

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape

The islands and waters along the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador are highly productive areas of the Eastern Tropical Pacific, belonging to one of the world's most diverse biogeographic provinces. This region has a high degree of ecological connectivity and complex oceanographic characteristics, primarily due to the convergence of major marine currents (Humbolt Current, Equatorial Current, Costa Rican Coastal Current, Panama Bight Gyre and Panama Current), which facilitate dispersal of marine larvae (e.g., corals, crustaceans, echinoderms, molluscs, fishes) and affect the migrations, movements and distribution of many species of regional and global significance including sea turtles, whales, sharks and tuna. The Eastern Tropical Pacific is also intensely affected by the El Nino – La Nina climatic cycle, which causes dramatic swings in upwelling, sea temperature and productivity.

The islands of the Eastern Tropical Pacific, Costa Rica's Cocos Islands, Panama's Coiba Island, Colombia's Gorgona and Malpelo Islands and Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, have some of the few coral reefs in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. Cocos, Malpelo and Galapagos are oceanic volcanic islands that emerged from the open ocean rather than being connected to the mainland continental shelf. The flora and fauna of oceanic islands are especially valuable because of the high number of endemic species. Gorgona and Coiba are continental volcanic islands that are connected to the mainland continents by underwater trenches. These trenches are important areas for the aggregation of pelagic species.

Marine Conservation Corridor in the Eastern Tropical Pacific

Planning for the development of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape (ETPS) began in 2000, when a team involving Conservation International (CI), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) was approached by the government of Ecuador to consider innovative methods for protecting marine biodiversity and improving fisheries management, tourism, and shipping practices within the Eastern Tropical Pacific.

The importance of this biologically rich and unique marine region was further recognized at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002, when CI, IUCN and UNEP convened an ETPS panel, featuring the presidents of Ecuador and Costa Rica, the Vice President of Panama, and the Vice Minister for Environment of Colombia. At the end of the meeting, the seascape initiative was launched with government backing at the highest levels.

In April 2004, the four countries confirmed their intentions by signing the San Jose Declaration. The agreement officially established the Marine Conservation Corridor between Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador.

At the beginning of 2005, the United Nations Foundation (UNF), Global Conservation Fund (GCF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) jointly funded the ETPS Project Promoting Marine Conservation Through World Heritage in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape began its implementation phase.

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

In August 2005, the NMSP created a partnership with Conservation International and UNESCO to provide management capacity building support for the ETPS sites. An initial needs assessment was conducted in September of 2005 with the site managers at a meeting in the Galapagos. The needs assessment was analyzed and three training scenerios were presented to the site managers at a second meeting in Panama in May 2006. The managers in turn recommended a hybrid of the three training scenerios. The managers' recommendation was to develop an 18-month training program, during which 3 trainings will take place. The three trainings will focus on the following issues and program areas: 1) sustainable tourism; 2) sustainable fisheries; and 3) monitoring/research and education/outreach. During the interim time periods, demonstration projects will be implemented to implement the lessons learned from the training programs.

THE TRAINING MANUAL

The training manual is organized around twelve modules, consisting of eight topical areas for building sustainable tourism plans for marine protected areas. The topical areas are as follows:

- Sustainable Tourism Concepts
- Sustainable Tourism Assessments
- Stakeholder Participation
- Visitor Impacts
- The Tourism Industry and Best Management Practices
- Zoning, Site Planning and Certification
- Marketing and Revenue Generation
- Education and Outreach

The modules are designed to incorporate as much local and regional knowledge as possible, then draw on an international perspective to compare and contrast successful approaches to sustainable tourism planning and management for MPAs. Local and regional case studies will be presented by training participants to both illustrate local knowledge and to start to build expertise and a knowledge base on sustainable tourism from within the seascape region.

The information in this training manual follows the agenda for each day of the training. The content of the manual is intended to be richer than the lesson plans so that it may serve as a resource when participants are in the field implementing lessons learned from the training. The training manual is available in both English and Spanish. The training manual and program were developed by compiling information from many sustainable tourism sources, all of which are recognized throughout the modules as major contributors to the curriculum.