

Creating Endowments for Sustainable Funding of MPAs: Practitioners Describe the Opportunities and Challenges

There are multiple sources of financing for MPAs, including domestic government budgets, international assistance, visitor fees, and more. While each source plays a vital role for sites worldwide, it can also be subject to fluctuation. Domestic budgets can be cut. International donors can change their area of interest. Tourism rates can rise and fall. These variations create instability for MPA management.

An ideal component of sustainable finance strategies would be a tool that ensures a steady, or even rising, stream of funds over the long term. The tool that perhaps comes closest to this ideal is an endowment. In an endowment, funds are invested and the earnings on those invested funds are spent on program activities. Meanwhile the capital in the investment remains fully invested, thus generating additional income year after year. While not risk-free (they involve investments, after all), endowments can provide a level of financial sustainability for MPAs that is hard to match. This month, *MPA News* examines this tool, including how to establish endowments, cases where they exist for MPAs, and what their main challenges are.

Benefits of endowments

“Endowments are useful for several reasons,” says John Adams, senior vice president for investments at UBS Financial Services, a global finance firm. Adams heads a group within UBS that manages the long-term investment of conservation endowments for income and growth. “First, endowments create financial reserves that can help meet budgets during unexpected hard times,” he says. “This allows an organization that has worked hard to hire a good staff to retain talented people during a lean period of funding.” Second, says Adams, an endowment will normally provide, from investment income, part or all of the funding needed to meet the budget of the organization. The larger the endowment is, the less an MPA manager has to search for other sources of funding.

“Finally,” he says, “the endowment creates a real psychology of permanence” that extends throughout the MPA, including staff, the community, and donors. “If everyone knows that there is funding in perpetuity for the organization, the future of the protected area is in far better shape,” says Adams.

Examples of MPA-related endowments in practice or in the planning stage include:

- **Protected Natural Areas Fund (FANP), Mexico** — Established in 1997 by a grant from the Global Environment Facility, the FANP annually contributes hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest to several Mexican MPAs. The FANP is managed by a private institution — the Mexican Nature Conservation Fund — which aims to build the endowment to US \$300 million by the year 2050, through further contributions from donors and reinvestment of some of the accrued interest. *MPA News* profiled the FANP in 2003 (*MPA News* 5:5). It is described in further detail at www.conservationfinance.org/Workshops_Conferences/WPC/WPC_documents/Apps_01_Gonzalez_v2.pdf.
- **Endowment for Aleipata and Safata MPAs, Samoa** — Established in 2003 with ST 20,000 (US \$8600) that had been earned by these two MPAs from tourism and other fees, this endowment demonstrates that the tool does not have to be initiated by outside donors. The endowment was expanded in March 2008 with a donation of ST 240,000 (US \$104,000) from Conservation International (CI) and the Coral Reef Initiative in the South Pacific (CRISP). The expanded endowment is expected to contribute 30% of the annual funds necessary to manage these community-based MPAs. It is managed in a trust fund overseen by a local board of community leaders, advised by international financial experts. More information is at www.conservation.org/newsroom/pressreleases/Pages/funds-awarded-to-samoas-largest-marine.aspx.
- **Endowment for Phoenix Islands Protected Area, Kiribati** — Also initiated with funding from CI (US \$2.5 million in this case), this endowment is expected to grow with matching funds from private and public institutions, as described in *MPA News* 9:8. The endowment will serve multiple functions, including supporting management costs for this enormous 410,500-km² MPA and compensating the government of Kiribati for lost revenue suffered from cancellation of fishing licenses. It will be overseen by

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a board of managers including personnel from CI, the Kiribati government, New England Aquarium, and other entities.

