

C O N N E C T I O N S
Newsletter of the National
Marine Protected Areas Center

February 2003

The mission of the National Marine Protected Areas Center is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas. *Connections* was launched to meet continuing calls by agency and external stakeholders for information about MPA Center activities.

Table of Contents

Message from Joseph Uravitch, Director of the National Marine Protected Areas Center

Clarifying Misconceptions About Marine Protected Areas (First Part in a Series)

A Tool to Assess MPA Effectiveness

NOAA's Coastal Services Center and the New York Division of Coastal Resources:
Cooperative Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Mapping
in the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve

Please Participate in a Quick MPA.gov Survey

First Best Practices Meeting Held Among Interns Collecting Data For State Inventories

National Marine Protected Areas Center's First Annual Retreat
Provides Center with Refined Mission and Vision Statements

Events and Conferences

**Message from Joseph Uravitch, Director
of the National Marine Protected Areas Center:
Congratulations to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)**

I would like to express the MPA Center's thanks to the hardworking staff of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). CNMI is the first of the U.S. commonwealths, states, and territories to complete the entry of information about their marine managed areas into the national database/inventory.

Representatives from CNMI's Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Lands and Natural Resources, both under the Coastal Resources Management Program, Office of the Governor, were instrumental in seeing the project through.

If you go the MPA website, you'll find data for all 11 sites in CNMI newly added to the inventory: http://www.mpa.gov/mpaservices/inv_status/sup_cnmiextended.html.

Once all coastal commonwealths, territories, and states have contributed, the inventory will serve as a valuable information, analytical, and management tool at both the state and regional levels.

Please contact me via email at Joseph.Uravitch@noaa.gov if you would like more information about the work of the MPA Center.

Clarifying Misconceptions About Marine Protected Areas (First Part in a Series)

Misconception: Marine protected areas are a new or recent resource management tool.

Reality: Resource managers have used place-based management, such as marine protected areas (MPAs), for decades to manage the marine resources of the United States. Examples of MPAs include the nation's 13 national marine sanctuaries and dozens of fishery management zones administered by NOAA, national parks in the marine environment administered by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service, and comparable state programs.

The first national marine sanctuary was established off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina in 1975 to protect the USS Monitor, a civil war ship that sank in 1862. The area around the wreckage was deemed a marine protected area in order to prevent further deterioration of the wreck, recover important ship components and artifacts, and protect the wreck from damage by human activities, such as vessel anchoring and fishing.

The National Park Service has operated parks in the marine environment for a longer period. For example, Everglades National Park was established in 1947, and protects more than 100 miles of coastline, including an extensive mangrove estuary, shallow tropical bay, and seagrass beds. It is the only subtropical preserve in North America. While there are some restrictions on water activities, including fishing and recreational activities, there are areas where fishing and boating are permitted.

MPAs complement other management measures such as fishery regulations and pollution controls. For example, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service administers gear-restricted areas to protect vital fish habitat areas around the country.

All in all, MPAs are not new, but they are gaining a new emphasis as a resource management tool.

To learn more about various marine protected areas, visit http://mpa.gov/mpaservices/mpa_inventory.html. The next part in this series will appear in the March issue of *Connections*.

A Tool to Assess MPA Effectiveness

Marine protected areas (MPAs) have been established worldwide to protect marine biodiversity and ecosystems, reduce poverty, and provide coastal communities with a strong foundation for economic growth. But MPAs are sometimes severely challenged in achieving their objectives. In some cases, insufficient financial and technical resources, lack of trained staff, or lack of management data can get in the way of success.

For these and other reasons, evaluating the effectiveness of MPAs plays a critical role in providing for and demonstrating long-term positive impacts on biodiversity and the human communities that depend on these resources. Management effectiveness is the degree to which a protected area is successful in achieving its goals and objectives. Evaluating management effectiveness should ultimately lead to improved project planning, accountability, and adaptive management.

To help tackle this issue, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are providing managers, planners, and other decision-makers with a method for assessing the effectiveness of MPA sites. This tool, called the MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative, enhances the capability for adaptive management in MPAs. The initiative builds on a book previously published by the IUCN called *Management Effectiveness Framework*.

One of the main focuses of the initiative is a working draft guidebook titled, "How is Your MPA Doing?" The guidebook has been developed over the last three years, after careful research and evaluation of MPA indicators. These indicators include biophysical goals (sustainable fisheries, protecting biodiversity, conserving species and habitats, and restoring degraded areas) and socio-economic goals (livelihood opportunities, non-monetary benefits, equitable distribution of benefits, compatibility, and awareness and knowledge).

The draft guidebook, having been developed in cooperation with and undergone several revisions by marine and coastal experts from around the world, describes how to select indicators for a unique MPA and how to use these indicators in assessing the effectiveness of MPAs.

