



## *The North American Marine Protected Areas Network... doing together what cannot be done alone*

“...these shores, so different in their nature and in the inhabitants they support, are made one by the unifying touch of the sea.”

Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea*, 1955

### **Why is a North American MPA Network needed?**

From the Sea of Cortés with its deep canyons, nutrient-rich upwellings and high levels of endemism, to the high range tidal zone and Gully Canyon of the Greater Gulf of Maine; and from the North West Caribbean where the second largest barrier reef in the world is found, to the 20,000 km of bays and inlets, upwelling zones and inland drainage systems of the Pacific North West, North America is home to unique and important shared marine environments. It is also home to a great number of shared marine species – such as the Leatherback Turtle, Bluefin Tuna and Pacific Gray Whale that migrate thousands of kilometers, moving through country, state/provincial/territorial borders without hesitation. Hence, be it through shared species or ecosystems, the marine environments of Canada, Mexico and the United States are **intricately linked**. Accordingly, **action or inaction on one side of a border, will have consequences on the living organisms and systems of another**.

Although many conservation efforts and sustainable development initiatives exist at present, they generally work independent of each other. **Unless these efforts are coordinated, species numbers will continue to dwindle and ecosystem integrity will continue to be at risk**. The successful conservation of the North American seascapes, therefore, requires collaborative action from all three countries and from a wide array of sectors of society. With this in mind, in 1999 the North American MPA Network was created.

### **Who are we?**

Presently the North American MPA Network, formed under the auspices of the **Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)**, includes **over 250 stakeholders** from the trinational, national, state/provincial/territorial and local levels, from governmental and non-governmental organizations, local community as well as indigenous groups, the private sector, and academia. ***We work together in a trinational, multi-sectoral partnership to enhance conservation of North American biodiversity... doing together what cannot be done alone.***

### **What are we doing?**

The North American MPA Network seeks to enhance and strengthen protection of marine biodiversity in North America by...

- protecting critical marine and coastal habitats and North American biodiversity by sharing effective conservation approaches and by developing cross-cutting conservation initiatives;
- enhancing collaboration among the three countries to address common challenges inherent to the protection of marine biodiversity and to jointly prioritize conservation actions;
- building regional, national and international capacity to conserve critical marine and coastal habitats by sharing lessons learned, new technologies and management strategies, and by increasing access to relevant information; and
- facilitating the future design and establishment of a globally representative system of MPAs throughout North American and the world, as called for by IUCN.

### **How can you become involved?**

To become involved with the CEC's North American MPA Network, or get up-to-date information on our projects, including related announcements and publications, please visit the CEC and Marinet web pages or contact us.

<http://www.cec.org>

<http://www.orchestrabycrossdraw.com/marinet>

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*“No matter who we are, no matter where we live or how we make a living, the oceans touch all of our lives. They sustain us, nourish us, inspire us.”*

Judith Gradwohl and Peter Benchley, Ocean Planet, 1995

## North American MPA Network Current Initiatives

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The CEC is focusing its stewardship of the NA MPA Network in a variety of ways. It is supporting the development of common tools, as well as the identification of trinational conservation priorities (species and habitats). It is also helping to develop complementary mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of MPAs. Moreover, it is ensuring that communication among stakeholders, the network of MPAs, and the institutional framework, which provides leadership and coordination in the region, are strengthened and effective. While some of the activities of the NA MPA Network have a North American-wide focus, others focus on the sub-region of the Pacific Coast of North America, also known as the Baja California-Golfo de California to Bering Sea (B2B) region.

### ***Developing Common Tools***

#### **Mapping Marine and Estuarine Ecosystems of North America**

Drawing upon and bringing together existing work in the three countries, this initiative seeks to identify and coordinate the development of a marine and estuarine ecosystem classification system to be incorporated into a North American GIS-based map. Presently, a trinational task force is developing a "straw man" of levels I-III. In March 2002, this proposed mapping scheme will be presented, reviewed and modified in a tri-national workshop.

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#### **CEC-WCPA/North America Marine Working Group Web Tool – Marinet**

[www.orchestrabycrossdraw.com/marinet](http://www.orchestrabycrossdraw.com/marinet)

[NA\\_mpa\\_news@mail.orchestrabycrossdraw.com](mailto:NA_mpa_news@mail.orchestrabycrossdraw.com)

Given the overlapping membership and goals of the CEC North American Marine Protected Areas Network and the North American Marine Working Group of the IUCN/WCPA, the two groups agreed to work together to address MPA issues in North America. A joint collaborative web tool – Marinet [www.crossdraw.com/marinet](http://www.crossdraw.com/marinet) and listserv [NA\\_mpa\\_news@mail.orchestrabycrossdraw.com](mailto:NA_mpa_news@mail.orchestrabycrossdraw.com) – was created to facilitate communications and provide a vehicle for members of the NA/Marine IUCN-WCPA Working Group and the CEC NA MPA Network to inform each other about important MPA related documents, events, issues, etc. All are invited to contribute information about related news and events.

