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Updating CaMPAM MPA Database
(Product of a consultant agreement with GCFI)

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Updating CaMPAM MPA Database

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Product of a consultant agreement with GCFI

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Introduction

In keeping with the objectives of Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) under the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean region (Cartagena Convention) and the Agenda 2030 (plan of action for people, planet and prosperity), the Government of Italy and UN – Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) have developed a partnership in support of implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals by Governments of the Caribbean, through a Project: "Biodiversity for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean through Ecosystem Based Management". The project is being implemented by UN Environment-CEP and funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (AICS).

The project was launched in 2015 with the aim to develop the region's institutional capacities through knowledge transfer needed for integration of a regional Decision Support System (DSS) for strategic/operational planning of marine managed areas under the Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) approach. As such, the project will promote and enhance the capacity and sustainability of CEP programmes regionally and globally, including SPAW activities, the Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management Network (CaMPAM), and collaboration with governments, local, and international partners.

The application of EBM/DSS requires access to MPA information, that covers the entire Wider Caribbean Region and contains data on geographical, biological, socio-economical and management aspects. In this respect, the CaMPAM MPA Database offers a great opportunity to demonstrate the real potential of the EBM/DSS tools, and so its revision and update is of critical relevance. Indeed, the project addresses this topic as one of the main goals and expected outputs. The UN Environment agreed with the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute to initiate the process of updating this MPA database.

Objective

Update the CaMPAM Marine Protected Area (MPA) database by entering data of 40 selected MPAs.

Methods

After consultation and agreement with the CaMPAM coordinator Georgina Bustamante and the GCFI executive director Robert Glazer, it was agreed that priority should be given to the 31 SPAW listed MPA. To ensure that a total of 40 MPAs were added to the database, another 9 MPAs were selected from Dominican Republic (DR). The DR was

selected because it is the country where two of the EBM/DSS pilot projects are being developed.

In order to select the most appropriate MPAs, I used the MPA nomination documentation that SPAW parties submitted to the UN Environment, SPAW Secretariat, as well as the WDPA online database. Information on MPA WDPA code of identification was verified/added to the entire CaMPAM MPA database, along with information on the IUCN protection category.

This approach was also used to facilitate the revision of existing information as well as the translation into English of the information that was written in Spanish or French for the agreed MPAs under consideration. The MPA information was further revised and completed based on the analysis of technical reports available at the SPAW web page along with submitted management plans. In these instances, the associated annexes were linked to the document.

The verification and update of the MPA database information was complemented with intensive searches on the internet and additional exchange of information with local MPA managers, particularly from Dominican Republic and Colombia. This included contacting personnel from their correspondent Ministries of Environment in both countries. I also used gray information as it became available; for instance, draft management plans from several protected areas including Dominican Republic and other unpublished technical documents were used.

Finally, the CaMPAM database was updated utilizing the revised and new information provided by MPA managers participating in the 2018 XIII edition of the regional course "Training of Trainers Marine Protected Area Management". Specifically, this provided information to update the nine MPAs in Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, The Bahamas, Barbados, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Results

As a result of the updating process, the following progress was made:

1. The excel file containing all the updated MPA information currently comprises a total of 339 MPAs from the Wider Caribbean Region. From those, four MPAs identified with ID 126, 250, 332, and 371 were repeated entries, thus a new column was added named "Update note" where those entries were marked as Repeated in red font.
2. In addition, this final file contains 20 new MPA entries, 15 from Dominican Republic, and one for Colombia, Cuba, France Overseas Territories, The Kingdom of Netherlands and Trinidad and Tobago. They were marked as NEW in the same "Update note" column. The original ID column for these MPAs, as for now, is

empty waiting for a decision on which ID should be utilized from UN Environment and GCFI agreement.

3. The WDPA code was updated / revised for 277 MPAs out of the 336 (82%) MPAs comprising the CaMPAM MPA database (not including the repeated entries). Not all the entries in the CaMPAM MPAs are also part of the WDPA database.

4. Similarly, information about the IUCN category was completed for 262 MPAs (78%), when the information was available in reports or the online searches.

5. The following 31 SPAW listed MPA were updated:
   Belize (3): Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Glover's Reef Marine Reserve and Port Honduras Marine Reserve;

   Caribbean Netherlands (4): Bonaire National Marine Park, St Eustatius National Park, the Quill/Boven National Park and Saba Bank National Park;

   Cuba (2): Guanahacahibes National Park, and Cayos de San Felipe National Park;

   Colombia (3): Sanctuary Cienaga Grande de Santa Marta, Wetlands between the rivers León and Suriqui, and Seaflower Marine Protected Area;

   Dominican Republic (4): La Caleta Submarine Park, Jaragua National Park, Los Haitises National Park, and Sierra de Bahoruco National Park;

   France (6): Grand Connétable Island Natural Reserve (French Guyana), National Park of Guadeloupe, St Martin National Reserve and Lagoon Ponds, Petite-Terre Islands National Nature Reserve in Guadeloupe, the Etang des Salines and Reserve Versants Nord de la Montagne Pelée in Martinique (), and the Agoa Sanctuary in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the French West Indies

   Grenada (1): Molinière-Beauséjour Reserve;

   Netherlands (3): Saba National Marine Park, St Eustatius National Marine Park, and Man O War Shoal Marine Park (Sint Maarten);

   Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (1): Tobago Cay Marine Park;

   United States of America (4): Florida Key National Marine Sanctuary, Dry Tortugas National Park, and Everglades National Park in Florida, and Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary in Texas.