The guidebook is now being reviewed and field-tested in diverse sites around the world. Once the field testing results are compiled, case studies will be developed and a final guidebook will be presented during the World Parks Congress, which will be held in South Africa in September 2003.

To read about the Management Effectiveness Initiative, the working draft guidebook, and pilot site profiles, log on to <http://effectiveMPA.noaa.gov/>.

**NOAA's Coastal Services Center and the New York Division of Coastal Resources:
Cooperative Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Mapping
in the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve**

The South Shore Estuary Reserve is a nearly 500 square mile area along the south shore of Long Island. It encompasses a large estuary system and land areas in Nassau and Suffolk counties that drain to it. Spanning about 75 miles west to east, the reserve extends from the New York City boundary to just beyond the eastern end of Shinnecock Bay. It includes part or all of the towns of Hempstead, Oyster Bay, Babylon, Islip, Brookhaven and Southampton, the city of Long Beach, and 31 villages. The reserve is home to about 1.5 million people.

The South Shore Estuary consists of the series of shallow, interconnected bays—and the tidal portions of their tributaries—formed behind the barrier islands that separate the Long Island mainland from the Atlantic Ocean. The estuary has tremendous ecological, economic and social importance. It contains the most extensive acreage of tidal wetlands and the greatest diversity of habitat in New York state. It supports the state's largest concentration of water-dependent businesses. Linked with the estuary's resources are the activities and facilities that epitomize the region's maritime heritage and present day culture: commercial and recreational fishing and shell fishing, boat building and boat yards, ferries and waterborne transportation, sailing, bay houses, bay beaches, estate parks, historic structures, and maritime centers.

At the urging of Long Island citizens, in 1993, the New York state legislature passed the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Act. The act recognized the South Shore Estuary as an unparalleled resource and provided for development of a comprehensive management plan to improve and protect the health of the estuary's ecosystem while increasing public access opportunities and sustaining economic activities. The act also created a South Shore Estuary Reserve Council to prepare the plan and promote its implementation. The council represents local governments, commercial and recreational fishing businesses, business associations, conservation and scientific organizations, education institutions, and three state agencies including the New York Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources.

One of the critical needs identified by the management plan is a baseline inventory of submerged aquatic vegetation resources, one of the reserve's most important living marine resources. Following the establishment of a comprehensive baseline submerged aquatic vegetation data set, the management plan calls for a long term monitoring program. The monitoring will be designed to evaluate the level of success in attainment of specific site goals and the cumulative achievement of projected improvements in estuarine resources from habitat restoration and protection activities. The ultimate goal is to support productivity of commercially and ecologically essential estuarine species by sustaining existing habitats of high functional quality and restoring degraded habitats.

NOAA's Coastal Remote Sensing program (part of the Coastal Services Center in Charleston) is working with New York's Division of Coastal Resources office and local government agencies to create the baseline submerged aquatic vegetation data set. The Division of Coastal Resources contracted the aerial imagery collection to the James Sewall Company of Old Town, Maine. Due to persistent outbreaks of brown tide, the collection of the imagery was delayed until summer 2002. The imagery interpretation will be conducted through a contract with a private mapping firm during the winter and spring of 2003. The Coastal Services Center is funding and administering the contract and providing technical guidance.

Initial field work for this project was conducted in the summer of 2002. The field effort was coordinated by the Division of Coastal Resources and culled local experts from each of the local jurisdictions. The Coastal Services Center is providing field equipment including towed and handheld underwater video cameras, rugged laptop computers, and global positioning system receivers. Information gathered during the field work will guide the interpretation of the imagery.

Using resources from the federal, state, local, and private sectors creates an excellent partnership that maximizes the skills and resources of all participants. The outcome of this cooperative project meets the federal need for a baseline habitat data set created from a standardized methodology. It allows for comparison with similarly collected data sets nationwide. The state and local need for a baseline data set allows for long term monitoring. In addition, the project has been created in an extremely efficient and technologically advanced manner by utilizing the private sector. The data is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2003.

More information about The South Shore Estuary Reserve and comprehensive management plan can be accessed online at <http://www.estuary.cog.ny.us>

Please Participate in a Quick MPA.gov Survey

We would like your input regarding the Marine Protected Areas of the United States website. A survey is now available on the mpa.gov home page. Developed to measure your level of satisfaction with the website, it consists of 12 questions and takes approximately five minutes to complete. Please help us improve <http://www.mpa.gov/>.

