

## International Programs

# Sister Sanctuary Framework

The framework for developing sister sanctuaries has been established within a series of progressively more detailed legally binding agreements for increasing international cooperation.

### UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Cartagena Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea all include provisions for increasing national and regional systems of marine protected areas.

### CEP

A regional sub-programme within UNEP, the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP), helps member countries comply with the Cartagena Convention.

### The SPAW Protocol

In this context, the governments of the region adopted the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region (SPAW). The SPAW Protocol became international law in 2000 and contains detailed provisions addressing the establishment of protected areas and buffer zones for *in situ* conservation of wildlife, as well as national and regional co-operative measures for the protection of species, including migratory species.

### CARTAGENA CONVENTION

In addition to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 26 United Nations Member States in the Wider Caribbean Region, including the United States, have ratified the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region, referred to as the Cartagena Convention.

It requires all Parties to, among other things, establish specially protected areas, exchange information concerning the administration and management of such areas, and cooperate in scientific research, monitoring, and the exchange of data relating to the purposes of the Convention.

### MARINE MAMMAL ACTION PLAN

In 2008, to assist member governments in their efforts to develop and improve marine mammal conservation policies and practices within this framework, governments adopted a comprehensive Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region, which includes priority action items supporting the formation of sister sanctuaries.



# Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region

In 2008, the United Nations Environment Programme's Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP), within the framework of the SPAW Protocol, developed a comprehensive Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean. The MMAP identifies activities at the national level, through regional and international cooperation, while respecting the sovereign rights of participating governments.

The MMAP focuses on two broad aims within the SPAW Protocol's general mandate for the protection and management of marine mammals in the WCR:

- Management of human interactions and use
- Species protection

Regional success in managing and conserving marine mammals will ultimately depend on countries' commitments to build their internal capacities and to implement regional guidelines by establishing conservation priorities, standards, and strategies. To that end, the MMAP consists of specific priority actions within five target areas:

- Increased scientific knowledge
- Enhanced public understanding
- Protective measures
- Policy development
- Improvement of law and its application

## Long-term objectives of the MMAP are:

- Conservation and recovery of all marine mammal species and populations, and protection of their habitats in the region (e.g. feeding, breeding, and calving grounds, movement corridors, etc.)
- Establishment of regional cooperation programs to increase scientific, technical, and educational exchange among relevant national, regional, and international organizations

## MMAP 2.4 Protected Areas and Other Management Regimes for Population Recovery

includes the following Priority Action:

Management 2.4.1: By mutual agreement among the Contracting Parties involved, design and declare marine protected areas and other management regimes, that maintain ecological connections (e.g. sister sanctuaries that promote the protection of transboundary assets) with user and stakeholder involvement and participation.

To date, Sister Sanctuary Agreements have been signed between the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) and the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Santuario de Mamiferos Marinos de la Republica Dominicana (SMMRD), France's Marine Protected Areas Agency Agoa Marine Mammal Sanctuary in the French Antilles, Bermuda's Ministry of Environment, Planning and Infrastructure Strategy. The Caribbean Netherlands Sister Sanctuary Agreement is expected in 2016.

UNEP/CEP Website: [www.cep.unep.org](http://www.cep.unep.org)

SPAW Website: [www.cep.unep.org/about-cep/spaw](http://www.cep.unep.org/about-cep/spaw)