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Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical
Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol
Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
(SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region

Virtual, 30 January – 1 February 2023

REPORT OF THE STAC PROTECTED AREA WORKING GROUP

This meeting is being convened virtually. Delegates are kindly requested to access all meeting documents electronically for download as necessary.

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ACRONYMS

CaMPAM	Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management Network and Forum
COP	Conference of the Parties
FNPA	Fundacion Parke Nacional Aruba
MMNP	Martinique Marine Nature Park
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MMA	Marine Managed Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFB	French Biodiversity Office
PA	Protected Area
RAC	Regional Activity Center
RAN	Regional Activity Network
TCU	Transitional Coordination Unit
SPA	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPA RAC	Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife for the Wider Caribbean Region
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region
WG	Working Group

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The first Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) of the SPAW Protocol, Havana (24-25 September 2001), in its Decision I.7, awarded “specific mandates to the STAC for the creation of *ad hoc* Working Groups to deal with those themes that, owing to their complexity or level of specialisation, thereby require [special attention].”
2. Four (4) such *ad hoc* working groups have been created to be dedicated respectively to Protected Areas, to Species, to Exemptions and the most recent one, to Sargassum. Working Groups are established by the STAC and operate according to Terms of Reference.¹ The outcomes of each Working Group depend on its tasks assigned by the STAC.²

I.1 Mandate and composition

3. The SPAW STAC Working group on Protected Areas had the following tasks assigned by the STAC³:

Mandatory tasks:

- ✓ *Review and provide the basis for recommendations on proposals from Contracting Parties to add new protected areas to the SPAW Protocol annexes (“Task 1” for the purposes of this report) ;*
- ✓ *Review as needed the procedure through which Contracting Parties can propose new Protected Areas to be listed as SPAW sites (“Task 3” for the purposes of this report).*

Specific tasks, as mandated by STAC9:

- ✓ *Review the proposal of the Government of Aruba as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW list of Protected Areas for future discussions at STAC10 and subsequent consideration of COP12 (included in “Task 1” for the purposes of this report).*
 - ✓ *In collaboration with the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, review the recommendations presented in the “Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of CaMPAM” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG42/INF.41 Add.1) and “Evaluation of Connectivity Between the SPAW-Listed Protected Areas to Guide the Development of the Functional Ecological Network of Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.10) and present an options paper to STAC10 that assesses the feasibility of implementing the recommendations and suggests possible means of doing so in the short, medium-, and long-term (“Task 2” for the purposes of this report).*
 - ✓ *Review the procedure through which Contracting Parties may nominate new protected areas to be listed as SPAW sites and prepare suggestions to simplify and streamline the process for consideration during the next biennium for future discussions at STAC10 and subsequent consideration at COP12 (included in “Task 3” for the purposes of this report).*
4. The current PA working group is composed of 18 experts, 16 nominated by 8 countries, and 2 nominated by observers or independently (see Appendix I).

¹ Terms of Reference of the SPAW STAC *ad hoc* Working Groups, as approved 11 January 2022.

² 2021-2022 Tasks and Chairs of the SPAW STAC *ad hoc* Working Groups, as approved 11 January 2022.

³ Ibid.

II. WORK CONDUCTED DURING THE BIENNIUM 2021-2022

TASK 1 – Review and provide the basis for recommendations on proposals from Contracting Parties to add new protected areas to the SPAW Protocol annexes

Parke Marino Aruba

(UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.11 &
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG 43/INF 12)

