

UN Environment launches guidance on how to combine governance approaches to promote more effective and equitable Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

As countries move towards achieving the Aichi target of 10% coverage of MPAs of their national ocean areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity, there is a growing focus on achieving other elements of the Aichi target, particularly to ensure that MPAs are *effective* in achieving their conservation objectives and *equitable* in ensuring (a) that the costs & benefits of protection are fairly distributed, (b) that the participation of local people in decision-making and implementation is provided for, and (c) that their customs and ways of life are respected and sustained. Indeed, meeting these elements of the Aichi target often represents bigger challenges than the act of designating a marine area as protected, and if these challenges are not met an MPA can lapse into being an ineffective and/or unfair ‘paper park’.

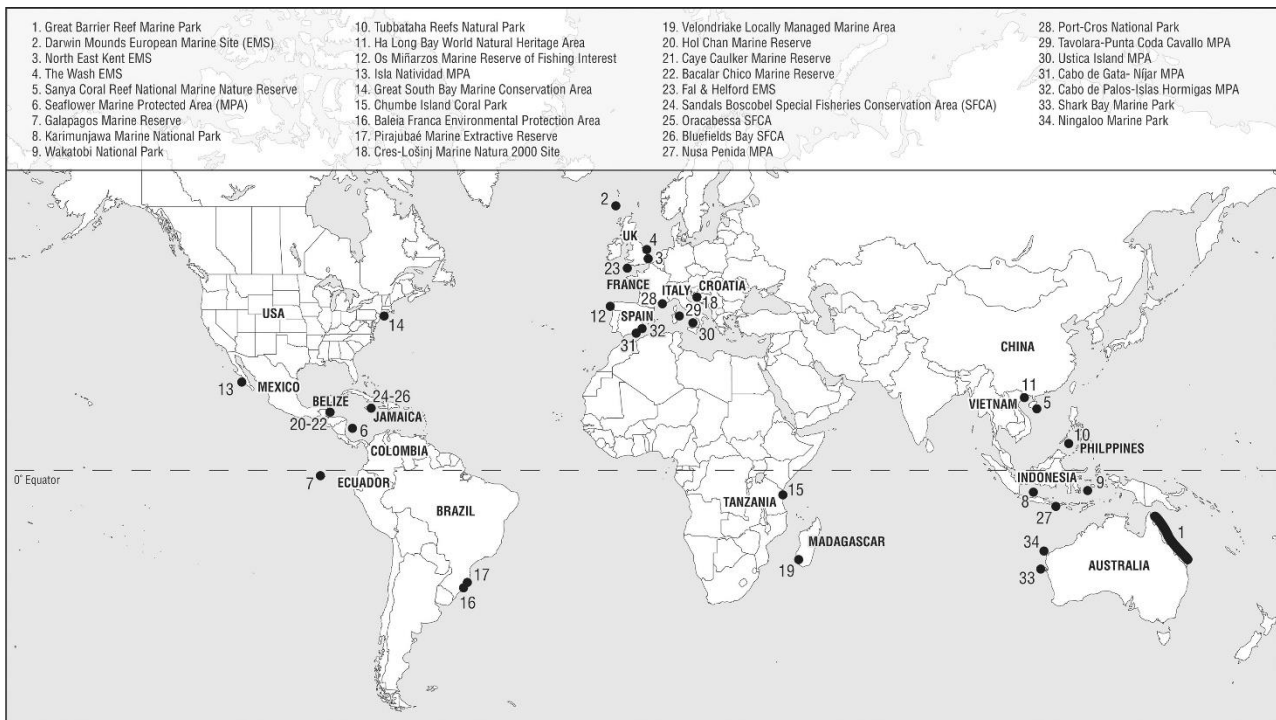
In order to help address these challenges, UN Environment is launching evidence-based



guidance on combining governance approaches to enable effective and equitable marine protected areas¹ (see cover, figure 1). It has been developed in collaboration with researchers from the MPA Governance Project at University College London (www.mpag.info). This guidance provides practical advice through a series of steps that focus on different ways in which five governance approaches – (1) top-down regulatory, (2) bottom-up participative, (3) market-led economic, (4) awareness-raising and (5) collective learning – can be combined to promote more effective and equitable MPA outcomes. This builds on the rationale that debates need to move on from which of these governance approaches is ‘best’ or ‘right’, towards practical advice on how these approaches can be combined to address each other’s weaknesses and build on each other’s strengths, in a synergistic and integrated way. These different governance approaches are

explored in detail through a menu of 36 individual incentives, including case study examples of how different incentives can be combined to better address conflicts between use and conservation objectives.