Setting up an endowment

In establishing an endowment, there must be an institution in place to administer it: this institution is known as a conservation trust fund, or CTF. In general, CTFs manage money that can be used only for a specified purpose, and are overseen and controlled by an independent board of directors. A CTF can take any of a number of forms depending on the legal code of the country where it is established (including as a “nonprofit corporation”, “foundation”, or “trust”, among other forms). A soon-to-be-published review of conservation trust funds, conducted by the Conservation Finance Alliance (www.conservationfinance.org), describes 53 CTFs around the world, mostly terrestrial.

Conservation trust funds do not have to feature endowments. A CTF may be funded only with a simple operating fund for use in the current fiscal year budget. Alternatively it may have a “sinking fund”: an account to be spent down to zero over a particular period of time. Combinations of different types of funds are also possible.

However, says Adams, an endowment should be considered for any CTF with a permanent mission, such as administration of a protected area. “The only negative element is that it often takes years of hard work to establish a meaningful endowment fund,” he says.

The hard work consists of several steps. “Prior to establishing a protected area endowment, a CTF should develop adequate administrative capacity and have a well-defined business plan,” says Adams. He notes that several large conservation organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF, and Conservation International provide technical assistance to CTFs in achieving these goals. “Once organizational and financial goals are defined, budgets can then be put into place,” he says. “This allows an evaluation of whether available funding sources are adequate to meet the annual budget. If there is a shortfall, the priority should be placed on meeting basic needs, not establishing an endowment. Most conservation trust funds begin with a large mission and limited financial resources.”

If it is feasible to begin work on establishing an endowment, says Adams, the current major donors for the CTF should be consulted. Are they willing to put up full or partial funding to assure the permanent financial stability of the organization? “At this time the donors will want to have progress reports and will look carefully at business-plan and budget forecasts,” he says. “They will also look carefully at the administrative capacity of the organization. In working with the initial donors that helped to establish the CTF, a plan for the long-term development of an endowment can be organized. This often will include widening the field of major donors, with the initial donor serving as a catalyst.”

Adams notes that conservation trust funds sometimes include forming an endowment as part of the initial funding plan for the organization, and a small set are established immediately with endowments. Without exception, he says, all of the CTFs he has encountered have continued to raise additional funds after the initial investment.

Challenges for endowments

Scott Smith is a senior policy advisor with the Global Marine Team of The Nature Conservancy, and has long been involved in conservation finance. He coordinated a workshop at the World Parks Congress in 2003 on building portfolios for sustainable financing of MPA networks (*MPA News* 5:5). He says the challenges involved in setting up CTFs and endowments should not be understated.

“Establishing a conservation trust fund is a substantial undertaking,” says Smith. “A successful trust fund needs not only funding, but respected and transparent governing bodies with a mix of private and public sector representation; capable staff and operating procedures to oversee its programs; and financial expertise to guide investment of its capital and assure sound management of its grants. In many places, especially in remote areas of developing countries where many MPAs are located, these are difficult to find.”

In terms of establishing an endowment, he adds, there is an additional hurdle: making the argument that a relatively large amount of funds should be set aside for the long term instead of spending it on today’s needs. “For these reasons, I believe that it is not effective to think about creating trust funds or endowments for individual MPAs,” says Smith. “The technical, financial, and organizational skills are usually just not available to create and operate a trust fund successfully at this level.”

Instead, he says, it may be more effective and efficient to create trust funds to support a number of protected areas, such as a network of ecologically connected MPAs or a national system of MPAs. “Defining the scope of a trust fund to include multiple MPAs allows pooling of

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Additional sources of information on conservation trust funds, endowments, and MPA financing in general

Evaluation of Experience with Conservation Trust Funds (1999, Global Environment Facility) www.gefweb.org/M&E/Eval_TF/eval_all.pdf

Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas: A Global Review of Challenges and Options (2006, IUCN) <http://app.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAG-013.pdf>

Financing Marine Conservation: A Menu of Options (2004, WWF) www.worldwildlife.org/what/howwedoit/conservationfinance/WWFBinaryitem7140.pdf


resources generated by the more charismatic or accessible MPAs," he says. Those resources can then benefit other components of the network that are unable to generate sufficient revenue to cover their own costs. "This also allows trust funds to program scarce resources for the activities that produce the greatest benefits (as defined by the trust fund's mission and objectives) across a network or system. In so doing, they can provide some healthy, performance-based competition for funding."