Methodology

5. The request from Aruba to include the Parke Marino Aruba into the SPAW listing sites has followed the same process as previous reviews.
6. The SPAW-RAC proceeds as follows in order to evaluate proposals;
 - i) The PA Working Group experts review the proposal;
 - ii) A provisional report is done, including an analysis of the points deemed lacking;
 - iii) It is sent to the country for additional information;
 - iv) The information received is communicated to experts for final review;
 - v) The Working Group concludes if they support the proposal or not.
7. The proposal of Aruba for the inclusion of Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW listing sites was submitted to the SPAW Secretariat for review on the 31 January 2021. Acknowledgement of receipt was sent on the 1st of February 2021 by the SPAW Secretariat.
 - i-ii) The process for the review of the proposal by the experts of the PA Working Group was presented at the kick-off meeting of the Working Groups, the 31th of May 2022. A core group was formed by three (3) voluntary experts to review the proposal using an evaluation table elaborated by SPAW-RAC to facilitate the consultation and evaluation process.
8. The proposal has been reviewed by the PA Working Group experts through online collaboration tools such as Google documents and Teamwork platform and supported by the completion of an evaluation table provided by SPAW-RAC.
 - ii-iii) On July 8th, the SPAW-RAC convened the core group in an online meeting in order to discuss their initial evaluation of the Aruba proposal and gather their remarks, which were shared with the submitting country. A provisional evaluation report of Aruba's proposal was drafted by SPAW-RAC and shared with the PA WG experts for consultation, validation and recommendations.
 - iv) Comments and justifications from Aruba, Kingdom of Netherlands, were sent on 5th of August 2022 and 12th of August 2022 to answer queries from the experts. These elements helped elaborate the evaluation table.
 - vi) On August 25th, SPAW-RAC convened all of the PA Working Group experts in a final online meeting to validate the table and finalise the evaluation. Two (2) experts answered the invitation and discussed the listing of the marine park of Aruba. Other experts who could not attend the meeting shared their position through the online collaboration tools and emails. These elements enabled the finalisation of the evaluation report for submission to STAC 10.
9. The SPAW-RAC encouraged the experts to participate in discussions on the proposal submitted by Aruba and pointed out that it would have been relevant to have more expert opinions during the evaluation process.

Outcomes and highlights

10. The experts thanked Aruba for submitting its proposal and acknowledged that a lot of work and effort was done to write the proposal.
11. However, the proposal lacks crucial information and precisions to fulfill all criteria.
12. Throughout the consultation process, all experts stressed that the amount and detail of data/information currently available in the proposal is insufficient to justify listing the Parke Marino Aruba under the SPAW Protocol.
13. According to them, the data on ecological criteria are very general and data on cultural and socio-economic criteria are lacking. Information provided for the criteria related to planning and management and protection measures, as well as evaluation are also very weak.
14. The additional information provided by the submitting country upon request allowed the experts to address certain identified gaps but were not sufficient to cover and validate the mandatory criteria.
15. According to the experts, the proposal lacks detail on capacities (human, equipment, infrastructure and fundings) to monitor the four sites and understand how to implement the main conservation objectives as well as evaluate them against defined indicators. They highlighted gaps with regards to measures put in place to assess management effectiveness and conservation success.
16. Similarly, the proposal lacks detail regarding the regulation mechanism put in place to enforce the legal framework with a clear zoning of human activities in the proposed site, showing gaps in the management, protection and recovery of habitats and species population.
17. Experts also questioned whether the ongoing discussions between the government entity and the designated park management regarding the organisation of the Fundacion Parke Nacional Aruba (FPNA) could impact the management of the marine protected area.
18. The experts expressed difficulties in evaluating the dossier containing fragmented information provided after the formal submission.
19. Experts recommended the current application be considered premature due to the missing elements and invited Aruba to strengthen the proposal for a resubmission once the gaps identified have been addressed.
20. More generally, the experts also recommended that all new applications of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol include a current management plan and performance evaluation report in order to be considered for listing.

Martinique Marine Nature Park

(UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG 43/INF 14 &
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG 43/INF 15)

Methodology

21. The request from the Government of France to include the Martinique Marine Nature Park (MMNP) into the SPAW listing sites has followed the same process as previous reviews.
22. The SPAW-RAC proceeds as follow in order to evaluate proposals;
 - i) The PA Working Group experts review the proposal;
 - ii) A provisional report is done, including an analysis of the points deemed lacking;
 - iii) It is sent to the country for additional information;
 - iv) The information received is communicated to experts for final review;
 - v) The Working Group concludes if they support the proposal or not.

23. The proposal of France for the inclusion of the MMNP in the SPAW listed sites was submitted to the SPAW-RAC for review on the 29th of July 2022. Acknowledgement of receipt was sent on the 1st of August 2022 by the SPAW-RAC.
 - i) The process for reviewing the proposal by the experts of the PA Working Group was mentioned at the kick-off meeting of the Working Groups, on the 31th of May 2022.
24. Two (2) experts volunteered to form a core group to review this proposal and complete an evaluation table.
25. The proposal was submitted to a series of reviews, carried out by the experts through online collaboration tools such as Google documents and Teamwork platform. This evaluation was supported by the completion of an evaluation table
26. Following the initial completion of the evaluation table and email exchange with the core group, the SPAW-RAC organised a meeting with the PA Working Group experts to evaluate the Martinique proposal.
 - ii-iii) On September 6, 2022, three (3) experts met online to discuss the proposal and made remarks which were shared with the submitting country. Other experts who could not attend the meeting shared their position through the online collaboration tools and emails. Based on these remarks the SPAW RAC elaborated a preliminary evaluation report.
 - iv) Comments and justifications from France by the French Biodiversity Office (OFB) were sent on September 20, 2022 to SPAW-RAC to answer queries from the experts. These elements helped consolidate the evaluation table.
 - vi) An evaluation report on Martinique's proposal was finalised by SPAW-RAC and shared with the PA WG experts for validation and recommendations.
27. Overall, the SPAW- RAC encouraged the experts to participate in discussions on the proposal submitted by France and pointed out that it would have been relevant to have more expert opinions during the evaluation process.