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## **North American Portal for Marine Conservation**

In coordination with the CEC's North American Biodiversity Information Network (NABIN) Portal, the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP), Canada's National Atlas, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) (North America Marine), and other international initiatives, governmental and NGO partners, the NA MPA Network is working to develop a Marine Protected Areas web-based information management tool for MPA practitioners, NGOs, decision makers, academics and other users. This visual, geographic information system (GIS)- and collaborative web-based tool will:

- facilitate communications and provide a vehicle for members of the North American MPA Network to inform each other about important marine conservation-related documents, events and issues;
- allow access to and query capability for different North American MPA inventory databases, providing information on the essential elements of North American MPA projects;
- and coordinate with the Management Effectiveness Clearinghouse to compile site-level MPA management effectiveness results to illustrate important trends, and valuable lessons-learned about MPAs across broader geographic scales, including networks of entire ecological regions.

The project is currently in its scoping phase (in terms of content and web design) and a prototype is being developed based on feedback received from MPA managers and decision-makers.

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## ***Developing Common Priorities***

### **MSCCC**

Through this initiative, governments, NGOs and marine conservation scientists are working together to develop a list of marine migratory and transboundary species of trinational importance at risk. To identify the species, a workshop was held to build consensus on the methodology to be used for identification (Monterey Workshop, May 2001). The results of the meeting can be found on Marinet at <http://www.orchestrabycrossdraw.com/marinet>. Since the workshop, the Parties have had a series of discussions to develop and apply fine-scale criteria to identify marine species of common concern and are presently in their final stages of discussions. Once the species are identified, a report on the MSCCC will be developed, describing the status of the species and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

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## Identifying Priority Areas for B2B

This initiative seeks to identify the highest priority areas to protect in the Exclusive Economic Zone off the West Coast of Canada, Mexico and the US—an essential first step towards establishing a network of marine protected areas along the Pacific Coast of North America. The priority areas map will focus the attention of all players on the resources that most deserve protection, serving as a means of catalyzing viable systems of marine protected areas from Baja California to the Bering Sea. To produce the map, a strategy building session, involving marine conservation NGOs, governmental agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and fisherman's organizations, was held to build consensus on the methodology to be used for identifying priority areas (Monterey workshop, May 2001). The results of the meeting can be found on Marinet <<http://www.orchestrabycrossdraw.com/marinet>>. Presently the best available scientific data and traditional ecological knowledge are being compiled to be used as a basis for identifying the priority areas. A workshop is being planned for late summer 2002 to define the final areas.

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## Developing Conservation Targets for and Indicators of MPA Effectiveness

### Marine Conservation Targets and Indicators

This initiative involves two phases. First, during a workshop held May 2001, the development of a generic framework to gauge management effectiveness was initiated. These results are being incorporated into broader practices focused on employing effectiveness measures in the successful management of MPAs. Second, while program-specific measures are being designed around the world, this initiative is seizing the opportunity to craft a comprehensive, web-based information management system that will compile these site-level effectiveness results to illustrate important trends, and valuable lessons-learned about MPAs across broader geographic scales, including entire regions (Clearinghouse on Management Effectiveness). It is being developed in close coordination with the MPA Inventory and the CEC's North American Biodiversity Information Network (NABIN).

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## Linking it together

### Integrated Management for the North American MPA Network

In the *Final Report on the North American Marine Protected Areas Network Workshop* (La Paz, Mexico, November 1999), a series of action plan items were identified to move towards the future design and establishment of a system of linked MPAs throughout North America. As can be seen, work has begun on various aspects of the development of this network. Elements are now at a stage where they are converging to generate a 'vision' for integrated management for the NA MPA network: (a) the Marine and Estuarine Ecological Regions Mapping project is characterizing, in part, *the framework*; (b) the Marine Species of Common Conservation Concern initiative is defining, in part, *the what*; (c) the Priority Areas work is recognizing *the where*; and (d) the Management Effectiveness work is outlining *the how well*. What we are missing is *the how*—the tools that glue these pieces together. As yet, however, there has not been a thorough assessment of what tools are available, could be developed, nor consensus on how they should be linked together for continental cooperative conservation. This initiative seeks to do just that. Specifically, it will