Smith offers these tips for practitioners who want to create a conservation trust fund or endowment:

(1) It is important to have a strong, respected, committed group, mostly from outside government, who will

lead the establishment of the fund, be its advocates, and become the core of its initial governing body.

(2) It is important to begin a program slowly, gain and build on experience, and in the process establish a reputation for competent, objective, transparent, and results-oriented programming.

(3) If you have a donor who is interested in contributing to an endowment, invest these funds wisely and in a relatively conservative manner, based on sound financial principles and advice. In good years, when returns exceed the average expected returns on investment, be sure to reinvest the surplus rather than artificially expanding programs with the windfall. 

Letter to the Editor

Dear MPA News:

Upon reading the April 2008 issue of *MPA News*, I was surprised, if not somewhat dismayed, at the unduly rosy description you gave of the Red Sea Marine Peace Park (RSMPP). I conducted research on this transboundary "marine protected area" for my doctoral dissertation. I would characterize this as a proposed protected area that unfortunately has had neither the funding nor the political and institutional commitment it needs.

For my research, I applied a method of spatial multi-criteria analysis on the entire park area for the purposes of developing a proposed protective zoning plan (see *Ocean and Coastal Management*, 50[7], pp. 499-522). My impressions were that very little had been accomplished other than a number of academic articles touting the so-called cooperative management and a report summarizing the results of the monitoring program, published in 2003.

By 2005, when I met with Israelis and Jordanians on the subject, the cooperative management between the two sides was virtually non-existent. I spoke with many people — residents of the city of Eilat on the Israeli side and Jordanians in Aqaba, including fisherman and businesspeople working in tourism — who had never heard of the Red Sea Marine Peace Park. The two real protected areas that comprise the RSMPP and predated its designation — Aqaba Marine Park on the Jordanian side and the Coral Reef Nature Reserve on the Israeli side — are two completely separate and limited entities.


Considerable funding was originally allocated to develop the peace park by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). A research team of Israelis and Jordanians conducted joint monitoring, beginning in 1999. The original program had many very positive elements, such as an educational component to raise local awareness of the need to ensure the continued

existence of the remarkable Gulf of Aqaba coral reefs. However, other than the joint monitoring that was completed by 2003, it appears that none of the other elements are being implemented.

The RSMPP is a great idea. However, it needs much more substance than it currently has to be touted as a success or an exemplar. I will rush to applaud any effort to make it one, but in the meantime I do hope there are transboundary MPAs that function as much in practice as in concept.

Michelle Portman

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Editor's note: Michael Crosby, who played a leadership role in planning the RSMPP joint research program in the 1990s when he was with the (US) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, responds: "There are immense political, social and cultural forces in the Gulf of Aqaba region with which all participants in the RSMPP have contended on a daily basis. The participants of the RSMPP should be applauded for their accomplishments through countless periods of regional turmoil over the years. That said, Michelle Portman is correct that the RSMPP has had neither the political nor funding support it needs. More support is necessary to build on the goodwill and real partnerships that continue today between marine scientists and resource managers of Aqaba and Eilat. The US should be a leader in facilitating this effort, ideally in partnership with the EU, World Bank and private foundations. With a small amount of support, an apolitical Gulf of Aqaba Research Consortium could be built that would include partnerships between all four countries bordering the Gulf of Aqaba (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia)." Crosby, who is now at the University of Hawaii'i, is working to build an endowment to fund such a consortium. For more information, e-mail him at mpcrosby@hawaii.edu. 

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MPA Perspective A National MPA Network for Canada by 2012:

How Do We Get There from Here?

