



**TRANSATLANTIC CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE ON MARINE
PROTECTED AREAS
15 - 16 May 2008
Brussels**

SUMMARY OF DEBATE AND CONCLUSIONS

Representatives of EU and US civil society met in Brussels on 15 - 16 May 2008 to review recent progress towards the implementation of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) on both sides of the Atlantic. They also discussed key issues which require concerted action to ensure further implementation of MPAs to meet national, regional and international targets. A summary of the main conclusions of the conference are outlined below.

Background

Representatives of civil society organisations from the EU and US gathered in Brussels on 15 - 16 May 2008 to exchange views and experiences relating to the establishment, management and monitoring of marine protected areas (MPAs).

The conference was organised jointly by NRDC and IEEP as part of the Transatlantic Platform for Action on the Global Environment (T-PAGE), a project co-funded by the European Commission within the framework of a programme to promote transatlantic dialogues at the non-governmental level. Under the marine theme of T-PAGE, the focus was on MPAs, and their role in the conservation of marine biodiversity in the EU and US. This is a subject of considerable debate on both sides of the Atlantic, with broader application given the growing interest in high seas MPAs to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). It is an important topic where there is much to learn from the different approaches adopted by US agencies, the EU and Member States in the establishment and management of MPAs.

The T-PAGE experts meeting and final conference marked the culmination of a program of activities undertaken by NRDC and IEEP since 2006 and built on the outcomes of two teleconferences which focused on progress towards meeting international and regional targets for the establishment of MPAs in the EU and the US. The final conference provided a key opportunity for a broader group of stakeholders to discuss outstanding issues and common strategies to build support for further implementation of MPAs.

Participants at the conference represented a range of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), environmental advisory councils, academic and other research institutions, as well as the fishing industry and independent experts working on different aspects of MPAs implementation. Some representatives of public authorities at the Federal and State level in the US and at the local, national and EU level in Europe also attended the conference and contributed to the debate as keynote speakers and experts.

The following is a summary of the key points based on two days of discussion and debate:

- **Legal and political aspects relating to the establishment of MPAs**

In Europe, there are three levels of law, international (global or regional, for example, OSPAR), European Community (habitats and birds Directives) and domestic law at the Member State level. In the US, there is a similar categorization of legal arrangements where the federal and state laws are equivalent to the EU and domestic system. These laws have specific deadlines and targets for the implementation of networks of MPAs.

Despite the legal obligations for action, participants agreed that meeting legal obligations to establish networks of MPAs was an ongoing challenge. Participants at the Conference discussed the role and effectiveness of different types of law in meeting MPA targets. Some key presentations highlighted progress towards implementation relating to various legal arrangements. Participants agreed that where there is a legal requirement to implement MPAs, both in the US and EU, there have been greater efforts to establish MPAs. However, while it is easy to get political commitment to take action through soft law (policies), the level of implementation in these cases is usually much lower.

- **Building support for the establishment of networks of MPAs**

Participants agreed that there is a need to build support at a number of levels to ensure establishment of networks of MPAs.

Experiences on both sides of the Atlantic have shown that it is difficult to prescribe a single best approach to ensure the establishment of MPAs or a network of MPAs. In the US, the top down and the bottom up approach have been used and have both proven to be successful. For example, in 2007, US President George Bush took a unilateral decision to declare the Hawaiian Islands MPA within 24 hours; this decision has been welcomed by stakeholders and is already in place. In other cases in the US, the bottom-up approach to establishing MPAs has been used with mixed results. In one particular case, on the east coast of the US (from North Carolina to Florida), it has taken over 15 years for stakeholders, spearheaded by the South East Council to declare this network of MPAs. Participants agreed that trust is an essential basis for co-management of MPAs where top down initiation in response to international obligations requires bottom up support to work.

In countries without strong institutional/political willingness to designate MPAs, the role of public pressure on the relevant institutions was discussed. In the US,

establishing MPAs to protect species and habitats is now pitched as a political legacy; MPAs are also promoted on the basis that they are good for tourism and other businesses not linked to tourism or fisheries. In Europe, there is still a need to build support for MPAs for fisheries conservation purposes. Whilst there is greater support for MPAs for broader conservation purposes, there is skepticism about the benefits versus the costs of MPAs for fisheries purposes.

- **The role of science in the establishment of MPAs**

Participants discussed the use of science in political decision-making on MPAs and agreed that it was important that decisions should be taken on the basis of the best available science. However, uncertainty should not be used as a mask for lack of political will or used to delay decisions based on the evidence-based approach. Instead the precautionary approach should be openly used in decisions on MPA designation and implementation. Examples from both sides of the Atlantic were used to highlight instances where science has been used to delay political decisions on MPAs. Participants discussed the idea of looking beyond science and towards socio-economic issues, particularly in relation to MPAs for fisheries conservation purposes as compared to those for nature conservation. This discussion led to another interesting point on how to win stakeholder support for MPAs.

- **The role of monitoring and evaluation**

Participants agreed that monitoring MPAs is important in order to highlight the suite of benefits that MPAs provide. This is particularly important for MPAs which contain non-target and vulnerable species and habitats that are not routinely monitored as part of traditional stock assessment or other monitoring programs.