Outcomes and highlights

28. The experts recognise the great interest of the nomination of the Martinique Marine Nature Park (MMNP) and the quality of the dossier.
29. The Ecological, Cultural and Socio-Economic criteria are mostly in line with the requirements/criteria of the listing process. The information in the application shows that the MMNP is of local ecological value, but the case was not made for the site as having outstanding or unique ecological value at regional level.
30. Experts stressed legal and management frameworks listed in the proposal are comprehensive and show that the park benefits from a strong support from the French Government as well as a management body with necessary means to implement this framework.
31. The proposal has a comprehensive list of measures and indicators to help evaluate the management effectiveness based on a set of goals. The proposal also provides a clear list of institutions partnering with the MMNP to conduct these evaluations.
32. Nonetheless, experts pointed out the proposal does not clearly explain how the listed objectives are aligned with conservation objectives of nature reserves, protection of specific habitats and vulnerable species as well as threat reduction and resilience of ecological processes.

33. Furthermore, the experts stressed that the dossier could have been strengthened with more ecological detail to justify the rarity, naturalness, diversity, connectivity, and resilience of the park.
34. Overall, the experts recommended giving full support to the proposal from France to include the Martinique Marine Nature Park as a SPAW listed site.

TASK 2 – In collaboration with the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, review the recommendations presented in the “Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of CaMPAM” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG42/INF.41 Add.1) and “Evaluation of Connectivity Between the SPAW-Listed Protected Areas to Guide the Development of the Functional Ecological Network of Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.10) and present an options paper to STAC10 that assesses the feasibility of implementing the recommendations and suggests possible means of doing so in the short, medium-, and long-term. (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG 43/INF.8; UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF 9)

Methodology

35. Task 2 was conducted by a consultant hired by SPAW Secretariat who was supported by SPAW-RAC and the PA Working Group experts.
36. On July 6, 2022, a virtual kick-off meeting with the SPAW Secretariat and SPAW-RAC team helped develop a concise and collectively constructed document, defining the dates and expected outcomes of the consultation.
37. In July, literature was provided by UNEP-CEP personnel. These elements were supplemented by additional online research to set a basis for the proposed methodology of work in order to develop a preliminary set of options for the two assessment documents. The methodology was shared with the experts for consultation and revision.
38. Relevant literature was complemented between July and August with information gathered through phone conversations and email exchanges with former SPAW Programme Officers and the former CaMPAM coordinator. Comments were received from seven (7) members of the PA WG and authors of the assessment documents as well as SPAW-RAC. All these elements were integrated into the development of the CaMPAM Options Paper and the Connectivity Options Paper.
39. A first draft of the CaMPAM Option Paper which uploaded into Google Drive on August 1, 2022 for review by the experts. The second version of this document was shared on August 31, 2022.
40. On August 22, 2022, the first draft of the Connectivity Options Paper was uploaded into Google Drive for review by the experts.
41. The documents have been submitted to a series of reviews, carried out by the experts through online collaboration tools such as Google documents and Teamwork platform as well as phone calls and e-mail exchanges.
42. On September 2, 2022, an online meeting was organised by the consultant during which the PA WG experts were introduced to the second version of the CaMPAM Options Paper and the first version of the Connectivity Options Paper. Only the CaMPAM Options Paper was discussed. Three (3) experts attended this meeting and stressed the importance of focusing efforts on actions that can be achieved realistically with limited funds. They also stressed the necessity to secure a bottom-up approach to better consider MPA managers' needs in the evaluation process.
43. Due to time constraints, the consultation process with the PA Working Group did not allow the organisation of a second online meeting. Therefore the two documents were finalised with email exchanges and cooperative work on the online documents. Experts also recommended that for a

stronger consultative process, it shall be necessary to open new opportunities for in-depth participation of most of the PA WG experts and perhaps to consider the inclusion of additional key partners. Hence, the SPAW Secretariat is looking for alternatives to respond to this advice, allowing the successful completion of this task.