   From those SPAW listed MPAs there were a total of five new entries to the CaMPAM MPA database.

6. Of the fifteen (15) protected areas in Dominican Republic that were added to the CaMPAM database, detailed information was updated/entered for only seven (7): El Morro National Park, Laguna Saladilla Wildlife Refuge, Montecristi Submarine Park, Ria Maimon Wildlife Refuge, Mangroves of Estero Balsa National Park, Estero Hondo Scientific Reserve Marine Mammals Sanctuary, and Siete Hermanos Wildlife

Refuge. These MPAs are located on the northern part of the country, and within or around the selected area of the EBM/DSS pilot project

7. One MPA (1) from Colombia was updated: The McBean Lagoon National Park, recently approved by National Park Special Unit in the Ministry of Environment (16 March 2018).
8. Additional improvement to the CaMPAM MPA database was made with respect to standardizing the format in the following fields: country names, eco-regional location, dates. The values of the total land and sea surfaces were updated and all values are now expressed in square kilometers. Priority to choose a surface area value was given to the existing value in the CaMPAM MPA database and then to the value in the WDPA online database.
9. Three (3) entries in the CaMPAM MPA database were duplicates. The word repeated was added to the ID field, thus it can be easily viewed for deletion.

Recommendations

1. The CaMPAM MPA database was revised and updated. It will be necessary to fill the ID column for the new database entries and delete all repeated entries, prior to the transition from GCFI server to the UN Environment server. Once this activity is completed the "Update note" column can be deleted.
2. The field named climate is one of a large scale, and can be changed from an open information field to a list of alternatives one, which in turn will simplify the future updates in the database.
3. The field named marine habitats would better suit the purpose of the MPA database by adding also the possibility of inclusion of coastal habitats, and this inclusion should be considered in the definition of this field.
4. The marine fauna in the database is described into two different fields, however it is recommended to combine these two fields in only one following a simplification process as recommended in the database evaluation.
5. The definition of the field named endangered species includes those listed as threatened and endangered, however it does not specify if this management strategy is imposed at a national, or international levels. It is recommended that future updates complement this definition by adding within what jurisdiction this listing is associated.
6. The field named Aggregation sites, which is expected to indicate whether the MPA contains a feeding, reproductive or nursery area, is recommended to be updated by allowing the MPA manager to choose from a list of alternatives. As it is now, this is an open response field. Options may include reproductive aggregations, feeding aggregation, and juvenile aggregations as options.

7. The database contains two fields, primary responsible institute and primary management institute, it is recommended to join these two field into one, responding to the requested simplification process. When a request for information is received, usually is the primary responsible institute to either responds or transfers the request to the appropriate organization, including non-government organizations if a co-management arrangement is in place. Therefore, what it is really needed is the primary responsible organization.

8. The field named as Cultural Resources, is the only field referring to socio-economic topics. It is recommended to provide a list of alternatives detailing information on what kind of cultural resources are present. Perhaps another field denoting the presence of coastal communities, the relevance of the fishery/marine resources as family income, or the existence of relevant touristic resources is recommended to be added to the database. Perhaps, a more efficient way to proceed is to establish a cooperation agreement between UN Environment and regional organizations to strengthen and compile efforts and data available from the MPA Socio-economic Monitoring (SocMon) into a new and dedicated database. Then a link between the new SocMon database and the CaMPAM MPA Database con be established.

9. With respect to simplifying the CaMPAM MPA database, it will be necessary to decide whether or not to combine, modify, or eliminate some fields that presently contain repeated information. These refer particularly to the fields named as geographic location and the eco-regional location, map url, kml url, and geo-marker.

10. Under the legal aspects section, the database contains five (5) fields that provide contact information for each MPA manager. Considering that in some protected areas this person changes every couple of years (short term), it is important to keep in mind that CaMPAM should request country focal points to maintain MPA manager contact information up-to-date.

11. The field 'MPA boundaries' can be very complex to summarize in text and in one field because it implies many geographic coordinates to include the boundary extension and irregularities. This field may be deleted, and utilize instead the URL mapping field already included in the database. The access of having a functional MPA boundary map is very important, thus need to be functional either within or outside the CaMPAM MPA Database.

12. The database, as it is, describes what kind of information is believed to be available on many issues, but in general, it does not present the data itself, or indicators that illustrates the population/ecosystem status. This is a complex topic but vital for implementation of Decision Support Systems (DSS). For that, additional information on qualitative or quantitative indices resulting from monitoring programs would be necessarily, and so it implies a modification of the database. A modification (along with a simplification) of the CaMPAM MPA database was recommended during its evaluation process. Future steps on this regard are yet to be agreed upon.

To better continue this updating process by MPA managers, it would be necessary to provide them with a guidance document with all the field definitions. This will ensure higher reliability in the information they provide.