### *Integrated Management for the North American MPA Network (cont.)*

- define the goals and objectives of integrated management for the NA MPA Network;
- identify existing theories, models and mechanisms for bilateral and multilateral networks, with emphasis on initiatives underway in North America;
- develop a more comprehensive understanding of the available MPA tools (e.g. policies, management regimes, regulations etc.) from the three countries, including processes for MPA establishment, jurisdictional extent and potential time-lines;
- identify other types of management approaches that would contribute to the conservation of the ecological linkages of the MPA network;
- based on the goals of the NA MPA Network, and the work done through other elements of the Action Plan (e.g. MSCCC, Ecological Regions Mapping, Priority Areas), identify potential criteria for assessing priorities areas for the NA Network; and
- identify other networks and the means to link to initiatives adjacent to NA (eg – Caribbean initiative) and to the IUCN’s Globally representative system of MPAs.

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### ***Developing Local Capacity***

#### **North American MPA Managers’/Practitioners’ Exchange**

The CEC is presently organising exchanges of directors (including managers, and practitioners in the case of Canada) from MPAs throughout North America. Through the exchanges, MPA directors will have a chance to go through a typical peer MPA director’s day to identify:

- common obstacles and issues,
- needs and opportunities,
- tools and mechanisms for collaboration, as well as
- commonalities in terms of species, habitats and practices.

Consequently, they will learn about mutual management opportunities and challenges that MPA directors throughout North America face day-to-day. They will also identify best practices for dealing with these issues. Moreover, MPA directors throughout North America will develop important ties with their peers that will enable them to be more efficient and effective in protecting the continent’s interconnected marine environments and associated migratory and transboundary species.

For each day of the exchange, the MPA directors will cover topics such as: administration, monitoring, evaluation, surveillance, enforcement, services and activities, as well as community involvement. Each MPA director will have the responsibility of completing a workbook/log for each of his or her exchanges. The results will then be compiled to: 1) identify common priorities for management capacity building and training, and 2) develop a MPA Director’s tool kit. The exchange is being organised in coordination with the B2B Managers’ Meeting (see below).

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### **Baja California to Bering Sea Marine Conservation Initiative**

The CEC is partnering with the Baja California to Bering Sea (B2B) Marine Conservation Initiative to bring together non-government organizations, agencies, scientists, stakeholders, and interested individuals to help restore and conserve the unique biodiversity and productivity of the Pacific Coast of North America through a linked network of marine protected areas. Among other goals, the B2B Initiative strives to build the long-term institutional support for the network and is working closely with the CEC on areas of common interest. Over the past year, the B2B participants have developed a common vision and mission, and identified the key components of a strategic plan. In order to facilitate communication among participants a listserv has been established, and a B2B website is in development that will be linked to the North American Marine Website. In 2002, the B2B Marine Conservation Initiative is coordinating public opinion research on oceans and protected areas, and, in conjunction with the NA MPA Network, will be organizing a managers' workshop for the B2B region. This workshop will bring together managers of existing MPAs in the B2B region from Canada, Mexico and the United States, as well as officials working on the development of new MPAs in the region to share their experience in the B2B region. Presently, a background report is being developed for the workshop that describes the issues facing MPAs in the B2B region, and examples of how practitioners are approaching these opportunities and challenges.

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### **Sustainable Whale Watching in MPAs along the B2B Coast**

The NA MPA Network, in coordination with the Environment, Economy and Trade program of the CEC, is looking at ways to bring the private sector together with conservation-minded organizations to develop win-win scenarios. In 2001, a market study of North American sustainable tourism was conducted. This study will serve as a tool to educate mainstream tourist industries/activities about the benefits of sustainable tourism. The groups also jointly organized a workshop (La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico, March 2001) on whale watching and MPAs in the B2B region to jointly develop a market-based strategy for sustainable tourism to support the conservation of shared species and critical habitat in the B2B coastal region. As a result of the workshop, a report is being developed that outlines recommendations on how the three countries can work together cross-sectorally on sustainable tourism and whale watching in the B2B region. Also as a result of the workshop, in coordination with the Baja California to Bering Sea (B2B) Marine Conservation Initiative and NOAA, the NA MPA Network and the EET program are fostering and enhancing a dialogue and partnership among regional leaders, focusing primarily on the development of a Sustainable Whale Watching Toolkit. The Toolkit will help reach out to tourists and local communities about sustainable tourism practices and the importance of MPAs, and will contain components such as common guidelines for sustainable whale watching in MPAs, as well as a Sustainable Whale Watching Fact Sheet, both for the B2B region.

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