Outcomes and highlights

44. Two Options Papers were drafted by the UNEP-CEP's consultant and reviewed by the PA Working Group experts. The options papers presented a set of recommendations and at least three different actions have been identified in the short, medium and long-term. Each alternative presents the desired target, the monitoring and evaluation indicators and proposed responsible entity.
45. These two documents, focusing on the improvement of ecological connectivity and coordination of MPAs in the Wider Caribbean region, have been written jointly as they are complementary and aim to strengthen compliance and enforcement of marine biodiversity initiatives.

CaMPAM Options Paper (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG 43/ INF 8)

46. The CaMPAM Options Paper gathers recommendations stated through the 2016 and 2021 assessments on the CaMPAM network effectiveness.
47. The document gathers 9 desired targets and 74 alternatives for the short (2 years), medium (5 years) and long term (10 years) associated with the implementation of the three main recommendations stated in the "Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of CaMPAM" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG42/INF.41 Add.1).
48. The recommendations made in the work done can be separated into three parts:
 - Improve the governance structure of the CaMPAM network to better meet the needs of MPAs in a bottom-up approach.
 - Develop agreements to ensure the financial sustainability of the network.
 - Build an updated multi-year work plan using a bottom-up approach.

Outcomes of the meetings about the CaMPAM Options Paper:

49. One (1) expert recalled the goal of this work is to analyse the structure of a renovated CaMPAM which suggests defining a joint vision and clear objectives.
50. The experts also stressed the need to know what had been done previously through the SPAW protocol in order to be able to pursue the assessments and recommendations of the CaMPAM Network (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG42/INF.41 Add.1).
51. They suggested to base recommendations on the feedback and needs of the CaMPAM members (especially the managers of SPAW-listed MPAs) through a bottom-up approach which was already started during the previous assessment of CaMPAM network (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG42/INF.41 Add.1). This will provide a clearer picture of CaMPAM's priority action program.
52. The experts also pointed out the very important role of the CaMPAM network in the region. This role must be unique and in line with actions already initiated in the region through several networks such as MPA Connect, the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, and Biopama, among others, securing stronger collaboration and coordination, leading to enhanced MPA effectiveness in the face of increasing challenges.

Preferred options from the consultant:

53. The CaMPAM network could be reactivated as a second level network, meaning it would become a network composed of other networks incorporated at national, regional and sub-regional organisations and networks. In this way, CaMPAM can focus on improving coordination among the multiple regional / subregional initiatives currently acting independently and securing consistency and effective responses much needed to counteract increasing environmental and anthropogenic threats.
54. CaMPAM could amplify the impacts of other existing networks and partnerships across the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) working on activities focusing on coastal and marine ecosystems. This way, CaMPAM could become the a of coordination at multiscale and multicultural levels.
55. The institutional support of SPAW-RAC remains an essential element in strengthening CaMPAM's work and giving confidence to investors/donors to subsequently secure diversified funding for the CaMPAM operation.
56. The SPAW Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention and the SPAW-RAC could seek ways to provide 100% funding for the first two years of the network's transitional coordination unit (TCU). That could be done by stronger coordination and joining efforts made by the SPAW Secretariat, the SPAW-RAC, a selected group of SPAW Parties or by following recommendations received from the various SPAW Working Groups. After that, CaMPAM should generate ways to fulfill its financial needs.
57. A bottom-up approach to the long-term planning process could be led by the CaMPAM TCU.
58. CaMPAM success would depend on the SPAW Secretariat, the SPAW-RAC, and SPAW Parties, and the SPAW Working Groups & other relevant partners' support.
59. CaMPAM would require the active support and involvement from different partnerships and networks to raise the profile of the CaMPAM network and extend its work on Marine Protected Areas and Marine Managed Areas management, towards effective implementation of the Ecosystem-Based Management concepts.

Connectivity Options Paper (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG 43/ INF 9)

60. The Connectivity Option Paper gathers 12 desired targets and 87 implementation alternatives in the short (2 years), medium (5 years) and long term (10 years) associated with the implementation of the four main recommendations stated in the "Evaluation of Connectivity Between the SPAW-Listed Protected Areas to Guide the Development of the Functional Ecological Network of Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.10)
61. The recommendations can be separated into four parts:
 - Improve regional marine conservation efficiency by developing /expanding network relationships among MPAs
 - Facilitate the process of filling gaps for improved habitats and species inventories to determine key ecosystems / key species status and trends
 - Use scientific & monitoring information to evaluate ecosystem / key species condition, trends & connectivity patterns
 - Reinforce regional communication & community outreach to broaden support for better connectivity & accomplishment of conservation targets and goals

Preferred options from the consultant:

62. The development of a greater level of MPA connectivity would require full time dedication, good communication and negotiation skills in order to help build trust among stakeholders in a region with complex characteristics and dynamics.
63. The reinvigorated CaMPAM network could provide a leading coordination role necessary to develop effective and complementary responses to tackle environmental and anthropogenic threats.
64. This approach would require extending the MPA management to MMA management, and moving from the national to the sub-regional and/or regional scales.
65. Clear and consistent responses will need to be based on technical recommendations from both bottom-up and top-down approaches, allowing the integration of appropriate data.
66. As recommendations may differ between communities and technologies, the proposed approach should be flexible and adaptable.

