WPC Recommendation 22

Building a Global System of Marine and Coastal Protected Area Networks

The 17th IUCN General Assembly (San Jose, Costa Rica; 1988) adopted Recommendation 17.38 (*Protection of the coastal and marine environment*), which called on international bodies and all nations to establish a global representative system of marine protected areas (MPAs) to provide for the protection, restoration, wise use, understanding and enjoyment of the marine heritage of the world in perpetuity. Also, delegates attending the IVth World Parks Congress (Caracas, 1992) adopted Recommendation 11 (*Marine Protected Areas*), which called for the establishment of a global network of marine protected areas.

And, more recently, the 8th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the convention on biological diversity noted in March 2003 that "… the data available indicate that regionally and globally, marine and coastal protected area networks are severely deficient, and probably protect a very small proportion of marine and coastal environments." The SBSSTA also recommended that the goal for marine and coastal protected areas work under the Convention should be the "establishment and maintenance of marine and coastal protected areas that are effectively managed, ecologically based, and contribute to a permanent representative global network of marine and coastal protected areas, building upon national networks".

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has made a significant contribution to the establishment of marine and coastal protected areas. The Convention also has site criteria in relation to the fish habitat importance of wetland ecosystems, has developed guidelines for managing wetlands within integrated coastal zone management frameworks and has specific guidelines for identifying Wetlands of International Importance.

There are concerns that more than 60 percent of the human population lives in coastal zones and they will increasingly put marine and coastal biodiversity under pressure and undermine the foundation for coastal economies. Thus, continuing loss of marine, estuarine, and other aquatic habitats is one of the greatest long-term threats to biodiversity, dependent species and the viability of commercial and recreational fisheries.

Urgent action is required to restore fisheries that have collapsed, avoid over-fishing of stocks already fully utilised, minimise the ecological effects of by-catch, to species and ecosystems and limit habitat destruction. Marine protected areas (MPAs) have been shown to be an effective means to support biodiversity and species conservation as

well as supporting ecologically and economically sustainable fisheries when managed in the context of human societies that are dependent on marine ecosystems.

MPAs covering the full range of IUCN categories are widely recognised by coastal nations as flexible and valuable tools for science based, integrated area management (including highly protected marine reserves and areas managed for multiple uses) supporting ecosystem-based management, because they can help conserve critical habitat, foster the recovery of overexploited and endangered species, maintain marine communities, and promote sustainable use.

There are further concerns that climate related global threats cannot be addressed by conventional management measures alone, and will require new and innovative approaches.

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) emphasised the need to maintain the productivity and biodiversity of important marine and coastal areas, and set target dates of:

1. 2012 for the establishment of representative MPA networks based on scientific information and consistent with international law;

2. 2015 for the restoration of depleted fish stocks; and

3. 2010 for the application of the ecosystem approach to ocean and fisheries management.

Also the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries emphasises the integration of MPAs into the sustainable use of marine natural resources.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Marine Cross-Cutting Theme at the Vth World Parks Congress, in Durban, South Africa (8-17 September 2003):

CALL on the international community as a whole to:

1. Establish by 2012 a global system of effectively managed, representative networks of marine and coastal protected areas, consistent with international law and based on scientific information, that:

    a. Greatly increases the marine and coastal area managed in marine protected areas by 2012; these networks should be extensive and include strictly protected areas that amount to at least 20-30% of each habitat, and contribute to a global target for healthy and productive oceans;

    b. Facilitates and incorporates understanding, support and collaboration at local, national and international levels to design

and develop such networks through sharing of knowledge, skills and experience in conservation and the achievement of sustainable socio-economic benefits;

c. Assists in the implementation of appropriate global and regional agreements, conventions and frameworks;

d. Is designed to be resilient[1], particularly in the face of large scale threats linked to global change; this will require building flexibility and adaptation into their design and management;

e. Incorporates both new and strengthened existing MPA sites with varying purposes and management approaches;

