

**South Atlantic and Gulf Coast Workshop:  
*Developing the National/Regional System of MPAs from  
the State and Territorial Perspective***

April 12-13, 2005  
Hilton Hotel, St. Petersburg, FL.

I. Introduction

This workshop, the second of three scheduled U.S. regional meetings, was held on April 12-13, 2005 at the Hilton Hotel in St. Petersburg, FL. Twelve state agency representatives (including fisheries, cultural resource, and coastal and natural resource managers) from Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and Texas, joined state participants from Oregon and Massachusetts, and federal agencies including NOAA's National MPA Center and Coastal Services Center, the National Park Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss the development of a national/regional system of MPAs. The specific goals of the workshop were to:

1. Initiate a dialogue among the federal MPA Center and the South Atlantic and Gulf 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 South Atlantic and Gulf 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, individual state MPA summaries and case studies were presented by representatives from Florida, North Carolina, Louisiana, Texas and Georgia. A short synopsis of a few primary MPA issues observed in the remaining states and territories that could not attend (USVI, Alabama, South Carolina, Puerto Rico and Mississippi) was then offered. These include:

- a) overfishing, temporary fishing bans, and habitat and spawning area protection;
- b) economically important resource use, artificial reefs for oyster production, and shrimping; and
- c) a growing emphasis on cultural and archaeological protected sites and management.

Following this, three detailed MPA state case studies from Florida, Texas and Oregon (invited to attend from previous attendance at the February 2005 West Coast MPA workshop) were presented as a means to relate and discuss key challenges and lessons learned:

#### IV. Participant Hopes and Fears

##### A. Hopes

- MPAs and the national system are a way to identify important areas and make people aware of them
- Start a history toward a coordinated national approach
- Build political will
- Public recognition of the need to zone the ocean and protect it
- Improved coordination among agencies and overlapping jurisdictions
- Mechanism for protecting cultural resources outside of state waters

##### B. Fears

- Another unfunded federal mandate
- Creates a 'piecemeal' new agency that hinders other agencies' ongoing efforts, i.e., take funding from other agencies
- The end result will be a paper MPA system after all the effort to develop it due to the volatility of MPAs
- Misuse of the designation process for purposes other than conservation
- Loss of political will because a site can not be effective due to lack of protection from other unregulated impacts

#### V. Participant Challenges and Opportunities

##### A. Challenges

- Traditional uses may have to change (fishing and other uses) – must overcome this with leadership from the top
  - May restrict "private rights"
- Need very good science and ability to clearly articulate the problem
  - Must prove that the MPA will be beneficial to states
- Need to articulate benefits of the system to states
  - Why do we need a national system if we already have fairly comprehensive state protections?
- Funding for states to participate in system (even seed money) – a little money can go a long way
- Delineation of authority (i.e. federal and state roles)
- Need clear, concise definitions and terms for politicians and the public in order to get on the same page because states and feds use different terms
  - Misunderstanding of the Executive Order and MMA Inventory

- Confusion over different types of regulations and jurisdictions and different types of MMAs
- Lack of enforcement even when authority is present to protect natural and cultural resources
- Lack of outreach and education on marine resource issues
- Working across state geographic boundaries (e.g. watershed issues) may become higher priority as national system is developed
- Reallocation of resources could harm existing program strapped for resources and staff
- Creates an additional level of state and local needs, thereby increasing complexity for the national system
- States or interest groups may use MPA designation as opportunity to restrict usage, thereby misusing the process

### *B. Opportunities*

- Cross-cutting benefit of cooperation and coordination opportunities for education and research
- National system provides money and technical assistance
- Technical assistance for ecological characterizations across regions
- Engage private sector and NGOs
- Gives name and recognition of area that was deemed “special”
  - designation confers a level of resource protection
- Leadership from top (e.g. President, Congress) to protect resources which filters down to state and local level
  - ride on wave of momentum from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (and the Pew Commission)
- Can use ecosystem approach
  - Mechanism for partnering or recognition of adjacent states that may not have MPAs or mechanisms to designate MPAs, but do work with states on water quality issues (i.e. watershed example)
- Can articulate positive economic impacts of effective management
- Speaking with one voice across agencies with consistent terminology
- Identify unprotected resources in need of protection (gap analysis) and mechanisms for protecting those resources
- Creation of federal/state partnerships

## VI. Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session Questions:

*\* How should NOAA and DOI maintain a dialogue with state about their perspectives on the national system?*

*\* Recommendations on issues to be considered in subsequent workshops*

*\* On what issues should the State Advisory Group further deliberate and provide additional input?*

*\* Suggestions for engaging the public in the process to develop the “National System of MPAs”*

### Summary of Comments

- The MPA Center needs to set clear definitions, goals, and criteria
- Need a targeted campaign of outreach, education, PR, and marketing - illustrate to states the value-added of participating in the national system
- Criteria for entry into national system should be general and flexible to allow for differences between states and agencies within states
- Start with existing federal and state sites and focus on these, making sure the system works
  - it should not be the initial focus of the national system to expand but it should not preclude growth
  - it should not close door to new sites that want to come into this process
- The nomination process:
  - stakeholders and resource users can nominate sites for the national system, but the state must approve
  - state support of a site would not automatically get it into the national system (still needs to meet minimum criteria)
- The support for sites in the national system:
  - funding, including seed money to leverage funds and enhance federal/state partnerships
  - use existing agencies and grant programs to give preference to sites in the national system
  - technical assistance and coordination
  - enforcement, assessment and monitoring

- The MPA Center can put out written information on what states are doing.
- Outreach to the public (never too early to start) – outreach to general ocean users
- Groups to partner with:
  - Sea Grant (get article in their newsletter)
  - Chambers of Commerce
  - League of Women Voters
- The State Advisory Group has talked about the need to improve communication with other states that don't have a representative on the group
- When talking about implementing a national system, it has to be regional
- For MPAs that cross jurisdictional boundaries, maybe states can coordinate to spend the money more efficiently
- GIS technical assistance – getting basic info, starting database would be great
- Technical assistance on biological analysis and assessments that include historical change data
  - Showcasing good examples and best management practices
- CSO is a good intermediary
- 'The CSC Coastal Services' magazine is a good model for sharing information
- Engage the National Governors Association, the Great Lakes Commission, the Society for American Archaeology, the Society for Historical Archaeology, and NGOs

## VII. Concrete Next Steps

- Finalizing terminology and definition is a critical first next step
- Establish framework:

- criteria, parameters to participate
- nomination process
- Short-term (2 or 3 year) plan for MPA Center with goals and objectives
- Need to do in-reach in refuges and in-reach in states – engage other states that haven't been involved
- Delivering completed inventory with some analysis of what exists – this can guide National System direction
- MPA Center can facilitate position statement on benefits and value-added of participation
- Use and expand [mpa.gov](http://mpa.gov) for education (e.g. share case studies)
- Getting some money to states
- The entire cultural resources thread and discussion needs to be woven in, not just “tacked on”
  - this can engage a whole new community of people
  - still have a long way to go on defining what cultural is, and on defining what sorts of protections will be given
  - need to start thinking about in a more holistic, integrated way
  - sounds as if the historic/cultural folks in different states know each other; with close-knit community like that have opportunity to get a lot of information
  - states can do a lot just by including cultural/historical contacts in discussions
- Would be good to have a compare and contrast of different state authorities, see how those play out. This would help states that are struggling with MPA designations now or in next 5 years.
- Large workshop with states and feds to kick-off next stage - might tag onto The Coastal Society in 2006 (St. Pete Beach)

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