By Sabine Jessen

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has assessed the factors delaying Canada's progress toward its international commitment to establishing a network of MPAs by 2012, and has identified opportunities to reach the 2012 goal. Our findings are detailed in the report *Challenges and Opportunities in Progress towards Canada's Commitment to a National Network of MPAs by 2012* (see box).

The primary source of information for our study was interviews with people working on MPAs in every region of Canada, with a focus on an "inside government" perspective. As a result, more than half of the interviewees were in federal agencies, with 13% from provincial agencies and the rest from environmental NGOs. Regardless of the affiliation of interviewees, the diagnoses of challenges and opportunities were remarkably similar.

Given the limited progress to date and the relatively ineffective existing process to establish MPAs in Canada, meeting the commitment of a national network of MPAs by 2012 will be a major challenge for Canada. Serious issues of leadership and governance must urgently be addressed if Canada is to ensure the conservation of biodiversity in ocean ecosystems.

Canada has made both national and international commitments to establish marine protected areas. At the international level these commitments include the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), World Parks Congress (2003) and Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). At the national level, these commitments date from 1992, and include: Canada's Ocean Strategy (2002); Canada's Oceans Action Plan (2004); and federal budgets (2005, 2007).


Canada has a suite of legal tools that enable the establishment of different types of protected areas in our oceans, including marine protected areas under the *Canada Oceans Act*, national marine conservation areas under the *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*, marine wildlife areas under the *Canada Wildlife Act*, and migratory bird sanctuaries under the *Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuaries Act*.

Canada has responsibility for a vast ocean territory of

5.87 million km², equivalent to more than half of the country's land mass and one of the largest EEZs in the world. So far, including the April 2008 designation of Bowie Seamount MPA, about 33,000 km² is currently in some form of federal marine protected area status. However, while this may appear to be a significant area, it amounts to only 0.56% of Canada's total ocean area. Given that Canada has been working on MPAs for over 20 years, there should be more to show!

With well less than 1% of its marine area protected, Canada's MPA system remains among the least advanced compared to other countries' efforts, as well as compared to our own land-based protected areas system which is now over 8%. In a recent Yale and Columbia Universities environmental performance index, Canada received a score of 5 out of 100 percentage points for its establishment of MPAs, while the average score for other countries in the same income group was 38.6 (see <http://epi.yale.edu/Canada>). This is certainly not the leadership position on oceans that Canada has attempted to stake since it was the first country to pass a comprehensive *Oceans Act* in 1997.

Currently, the approach in Canada to the establishment of MPAs is on a site-by-site basis, and it generally takes between 6 and 10 years from idea to final designation for each MPA. The pace of MPA establishment in Canada was commonly described by interviewees in our study as disappointingly slow.

CPAWS has identified a number of recommendations for Canada to achieve a national network of MPAs. Key among these is the need for high-level political direction and a plan for achieving the 2012 target, including timelines and milestones to ensure accountability at both the political and bureaucratic levels. Canada has an excellent opportunity, through current and future ocean-planning processes convening governments and stakeholders on each coast, to ensure that a key deliverable is a network of MPAs. In addition to developing more effective coordination among federal agencies, interim protection of identified areas of high biodiversity is needed while efforts are made to address the cumbersome and lengthy designation processes. Canada can learn from international best practice for implementing MPA networks, and should move to a network approach from the current site-by-site approach to ensure that marine biodiversity is conserved in its oceans. Overall, it remains a concern that oceans issues are not a high priority for the Government of Canada. A national-level dialogue on oceans, including MPAs, is urgently needed. 

