect. Education is fundamental to building awareness about coastal processes and leadership for present and future generations. The regional education workshops provided invaluable feedback, and the MPA Center's Education Project is committed to providing support to MPA educators.