



International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas

MISSION STATEMENT

The International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, ICMMPA, is an informal group of international experts dedicated to the conservation of marine mammals and their habitats. Members of ICMMPA (pronounced eye-COM-pa) represent various geographic regions, as well as a wide range of expertise within the fields of marine mammal biology, ecology and the design and management of marine protected areas and other marine planning initiatives. Members include scientists, representatives of governmental agencies and NGOs.

Overall objective

ICMMPA is an international cross-boundary effort to promote, develop and maintain protected areas to conserve marine mammals and their habitats, as well as to ensure that marine mammals are well represented and included in larger marine protected areas, ocean zoning and marine spatial planning initiatives. The group convenes conferences for networking and disseminates knowledge and tools for establishing and managing MMPAs.

Specific goals

- Organize conferences on MMPAs incorporating both a global and a regional focus taking into account the cultural perspectives and needs of local constituents with the aim to enhance the conservation of marine mammals and their habitats. Relevant tasks are to:
 - ✓ use conferences to facilitate networking among scientist and managers of different MMPAs;
 - ✓ evaluate the performance and outcome of conferences with the aim of improving future conferences.
- Facilitate evaluation of the effectiveness of existing MMPAs and MMPA networks on the conservation of marine mammals and their habitat, and learn how the performance of MMPAs can be improved, with the relevant tasks to:
 - ✓ evaluate the role of research in the design, management, and periodic review of marine mammal PAs;
 - ✓ collate and disseminate information on tools available for evaluating the effectiveness of existing and future MMPAs;
 - ✓ support the development and use of “rapid assessment techniques” to provide information to managers regarding existing and future MMPAs,
 - ✓ provide advice to help improve effectiveness of international and national sanctuaries as real MMPAs, or as zoned conservation areas;

- ✓ identify the potential use of adaptive management protocols in establishing new MMPAs or as part of the research programs of existing MPAs;
- ✓ encourage the integration of the cultural knowledge, needs and perspectives of local constituents with the design and implementation of MMPAs.
- Enhance the conservation of marine mammal habitats by assisting in the establishment of new MMPAs, and by supporting management efforts of existing MMPAs. Relevant tasks are:
 - ✓ assist in the identification and description of critical marine mammal habitats;
 - ✓ determine when MMPAs are not the best tool for a particular management need;
 - ✓ explore the use of MMPAs as centers for research, innovation and creativity in terms of solving marine mammal conservation problems and endeavor to share that knowledge as widely as possible.
- Establish networks among existing and/or future MMPAs and facilitate communication and networking among MMPA managers, constituent groups and regulatory agencies. Relevant tasks are to:
 - ✓ incorporate education/outreach/ocean literacy programs into the operating protocols of MMPAs and study the effectiveness of such programs should be evaluated;
 - ✓ identify and disseminate information on the primary management strategies and tools available to managers (e.g., enforcement, monitoring, community-based management and education, stranding and research programs);
 - ✓ examine the possibility of integrating international and national sanctuaries with existing and future MPAs and sanctuaries in national waters to help form networks;
 - ✓ facilitate the use of sentinel cetaceans and other marine mammal species to promote the establishment and management of MPAs, for the benefit of other marine life and the quality of marine ecosystems and overall health of the oceans;
 - ✓ promote the inclusion and integration of protected areas for preserving heritage resources related to the history of whaling (and other marine mammal exploitation) into MMPA networks and systems.
- Build competence and capacity in regions where legal frameworks and infrastructure to establish and maintain MMPAs are less well developed, by supporting the transfer of essential skills, resources and capacity to researchers and management staff. Essential tasks are to:
 - ✓ support participation from developing countries in the conferences;
 - ✓ develop a handbook for identifying critical marine mammal habitats, to provide guidance on establishing, enforcing, managing and evaluate MMPAs;
 - ✓ provide guidance on how to set up management plans for MPAs, including how to set management objectives, build consensus, and maintain functioning sanctuaries;
 - ✓ provide guidance on education/outreach/ocean literacy programs and how they should be incorporated into the operating protocols of marine mammal MPAs as well as recommend how the effectiveness of such programs should be evaluated.
- ICMMPA will actively seek partners to assist in the accomplishment of this ambitious mission statement.