Participants also agreed that:

- Good monitoring should include a wide range of stakeholders and not just researchers;
- There is need to incorporate spillover effects in monitoring since spillovers can demonstrate value;
- The timescale for monitoring the impacts of MPAs is important. In some cases, this could be 2-3 years; in other cases there may be need for longer term monitoring programs to evaluate effectiveness of specific MPAs;
- It is important to monitor stocks and fishing activities inside and outside the MPAs in order to fully evaluate the impacts of the closed areas; and
- More funding should be allocated to monitoring programs. However, managers need to provide guidance on the types of data which should be collected and which would be useful for decision-making.

Participants agreed that monitoring is critical in the adaptive management process and that managers should be consulted on their data requirements to ensure the effectiveness of monitoring programs. Furthermore as part of the discussion on management, participants discussed ‘bioregionalisation’ as a management tool. This tool is being used in Baja California and could be useful in the EU context. However, it was highlighted that ‘bioregionalisation’ requires good data and monitoring which is currently lacking in most EU regions.

- **Monitoring and enforcement of MPAs**

Finally monitoring was discussed in the context of enforcement and the costs associated with the management of MPAs. Participants agreed that understanding the nexus of enforcement and monitoring includes understanding fishermen's behavior, in particular, how they distribute themselves after an MPA is created. It is important to know if they have been displaced to the areas adjacent to the MPA as their activity may contribute to the effectiveness of the MPA. Recent examples in the US and EU (in the EU, the cod closure and the impact of fleet displacement outside the closure) were used to highlight the impacts of poor monitoring and enforcement programs.

- **High seas MPAs**

The establishment of high seas MPAs is currently on the international political agenda. Participants agreed that there is a need for a more comprehensive management of areas beyond national jurisdiction to protect high seas resources, vulnerable species and habitats, for example deep water corals. The need to enforce international laws and regulations adopted by regional fisheries management organisations regarding the activity of fishing vessels on the high seas was highlighted as a priority. There was support for recent development at the FAO which will require fishing vessels to notify (through transponders) their movements in and out of specific regions and zones as the lack of reporting systems is seen as a loophole in international law which needs to be addressed. There was no agreement on the type of MPA which would be most effective for high seas areas, although there was agreement that there should be larger buffer zones. There was also support for further collaborative efforts between US and EU civil society in the designation of high seas MPAs.

- **Conclusions**

The T-PAGE conference provided yet another platform for dialogue on MPAs. During the meetings, participants discussed a number of issues which have been the focus of several international, European and national conferences in recent times. Whilst the conference and its conclusions are not unique, the opportunity to share experiences of best practice in the establishment and management of MPAs between US and EU experts was timely. In both instances, whilst there is a recognition that the drivers, challenges, approaches and arrangements for implementing MPAs are different in the US and EU there is an ongoing commitment to achieve targets relating to marine biodiversity and fisheries conservation.

The CBD and WSSD targets for the establishment of MPAs by 2010 are approaching. The US and EU are key players in the international context and their achievements will be judged on their success in establishing networks of MPAs in their waters. As the case studies leading up to this conference showed, both players have the capacity and political will to further the implementation of MPAs. The challenge remains as to how to encourage stakeholders, civil society and all interested parties to work together in addressing the issues outlined during this conference.

List of Conference Participants

Name	Organisation
Phil Alcock	Scottish Government
Kathrine Angell-Hansen	Maritime Policy Task Force, European Commission
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Thomas Binet	Independent
Richard Blackman	EUROPARC Federation
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Dr Marc Carr	UCSC
Maria Candela-Castillo	DG MARE
Bill Causey	Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
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Mat Cork	Royal Haskoning
Colleen M. Corrigan	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), Cambridge
Anna Dmitrijewa	Assistant to Struan Stevenson MEP, Vice-President of the EPP-ED Group and Conservative Member for Scotland
Perrine Ducloy	Comité national des pêches maritimes - CNPMM (French national committee of fisheries)
Antonio Flórez	Subdirección General de Asuntos Comunitarios, Dirección General de Recursos Pesqueros y Acuicultura (Spain)
Sonja Gantioler	IEEP
Kristina Gjerde	IUCN
Marina Gomei	IUCN
Jan Haelters	Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM)
Mrs Jorid Hammersland	Swedish Environment Protection Agency, Marine Environment Unit
Christina Heilmann Rasmussen	European Anglers Alliance (EAA)
Dennis Heinneman	Oceans Conservancy
James Hind	Gardline Group.UK
Nicolas Hoepffner	European Commission - Joint Research Centre, Institute for Environment & Sustainability, Global Environment Monitoring Unit,
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Olivier Laroussinie	AAMP
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Indrani Lutchman	IEEP
Stephen Mangi	Plymouth Marine Lab
Cora Markensteijn	Productschap Vis / Dutch Fish Product Board
Dr Christos Maravelias	DG Research, Unit E4 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Aquaculture, European Commission
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Eric Mink	Interel Cabinet Stewart/ European Dredging Association
Melanie Nakagawa	NRDC
Daniel Owen	Independent
Mark Pallemmaerts	IEEP
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Christiana Polizou	Border region Delta-Rhodopi
Geert Raeymaekers	Belgian Government - DG Environment, Marine Environment
Saskia Richardz	Greenpeace
Anastasia Roussi	The Hellenic Fishermen Confederation
Nicole Schaefer	DG MARE, E-1 Maritime Policy in Baltic and North Sea
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