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Theme 2: Biodiversity

Marine Protected Areas

MPA Expert Group

PAME's MPA Expert Group (MPA EG) oversees the work on Marine Protected Areas. All eight Arctic Council Member States are represented in the expert group, in addition to Permanent Participants and Observers. The MPA EG meets in conjunction with regular PAME meetings and has overseen a workshop series outlined below.

PAME and CAFF will convene a joint session on the Arctic Council's marine protected area networks portfolio at the 2nd Arctic Biodiversity Congress in October 2018 to inform on this work and solicit expert input.

Questions

- Do you have priorities or concerns that you would like to be considered for inclusion in the MPA EG workplan?
- Are there initiatives you are involved in within or outside the Arctic that we should connect with to inform our work on MPAs?
- Do you have resources and/or expertise you would like to contribute to the EG priority actions?
- Do you have suggestions about how we can increase the impact of our work outside the Arctic, including influencing public knowledge and decision makers on actions that affect the Arctic?

Background

Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a generic term that includes a variety of types of protected areas in the marine environment, some of which are known by other terms (e.g. park, sanctuary, reserve). As defined by the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature's](#) World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN/WCPA), and as used in PAME's work, an MPA is:

"A clearly defined geographical space recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."

While their primary focus is on the conservation of nature, MPAs provide many other benefits, including supporting local communities through sustainable fishing, tourism and traditional ways of life, as well as ecosystem benefits such as carbon storage to mitigate climate impacts. IUCN has developed categories to compare protected areas at a global scale, accompanied by guidelines for applying these categories.

All Arctic states have legal and policy tools for designating and managing MPAs in the Arctic, and PAME's work recognizes that Arctic States pursue MPA development based on their own authorities and priorities. PAME released the [Framework for a Pan-Arctic network of marine protected areas \(MPAs\)](#) in 2015, setting a common vision for international cooperation in MPA network development and management, based on best practices and previous Arctic Council initiatives. This framework

identifies both short- and long-term actions and charts a course for future collaborative planning, management, and actions for the conservation and protection of the Arctic marine environment.

To advance this work, [PAME's MPA-network Toolbox: Area-based conservation measures and ecological connectivity "Toolbox" project](#) (2015-2017) developed guidance to assist Arctic States in advancing their MPA network by providing theory and tools that can be used to assess and protect the diversity of genes, species, populations, habitats, features, and ecosystems; their interactions and processes; and their ability to adapt to change. The project also fostered collaboration on MPA network development between Arctic States, Permanent Participants, Arctic Council Working Groups, and the conservation and science communities. The Toolbox is intended to be updated periodically as PAME produces additional scientific information.

Indicator report

CAFF and PAME developed the [2017 Arctic Protected Areas - Indicator Report](#). This report uses the IUCN protected area categories to provide an overview of the status and trends of protected areas in the Arctic. The data used represent the results of the 2016 update to the Arctic Biodiversity Data Service (ABDS) Data Portal (<http://geo.abds.is>), which includes submissions from each of the Arctic Council Member States. The report revealed that the level of protection and governance of these areas varies throughout the circumpolar region and its countries. It shows that, while the extent of protected areas in the Arctic's marine environment almost quadrupled between 1980 and 2016, Arctic MPAs are dominated by several very large areas, and some parts of the Arctic marine ecosystem are poorly protected. This report is currently being updated.

MPA Network Workshop Series

PAME is currently working to advance the implementation of the Pan-Arctic Network of Marine Protected Areas and the Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of MPAs through a series of science workshops and associated desktop studies that will build on previous work of the MPA EG. This information will be integrated into the Arctic MPA-network Toolbox, a practical, hands-on resource for MPA programs and partners in advancing the design and implementation of MPA networks.

The workshop series' objective is to develop guidance to assist Arctic States in advancing their MPA networks by providing theory and tools to inform decision-makers, practitioners, Indigenous peoples, and stakeholders involved in developing MPA networks and ecosystem-based management in the marine Arctic. A key focus has been on the role of "other measures" – area-based measures that are not formal MPAs but still contribute to conservation outcomes – as components of Arctic MPA networks. The fourth workshop will focus on Indigenous involvement in, and Indigenous led, marine protection in the circumpolar Arctic Ocean. Canada will host this workshop in November 2018.

The workshop series builds on itself by exploring how the measures identified in the Toolbox can be applied in order to:

1. Address identified conservation needs in designing representative and ecologically-connected MPA networks and support pan-Arctic network coherence;
2. Effectively conserve different types of marine species, habitats, features, and ecosystems;
3. Enhance resilience of Arctic marine ecosystems and the social and economic benefits they provide in the face of changing conditions, such as ocean warming, ocean acidification, and loss of sea ice;
4. Address present and future specific threats;
5. Address conservation and management needs to enhance ecological connectivity; and
6. Contribute to an integrated ecosystem approach to management.