f. Integrates MPAs with other ocean, coastal, and land governance policies, as recommended by the Jakarta Mandate, to achieve sustainable fisheries, biodiversity conservation, species protection, and integrated watershed, coastal, ocean and high seas and polar management objectives;

g. Contributes to in situ conservation of threatened and endangered species and their habitat;

h. Includes strictly protected marine reserves that contribute to protection of diverse marine habitats and ecosystem structure, biodiversity conservation, species protection recovery of endangered species, public education, and sustainable fisheries management;

i. In the sustainable management of fisheries, is an integral component that can contribute significantly to the management of species with special management needs. This may include protection for critical life history stages, such as through protection of spawning grounds;

j. Can provide a framework that can contribute significantly to the management of species, with special management needs including highly migratory species, ecosystems and habitats;

k. Engages stakeholders including local and traditional communities through participatory processes in the design, planning and management and, sharing of benefits of marine protected areas;

l. Protects and strengthens relatively intact marine and coastal areas for species and habitats that are not yet significantly

[1] Resilience is the ability of an ecosystem to recover from disturbances within a reasonable timeframe. Components of resilient MPA networks include effective management; risk spreading through inclusion of replicates of representative habitats; full protection of refugia that can serve as reliable sources of seed for replenishment; and connectivity to link these refugia with vulnerable areas within the network.

degraded by direct or indirect human impacts and represent important biodiversity values;

m. Implements best available, science-based measures reflecting international policy and practice and are consistent with international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other instruments;

n. Uses management effectiveness assessments to promote adaptive management, taking into account the approaches, issues and concepts outlined in WPC Recommendation 5.18;

o. Builds the best available science on connectivity into marine and coastal protected area network design, in order to create networks that are ecologically coherent;

p. Provides appropriate incentives and support for the implementation of diverse portfolios of financing mechanisms and management approaches which, together with supportive local and national policies, provide for the long-term sustainability of MPA networks;

q. Is embedded within wider integrated coastal and marine management frameworks that include collaboration among resource management bodies and ensure linkages among marine coastal and terrestrial protected areas to address potential threats beyond area boundaries; and

r. Sets performance objectives for global, national and regional networks of MPAs to meet fisheries, biodiversity, habitat stabilization and societal needs.

2. Implement an ecosystem-based approach to sustainable fisheries management and marine biodiversity conservation:

   a. Through marine protected areas integrated with other marine and coastal governance and management actions, as appropriate, through the application of best available science and consistent with international law to:

      i. Provide sustainable socio-economic returns to local and traditional communities and industry;

      ii. Protect important habitats and areas sensitive to particular gear impacts and minimise negative impacts on the food web;

      iii. Restore depleted fisheries; and

      iv. Build a biogeographic based framework for maintaining ecosystem structure and function through MPA networks;

b. Through multilateral consideration of appropriate criteria, frameworks and incentives for integrated networks of local, national, and regional marine protected areas, including transboundary areas, and for effective compliance and enforcement to effectively address challenges within and beyond national boundaries, consistent with international law;

c. Through recognition of MPA networks as an integral component in sustainable fisheries management which should complement and not be used as a substitute for normal fisheries management practice;

d. Through fostering an on-going dialogue with all fisheries sectors to develop mutual understanding and the transfer of knowledge in both directions and to ensure the process and outcomes occur in a transparent and trusting environment. This may be enhanced by:

    i. The ability of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations to become integral stakeholders in MPAs; and

    ii. Elaborating MPA theory and practice to facilitate dialogue with fishers and fishery management;

e. Through the designation of marine protected areas, including those within Large Marine Ecosystems, as one of the strategies applied to the recovery of depleted fish stocks reduction of coastal pollution and conservation and restoration of biodiversity;

f. Consistent with the precautionary approach, and which ensures that the burden of proof that the environment is not harmed resides with those who commercially benefit from MPA resources; and

g. Which sets performance objectives for global, national and regional networks of MPAs to meet the fisheries, biodiversity, ecosystem stabilization and societal needs.

Stream: Marine

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