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### **Third International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas Highlights Importance of Place and Size for Protected Areas**

The declaration of the first marine protected area, or MPA, for Bangladesh to safeguard Bryde's whales, tropical dolphins, sea turtles, and sharks was announced this week at the Third International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 3), in Adelaide, Australia. More than 100 delegates from over 20 countries around the globe gathered for the conference, a parallel event to the IUCN World Parks Congress, being held this week in Sydney. "Important Marine Mammal Areas - A Sense of Place, a Question of Size," was the theme of ICMMPA 3.

"Many large new MPAs designated by Pacific nations as well as the US and France have come on stream in the last few years," said Naomi McIntosh, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Pacific Islands Region and Chair of the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas. "They are presenting new challenges for management, but we also wanted to revisit the smaller areas and how they can help marine mammal conservation."

Also in a conference keynote and in two workshops, Erich Hoyt, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Research Fellow, announced a new tool for conservation — the Important Marine Mammal Area, or IMMA, which the Committee along with the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, have been developing.

"IMMAs are not MPAs," says Hoyt, co-chair of the new Task Force with Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara. "They are tools to identify and map all the areas that we *should* be paying attention to whether the result is an MPA, part of a network, a zone for marine spatial planning, or an area where whales are getting hit or being bothered by noise that could be zoned or given other protection measures. Putting a layer of IMMAs on the map keeps everyone honest."

"Worldwide, there are at least 700 existing or proposed MPAs for marine mammals in some 90 countries," McIntosh said, "the future of marine mammals reveals the future of the health of the ocean and the planet."

## **Notes for Editors:**

The International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas ([icmmpa.org](http://icmmpa.org)) provides an international forum for Marine Mammal Protected Area managers, scientists and educators to share common challenges and solutions in the protection and conservation of the world's marine mammals.

The conference held Panel discussions and workshop sessions leading to recommendations for improved marine mammal management, networking and approach to emerging threats.

Delegates represented marine mammal protected areas of every description, from small or remote locations to sophisticated globally recognized sites.

Other organizations represented at the conference included the International Union for Conservation of Nature Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, IFAW, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, SPREP the governments of Australia, France and Mexico including the South Australian Government.

During the conference, the French Marine Protected Agency announced a joint agreement for networking between the Agoa Sanctuary in the French Caribbean and the Saguenay – St. Lawrence Marine Park in Québec, Canada. Some humpbacks make the journey between the two parks every year. On the final day, the Government of Mexico's National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) announced that they would host the Fourth International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 4) in 2016.

The 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.