

MISSION STATEMENT

The WCPA/SSC Marine Mammal Protected Area Task Force (MMPATF) was launched at IMPAC3, Marseille, France, on 24 October 2013.

The MMPATF was created by the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA) and the WCPA Marine Vice Chair, with the support of the SSC Steering Committee and the co-chairs of the Marine Conservation Subcommittee of the SSC, to help provide a global profile and a stronger voice for the MMPA constituency within IUCN – thus heightening coordination of activities, and to provide a strong formal linkage between IUCN and ICMMPA's activities, including the series of international conferences on MMPAs held every three years (e.g., ICMMPA1, Maui, Hawaii, 2009; ICMMPA2, Martinique, 2011; ICMMPA3, Adelaide, Australia, 2014; ICMMPA4, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, 2016).

The creation of this task force acknowledges that marine mammal MPAs form some of the most iconic of all MPAs, that the species themselves have a very high resonance with people which is underplayed currently in IUCN WCPA, and that some areas of the ocean are disproportionately high in importance to marine mammals, based on reproduction, feeding, migration, and other vital activities¹. Many of these areas of value to marine mammals overlap with common threats. One tool that can be effective in conserving marine mammals and their habitats is to designate protected areas that specifically address those threats and have a clear marine mammal conservation objective. Our consideration of marine mammal protected areas includes both areas allocated specifically for marine mammals, as well as area-based conservation measures where important marine mammal habitat is included. Although they may range from tropical to polar, and cover shallow reefs to the high seas, these MMPAs often have common issues and threats (e.g., ship strikes, resource extraction, entanglements in fishery gear, noise) and face common constraints (monitoring, enforcement, funding) that may decrease their effectiveness and inhibit them from meeting management and conservation objectives. What's more, marine mammals often utilize large areas, spanning multiple countries, regions, and jurisdictions, and thus true conservation should consider the big picture, encompassing the entire range and life history of the marine mammals as well as global and regional threats to their existence. There are currently few international efforts dedicated to the promotion, utilization and effectiveness of spatial measures for conserving marine mammals and their habitats. In particular, areas of the open seas beyond national jurisdiction are essential to many marine mammals, and the MMPATF will provide policy input into the negotiations currently under way on this topic. The role of the new MMPATF is to combine the strengths of WCPA and SSC with ICMMPA's work within the growing global community of practice which includes managers, natural and social scientists, decision makers, donors and supporters, and other stakeholders, to accelerate action and to bridge the gap between social and natural scientists as well as between planners and practitioners.

¹ Marine mammals are here intended to include several species that spend some or all of their lives in freshwater habitats (e.g., river dolphins, manatees, and certain seals).

To do this the MMPATF will have the following Terms of Reference:

1. Objectives:

The main objective for the MMPATF is to facilitate mechanisms by which this “community of practice” can collaborate, share information and experience, access and disseminate knowledge and tools for establishing, monitoring, and managing MMPAs and promote effective spatial solutions and best practices for marine mammal conservation. More important, the MMPATF will bolster capacity within the MMPA community by exposing it to state-of-the-art tools from the wider MPA and place-based conservation world. In doing this, the MMPATF helps to enable the implementation of global MPA targets and agreements. Simultaneously this will greatly enhance opportunities for cooperation, communication, exposure of related products and expertise to a far wider audience.

2. Products and Activities:

- publications, guidelines, best-practice guidance (e.g., in the Protected Planet series);
- consolidation and coordination of the global community of practice;
- outreach (conference presentations, workshops, website, social networks);
- application of new technologies (e.g., Google tools);
- provision of information on activities to WCPA – Marine and to SSC, and for protected area news in and outside of IUCN, as appropriate, on a regular basis;
- support pursuance of WCPA, SSC and IUCN goals where appropriate; and
- support of relevant resolution drafting and World Park Congress planning and participation.

3. Operations:

- The MMPATF is co-chaired by Erich Hoyt and Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara.
- The MMPATF will provide a plan of deliverables and activities at the beginning of each calendar year and will provide a short report using the WCPA template at the end of the year (December) on achievements
- The MMPATF consists of members of WCPA and SSC with extensive knowledge of the various aspects of MMPAs (e.g. science, management, policy, education). Membership strives for broad international and disciplinary representation. For effective operation, the MMPATF seeks to consist of about 20 core members, chosen by the chairs, with a wider associated community of practice. Chair(s) and members of this group are reviewed and appointed every 4 years by WCPA and SSC.
- The MMPATF communicates and functions largely electronically, with occasional meetings.

4. Funding

- The MMPATF is self-funded, and ICMMPA will work with WCPA and SSC to raise funds to support MMPATF functions.