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The CPAWS report *Challenges and Opportunities in Progress towards Canada's Commitment to a National Network of MPAs by 2012*, produced with funding support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, is available at http://cpaws.org/files/report_mythandmadness.PDF

An accompanying document, *Myth and Madness: Conquering the tragedy of marine protection in Canada*, presents a summary of key findings and recommendations from the report, and is at http://cpaws.org/files/booklet_mythandmadness.PDF

MPA Perspective Integrating a Community-Based MPA Network at the *Barangay* Level in the Philippines

By Jan-Willem van Bochove

Near Padre Burgos, a coastal municipality in the province of Southern Leyte, Philippines, fish stocks have declined dramatically in recent years. Although local reefs boast high coral cover and diversity, they support low numbers of commercially targeted fish. Pressure on marine resources is enormous, with exponential growth in the human population: the average family size is eight or more individuals. Fishers in super-light vessels, frustrated with disappointing catches close to home, have been venturing farther out under the cover of night to target the remaining large fish in the area.

Six years ago, to tackle these issues, the provincial government invited Coral Cay Conservation (CCC) — a UK-based conservation NGO — to assess Southern Leyte's coastal resources. Together with the Provincial Environmental and Natural Resources Management Office (PENRMO), CCC would develop a coastal resource management plan.

In addition to community awareness campaigns and local capacity-building, CCC viewed the creation of a network of community-based no-take MPAs as an important step in this process. In the Philippines, local-level politics govern the placement of marine protected areas, and hundreds of community-based MPAs have been designated over the past three decades. Unfortunately, in the case of many of these sites, poor management and a lack of community involvement have given them a reputation among fishermen of being a hindrance rather than a practical solution for dealing with declining fish catches.

To change this perception, CCC invited municipal representatives and local leaders on a trip to an MPA on Apo Island, in the province of Negros Oriental. The excursion gave these officials a chance to share experiences with the local Apo leader and get a first-hand glimpse of this successful community-based MPA. It sparked the enthusiasm and encouragement needed to help pave the way to community-managed, and community-supported, no-take zones back home.


Upon their return to Padres Burgos, the officials shared what they had witnessed on their trip to Apo. It did not take long to put together a plan to establish four MPAs, with one sited in each of four local communities, or *barangays*, in the municipality. CCC organized workshops to outline the potential benefits to fisherfolk. Lengthy discussions about the costs and benefits of MPAs were held between the barangay captains and their people. Barangay captains control local-level

politics, and the success or demise of coastal resource management on the barangay level hinges on a captain's support, vision, and charisma.

Proposed locations of the MPAs were carefully coordinated with the community to avoid placement over important fishing grounds or boat passageways, while targeting the areas of healthiest reef — both to facilitate rapid stock recovery and provide good diving opportunities to attract tourism. CCC volunteers conducted scientific surveys to establish baseline data and, later, annual data on the abundance of fish and general reef health. These data were presented to the community through simple bar charts and pie graphs. (Regular meetings with barangay representatives and fisherfolk are an essential way to show support to their efforts and address any issues that may arise.) The barangays eventually designated all four MPAs.

The MPAs cover about one-fifth of the Padre Burgos coastline. Local dive resorts have shown their support through annual monetary contributions to support guardhouses in the MPAs, and fuel costs for a patrol boat. Divers are happy to support the communities' efforts by paying a \$1 dive fee.

Already the small network of MPAs in Padre Burgos has shown remarkable success: biomass of targeted fish species has increased in the MPAs, as has live hard coral cover. The number of divers visiting Padre Burgos has increased as well. The sites have helped create a new sense of awareness within the community — that there are solutions to an increasingly desperate situation. Other barangays are following their lead: on the nearby island of Limasawa, an 85-hectare MPA is set for designation. Communities are realizing that divers are prepared to pay for diving on well-managed reefs.

It has been said many times before that for an MPA to succeed, there needs to be significant community support. MPA establishment is relatively easy; the real challenge arises a year or two later when fishers have yet to see significant changes, or when a new barangay captain is installed who doesn't understand or support the MPA. It is important to continually provide support and share findings with these communities at meetings. For example, CCC organized a follow-up field trip in 2007 where the same municipal representatives from Padres Burgos were taken to urban MPAs of Mactan Island, in the province of Cebu. The group gathered ideas there on how to develop a better dive user-fee system for their MPAs and more cost-effective ways of management. 