TASK 3 – Review the procedure through which Contracting Parties may nominate new protected areas to be listed as SPAW sites and prepare suggestions to simplify and streamline the process for consideration during the next biennium for future discussions at STAC10 and subsequent consideration at COP12.

Methodology

67. On October 6, 2022, a virtual kick-off meeting with the PA Working Group experts was organised by SPAW-RAC to launch Task 3.
68. Prior to the meeting the experts were invited to think about ways to review the procedure through which Parties may nominate new protected areas.
69. For this purpose, they had at their disposal a series of documents available on Google Drive among which, the “Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol”⁴, the “Annotated format for the presentation reports for the areas proposed for inclusion in the SPAW list”⁵ and the evaluation table designed by SPAW-RAC.
70. SPAW-RAC proposed a working method consisting in reviewing the documents provided on the Drive and modifying them in track changes mode to gather comments from the experts.
71. One (1) expert took the lead for Task 3 by sharing comments and expected outcomes on the “Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol”.
72. A first draft of the reviewed “Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol” was provided on October 21, 2022.

⁴ Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol https://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/guidelines_a2711.pdf

⁵ Annotated format for the presentation reports for the areas proposed for inclusion in the SPAW list https://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/annotated_foa04f.pdf

Outcomes and highlights

73. During the meeting, all the experts agreed that the current application format is too complicated and suggested to review some of the criteria to simplify the process.
74. Some experts suggested focusing more on species protection by looking at whether the listed areas protect all or most SPAW-listed species.
75. Other experts suggested focusing more on the way the Contracting Parties intend to manage species and habitats inside their protected areas. Therefore, the adaptation of the guidelines would focus more on the management, capacity-building, monitoring and funding aspects.
76. One (1) expert recommended focusing first on the objectives of the SPAW network in order to identify the real benefits and objectives for each Contracting Party.
77. For most of the experts, the consolidation of the SPAW network and the revision of the listing process are two related elements in accordance with Article 7, "Cooperation program for protected areas and their listing," of the **SPAW Protocol**. Working on this topic will be a first step to make the listing process more comprehensive.
78. For this purpose, one (1) expert suggested simplifying the "Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol" all the characteristics of the network under the section "general principles", by gathering these elements under one or two bullet points.
79. One (1) expert suggested modifying paragraph IV of Section A. "General Principles" of the "Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol".
80. One (1) expert suggested completing paragraph 10 of Section B. "Ecological, cultural and socio-economic criteria" of the "Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol" by referring not only to Article 4 "Establishment of protected areas" but also to Article 6 "Protected area planning and management regime" of the SPAW Protocol. This addition would limit applications from Contracting Parties to areas that are effectively managed.
81. One (1) expert suggested adding a reference to a management plan to paragraph 12 of Section B. of the "Guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol"
82. Given the importance of this task for the existing SPAW network and future applications from countries, the SPAW-RAC and the experts of the PA Working Group suggested to continue working on the revision of the listing process based on the work initiated in 2022 in the next biennium. This work can be guided by the STAC 10 recommendations.

APPENDIX I: LIST OF SPAW PROTECTED AREAS WORKING GROUP EXPERTS

Name of experts	Affiliation
Adriel Castaneda	Belize
Alicia Nunez	Belize
Ana Maria Gonzalez-Delgadillo	Colombia
Nacor Bolaños-Cubillos	Colombia
Aylem Hernández Ávila	Cuba
Augusto Martínez	Cuba
Juan Luis Gonzalez	Dominican Republic
Ricardo Rodriguez	Dominican Republic
Cyrille Barnerias	France
Sophie Bedel	France
Tadzio Bervoets	Netherlands
Sietske van der Wal	Netherlands
Lcda. Digna Barsallo	Panama
Marino Abrego	Panama
Gonzalo Cid	USA
Samantha Dowdell	USA
Emma Doyle	GCFI
Lloyd Gardner	<i>Foundation for Development Planning, Inc.</i>