The guidance is evidence-based in that it draws on examples from 34 case studies of MPAs in 19 countries around the world, undertaken as part of the MPA Governance Project (see map, figure 2).



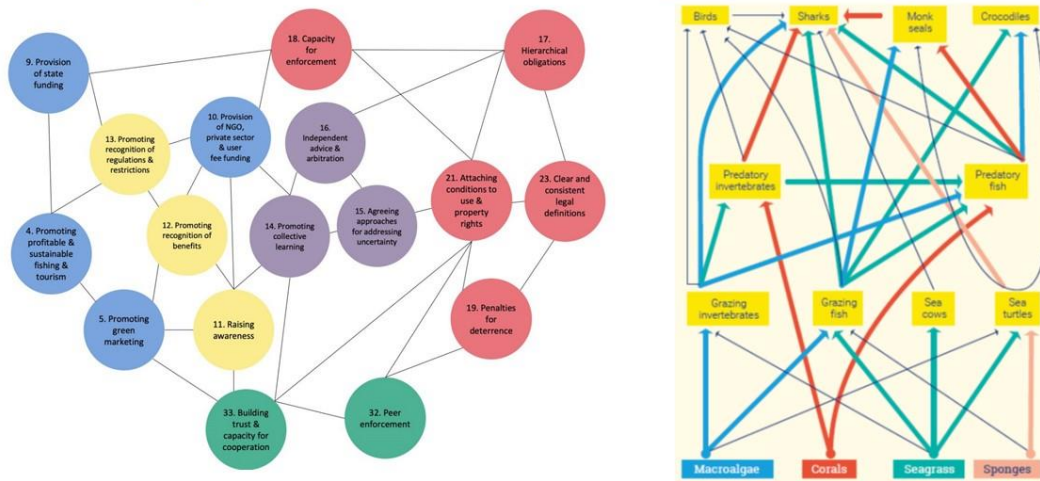
All of these case studies involve a combination of in-depth field work through interviews with various groups of people involved in the governance of a given MPA, and detailed analyses of the legal and policy framework of the MPA, also drawing on ecological assessments of trends in the species and habitat on which the conservation objectives are focused. This enables a detailed inter-disciplinary and applied assessment of the combinations of governance approaches that appear to represent ‘good practice’ in promoting effectiveness and equity, as a basis for practical guidance on how such combinations can be adapted and applied to other MPAs to help build their capacity. It is explicitly recognised in the guidance that most MPAs face pressures from driving forces, such as population growth, increasing demand for tourism and fish, and the legitimate development aspirations of local people. The guidance aims to promote the building of governance capacity that more equitably addresses these driving forces and more effectively achieves specific conservation objectives.

This guidance is based on extensive research under the MPA Governance Project since its inception 10 years ago by the lead researcher, Dr Peter Jones, including his related book *Governing Marine Protected Areas: resilience through diversity* (tinyurl.com/GoverningMPAs, 20% discount code DC361). The underlying rationale is that in the same way that a diversity of different species, representing different functional groups, helps promote the resilience of ecosystems, a diversity of different governance approaches through combinations of incentives helps promote the resilience of social systems (see figure 3), i.e. a social-ecological systems view.

Rather than assuming that MPAs are set-aside from use, the guidance recognises that MPAs should be seen more as vehicles for promoting integrated and sustainable use, which helps achieve a diversity of Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG14 (Life Below Water, related to Aichi target), but also others such as SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG2 (Zero Hunger), SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG13 (Climate Action) and SDG16 (Peace, Justice

and Strong Institutions). As such, the UN Environment guide aims to provide practical and accessible advice to MPA managers and related policy-makers and interest groups on how to build capacity for effective conservation and integrated and equitable development, as well as providing a novel perspective on theories of natural resource governance. As UN Environment concluded in their *Frontiers 2017 report*, which included an article highlighting MPA governance challenges and new approaches, “Ultimately, governing the oceans in a sustainable way could see Marine Protected Areas as a driver – not a limit – for the vital economic and social benefits that we derive from the global ocean”.

Diversity is the key to resilience, both of species in ecosystems and incentives in governance systems



www.unenvironment.org/resources/marine-protected-area-governance

¹ UN Environment (2019) *Enabling effective and equitable marine protected areas: guidance on combining governance approaches*. Authors – Jones PJS, Murray RH & Vestergaard O. Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/marine-protected-area-governance>