Editor's note

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Notes & News

UK proposes network of MPAs

The UK government has released a draft Marine Bill that sets out plans for a new network of marine conservation zones around Britain's coast. The country aims to meet the goal of having an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs by 2012. Currently just 2.2% of UK waters are in MPAs, according to government figures. Environment Secretary Hilary Benn said, "Our proposals will raise protection and management of our seas to a new level, halting the decline in biodiversity to create clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse ocean and seas."

Release of the draft Marine Bill, which also includes a proposed marine planning system and other measures, is the latest in a series of steps taken by the government to revise its approach to ocean management. In 2007, the government released a white paper that introduced several of the proposals now included in the draft Marine Bill (*MPA News* 8:9). The draft Marine Bill is open for public comment until 26 June 2008, and is available at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/index.htm.

Australia gains jurisdiction over large seabed area

A United Nations commission has approved Australia's request for jurisdiction over an additional 2.5 million km² of its continental shelf, extending beyond the previous 200-nautical mile limit of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The added area is equal to five times the size of France. In an April 2008 decision, the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf confirmed the new outer limits of Australia's jurisdiction, providing the country with exclusive rights to what exists on the seabed there, including oil, gas, and biological resources.

Government officials expressed hope the extension would yield oil and gas reserves, but also noted that it offered opportunities for designating new MPAs. Last year, *MPA News* reported on the conservation implications of extended seabed jurisdictions in the context of the Arctic Ocean, where multiple nations have petitioned the UN for extended jurisdiction ("Before All the Ice Melts...", *MPA News* 9:2 and 9:3). More information on Australia's newly extended jurisdiction is available on the Geoscience Australia website at www.ga.gov.au/news/index.jsp#clcs.

MPA Spotlight: Bowie Seamount MPA, Canada


The Bowie Seamount Marine Protected Area in Canada provides an example of how negotiations among NGOs and resource users can help secure benefits for conservation and industry.

Designated in April 2008 by the Canadian government, the 6131-km² MPA off the country's west coast features what may be some of the most productive seamount habitat in the northeast Pacific: one of the MPA's three seamounts rises to within 25 meters of the surface. The site's high productivity has drawn the interest of conservationists in the past decade and, for even longer, the attention of the commercial fishing industry. The Bowie Seamount has been fished commercially since 1982.

Government efforts to designate an MPA around the site began in the late 1990s but stalled around 2002. Two years ago, interested in completing the planning process, conservation group WWF-Canada approached the main resource user — the Canadian Sablefish Association (CSA) — to explore opportunities to deliver a set of shared recommendations to the government. The bilateral discussions, held over two years, found agreement around a proposal for a multi-use site, with one zone

remaining open to commercial fishing but the remaining two zones closed. The two organizations' recommendations to the government unblocked the stalled process and formed an important part of the site's eventual regulations, available at <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/partIII/2008/20080430/pdf/g2-14209.pdf>. (In planning the MPA, the federal government also negotiated a joint management arrangement for the site with the government of the indigenous Haida Nation.)

CSA viewed its negotiation with WWF-Canada as a way to avoid a worst-case scenario. That is, a planning process without industry involvement might have resulted in a completely no-take MPA. "It is better to negotiate than to be evicted from the site completely," says Eric Wickham, who led the talks for CSA. "We got WWF to agree that responsible fishing was acceptable in the marine protected area. And we agreed to leave some areas unfished."

Michele Patterson of WWF-Canada says NGOs should look more often at "creative, risky, intuitive, out-of-the-box" conservation strategies. "Industry partnerships are one example of this," she says. "NGOs and resource users have the capacity to be good partners as long as relationships are built first, and if both feel that seeking solutions to a shared problem — even if for different reasons — is common ground to build on." 

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The Canadian government press release on designation of the Bowie Seamount MPA is at www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/media/infocus/2008/20080421_e.htm.