

Towards a network of SPAW-listed protected areas managers

Hacia una red de gestores de áreas protegidas incluidas en la lista SPAW

Vers un réseau de gestionnaires d'aires protégées listées SPAW

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Networks have emerged in North America and the Wider Caribbean Region. MPA Networks main goal is to strengthen individual MPA performance by addressing issues of common conservation and management concerns, including capacity building, sharing monitoring information, policy support and research collaboration.

In the framework of the Cartagena Convention for the protection and development of marine environment in the Wider Caribbean Region, the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol is dedicated to the protection of “specially protected area and wildlife”. One objective of the Protocol is therefore to “identify particularly important areas for the Wider Caribbean”.

The 12th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the SPAW Protocol recommended that “*The SPAW Regional activity center (SPAW-RAC) [...] develop a proposal for the creation of a network for the 36 SPAW-listed protected areas [...] with the purpose of understanding and addressing the needs of protected area managers to improve protected area effectiveness.*”

METHODOLOGY

Referring to the “Guidelines and Best practices for MPA Manager Networks”, “*determining a network’s purpose is an evolving process following the evolution or maturation of the network and is most effective when it is the result of a collaborative process that involves an initial group of managers coming together to identify common goals or threats that are best addressed through experience sharing and cooperation.*” (Mudford and Besançon 2022).

SPAW-RAC led a bottom-up approach to create this network, first by reaching out all the SPAW-listed protected areas managers. The bilateral interviewed confirmed a strong interest of the managers in the creation of the network, and revealed the first themes of shared interest, such as Sargassum, sustainable financing, connectivity, marine mammals, visitors, surveillance, local communities, climate change, and standard monitoring.

After securing fundings, SPAW-RAC organized a first in-person workshop with the objectives of defining a strategic vision, goals, institutional structure, topics of interest for the network and conducting a first technical session on management plan.

This three-day workshop brought together 24 protected areas managers from 13 territories who shared their individual challenges and motivations. Doing so, they defined their convergence and differences in a process led through collective intelligence.

RESULTS

The members of the network spent time to define themselves as a network, think of their convictions, the activities that would bring them together, as well as the unique of contributing to the network convictions. This led to a proposed purpose for the SPAW-listed protected areas managers network, phrased as: “*We are an empowering body committed to finding solutions that addresses areas of concern within protected areas, through collective intelligence*”.

Thinking of desirable future, the network thought of four (4) main strategic areas and determined specific objectives for each areas: *ensuring political involvement in the action, raising community awareness, ensuring financial stability, sharing strategy & results.*

CONCLUSION

This first workshop enabled the network members to make strong connections with their peers and share their commitment and passion for protecting the Caribbean marine environment.

A provisional roadmap was drawn up, which will enable the network to focus on various subjects of shared interest, including the development of standardized monitoring in the region.

In parallel to this first stage in the creation of this network, the SPAW-RAC is making a regional effort to unify a common vision and common objectives across other Caribbean MPA networks, to avoid duplication of effort, help influence the global political agenda and enhance the regional technical and financial capacity of MPAs.

KEYWORDS: network of managers, protected areas, Caribbean, SPAW protocol.

LITERATURE CITED

Mudford T. and Besançon C., 2022, Guidelines and best practices for MPA manager networks, Final report, MEDPAN, 54 p.