First Best Practices Meeting Held Among Interns Collecting Data For State Inventories

MPA Center interns from across the country recently gathered via telephone lines to share best practices as they work on gathering data for the state inventory piece of the marine managed areas (MMA) inventory. Interns representing the states of California, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Washington, Alabama, South Carolina, and Oregon reviewed the data entry form, talked about ways to contact state MMA interagency working groups, and discussed the best ways to begin gathering data. Coordinators for the MMA inventory at NOAA's Ocean Service also participated in the call.

Marnie Meyer, who has been working on collecting California MMA data since August of last year, took the interns through the procedure step by step, offering tips for making the process go smoothly.

Some suggestions included determining the order in which MMA data is collected for efficiency, identifying which MMA sites are managed by which state agencies so that they can be reviewed 'in bulk,' and searching for existing maps of MMA sites to aid in finding locations, general features, and marine resources.

Other guidance included how to better understand state marine policies, keep track of resources, organize the data collection work, become familiar with the data entry form quickly, and ask questions when needed.

The interns hope to continue talking on a monthly basis as their work progresses.

For more information on the MMA inventory, go to http://mpa.gov/mpaservices/mpa_inventory.html.

National Marine Protected Areas Center's First Annual Retreat Provides Center with Refined Mission and Vision Statements

The MPA Center held its first annual retreat in late January. Thirty-five staff from NOAA and the Department of the Interior participated over an intensive two and a half days. The retreat focused on the MPA Executive Order, long-term priorities of the MPA Center and its institutes, criteria for success, the Center's work towards a framework for a national system of MPAs, external communications, and partner agencies. The retreat reinforced the MPA Center's commitment to fostering better relationships with all communities that use and access our coasts and oceans.

One of the major accomplishments included crafting a revised mission statement and new vision statement for the MPA Center.

The updated mission of the MPA Center is:

To facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas.

The vision statement is:

An effective, science-based, and collaborative national system of marine protected areas conserving marine ecosystems and cultural resources throughout the U.S.

Another outcome was refining the Center's goals and objectives for the next year. The first goal is *to facilitate the design of a science-based national system of MPAs*. The objectives to meet this goal are:

- Develop a conceptual framework for a national system
- Assess the effectiveness of the existing suite of MPAs
- Identify gaps in protection among ecosystems and natural and cultural resources
- With agency partners and stakeholders, develop a comprehensive design or blueprint for a national MPA system

The second goal is *to enhance MPA stewardship by strengthening capacity for planning, management, and evaluation*. The objectives to meet this goal are:

- Assess the needs of existing MPAs
- Assess and facilitate the improvement of effectiveness of existing MPAs
- Develop the natural and social science foundation for sound decision-making
- Facilitate the development, sharing and application of MPA information
- Build capacity within MPA programs and sites
- Assess and document the strengths and limitations of MPAs as a conservation tool
- Improve public awareness and understanding of MPAs

Events and Conferences

FEBRUARY

14: Managing Visitor Use in Coastal and Marine Protected Areas; Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, Eastpoint, Florida. For more information contact Tom Fish at the NOAA Coastal Services Center: (843) 740-1271, or Tom.Fish@noaa.gov.

24-25: Sportfishing Leadership Conference, St. Pete Beach, Florida. By Invitation Only. For further information, contact the American Sportfishing Association, (703) 519-9691.

MARCH

4-5: Northeast Region, National Park Service MPA Meeting, Newport, Rhode Island.

APRIL

13-15: Restore America's Estuaries: Saving Our Coastal Heritage, Baltimore, Maryland: <http://www.estuaries.org/>

14 - 18: George Wright Society Biennial Conference, Protecting Our Diverse Heritage: The Role of Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites, San Diego, CA: <http://www.georgewright.org/2003.html>

MAY

11 - 16: The Fifth Annual Science and Management of Protected Areas Association (SAMPAA) Conference, Victoria, British Columbia:
http://www.sampaa.org/sampaa_conference.htm

JUNE

4-6: Oceanology International 2003, New Orleans, LA: <http://www.oiamericas.com>

8: Oceans Day

JULY

13-17: Coastal Zone '03, Baltimore, Maryland. Theme is coastal zone management through time: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz2003>

20-24: National Marine Educators Association, Wilmington, North Carolina:
<http://www.marine-ed.org/nmea2003>

AUGUST

10-14: American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting, Quebec City, Canada. Theme is aquatic protected areas as fishery management tools. Abstracts are due February 24, 2003;
http://www.fisheries.org/apa_symposium/homepage.htm

SEPTEMBER

8-17: World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/>

OCTOBER

7-11: North American Association for Environmental Education, Anchorage, Alaska:
<http://naaee.org/>

NOVEMBER

8-12: National Association of Interpretation, Reno, Nevada:
<http://www.interpnet.com/niw2003/>

TO SUBSCRIBE: Send an email to Dana.Topousis@noaa.gov.