

MPA

Issue Briefs for the Caribbean *Lessons learned for building and sustaining effective marine protected areas*

INTRODUCTION

The economic viability and well being of coastal populations across the Caribbean is dependent on goods and services provided by healthy, functioning coastal ecosystems. Coral reefs, sea grass beds and mangroves harbor a vital source of protein, protect coastlines from storms and wave damage and fuel a robust tourism industry. The region's diverse cultural heritage is therefore inextricably linked to its endowed wealth of coastal and marine resources.

Yet coastal ecosystems across the Caribbean are in rapid decline due to intensive near shore development and land clearance, agriculture, sedimentation, over fishing and unsustainable human activities associated with rapid tourism growth. Moreover, recent coral bleaching events illustrate the increasing threat posed by climate change, warming oceans and ocean acidification.

In response to these threats, many Caribbean nations have in recent years established various types of marine protected areas (MPAs) in an attempt to conserve and foster sustainable use of coastal resources. Building on this momentum, participants in the Caribbean Challenge, notably Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, are striving to manage

at least 20% of their coastal and marine habitats as protected zones by 2020.

This collection of issue briefs is designed to promote best MPA management practices and address critical capacity building efforts that support effective, ecologically resilient and socially equitable marine resource management. The briefs do not aim to present an exhaustive exploration of key management issues, challenges and solutions. Rather, each brief provides an introduction to the issue for managers, wardens, funders, policymakers and other marine resource professionals interested in coastal and marine resource management.

The briefs are designed as stand alone documents but may also prove useful as a compilation. Selected case study examples, best practices and lessons learned are highlighted with links to enable further exploration of the issues. Additional best practice examples exist on various issues at Caribbean MPAs and beyond and thus readers are encouraged to explore the CaMPAM website and listserv for more information. New briefs addressing other critical management topics may be added to this collection in the future.



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