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Media Release

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Proceedings from 3rd International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 3 – Adelaide, Australia) Now Available

Proceedings from the International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 3) were released today, along with the formal announcement of a fourth conference to be held in Puerto Vallarta, México, Nov. 13-17, 2016. The 95-page publication includes summaries of the individual talks, discussions, workshops and side events.

ICMMPA 3 had two main goals (1) to highlight the challenges of place and size for protected areas that feature or include marine mammals, and (2) to explore the use of a new tool for conservation — the important marine mammal area, or IMMA, designation which the closely associated IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force has been developing.

The ICMMPA 3 Proceedings call for an enhanced mission for the Task Force and the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas to work with managers and communities to engage more stakeholders in marine mammal habitat protection and keep them engaged.

“Marine mammal protected areas, or MMPAs, can give the public a stake in what happens in the sea,” says ICMMPA Chair Naomi McIntosh, who is with NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and served as the former superintendent of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. “Indeed, without that involvement, it is difficult to create successful MMPAs.”

“With the prospect of work on the IMMAs, too,” says WDC research fellow Erich Hoyt, who edited the ICMMPA 3 Proceedings, “although the selection of such areas is seen as a scientific process, gaining acceptance and traction for IMMAs, in terms of using them as tools for conservation, will depend on connecting people with the ocean — not just nearshore waters but offshore waters and the great expanse of the high seas. We urgently need to build these connections.”

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The ICMMPA 3 Proceedings also contribute to the wide-ranging discussions on marine spatial planning (MSP), pointing to the need for applied and focused marine mammal research to be made available to planners and those practicing adaptive management, to fine-tune marine plans and adjust MPA borders and regulations over time.

“Innovative ways of collecting data are urgently needed,” says Tundi Agardy, Executive Director of the Washington, DC-based Sound Seas. The MSP workshop stressed the objective to use MSP to avoid marine mammal decline that might occur from uncontrolled activities “creating a sea of degradation in which MMPA islands of protection sit.”

The conference was co-hosted by the Australian Department of the Environment, South Australia Department of Environment, Water & Natural Resources, and Whale and Dolphin Conservation Australasia (WDC). Additional sponsors included the French MPA Agency (Agence des aires marine protégées), the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, Eulabor Institute, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas – (CONANP, SEMARNAT) from Mexico.

Additional regional sponsors, besides the Australian government, included the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

To learn more about the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, please visit: <http://icmmpa.org>. Conference proceedings for this and previous conferences can be found online by following the links, as well as news about the ICMMPA 4 conference to be held in Puerto Vallarta, México, Nov. 13-17, 2016.

For more information, to participate, or to become a sponsor for ICMMPA 4, please contact:

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