

# Guide to participatory planning for coastal and marine areas



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Guide to Participatory Planning in Coastal and Marine Protected Areas

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PROTECTED AREAS – MANAGEMENT PLANS – COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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## FOREWORD

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*The PROARCA/Costa project of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) is implemented with funding from USAID and technical support from a consortium headed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in association with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Center for Coastal Resources of the University of Rhode Island. (CRC/URI). Within this institutional framework, PROARCA/Costas has carried out work involving integrated management and coastal resources, protected areas and institutional strengthening.*

*The PROARCA/Costas project has primarily employed the participatory planning approach as a tool to support planning for protected areas. The instrument presented in the following pages does not emphasize protected area planning methodologies, since these are well known*

*by professionals working in the area of protected area conservation in Central America. However, during the five years the PROARCA project was implemented, we observed the difficulties of carrying out planning in an open and participatory manner, and noted that people do not have a good understanding of the benefits these processes have for effective planning and implementation of protected area management in the long term, or of the investment required.*

*This document thus presents participatory planning methodology with an emphasis on mechanisms for achieving the effective participation of different stakeholder groups in planning and management of coastal and marine protected areas. It provides an extensive explanation on how to promote processes encouraging stakeholders to participate and how to*



*facilitate ownership of the results of those processes by stakeholder groups or groups affected by the establishment and implementation of protected areas management.*

*Néstor Windevoxhel Lora  
Director of PROARCA/Costas  
TNC – WWF – CRC/URI*

*We are confident that this practical guide will be of great use for those in charge of protected area management in Central America, and for nongovernmental organizations and government agencies facing the dual challenge of conserving biodiversity while striving for civil society participation in the decisions that must be made.*

*We look forward to any suggestion that will improve this tool, and proudly place in your hands a document we consider of great practical use.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most common problems encountered in planning for protected areas in developing countries has been opposition from local communities due to the opportunity costs when use is restricted within these areas. If we add to this the difficulties and costs of achieving a process that is truly participatory, as well as the absence of regulations ensuring genuine participation, it is easy to imagine why many of the management plans produced in the past and even today may have included consultation with stakeholder groups, in the best of cases, but were very rarely prepared together with them, as should occur.

Our aim in this document is to offer methods for making participatory processes in planning for

coastal and marine protected areas truly participatory.

1.1

PLANNING FOR  
ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS  
IN COASTAL  
AND MARINE AREAS

The unique characteristics of coastal and marine systems pose a special challenge for conservation.

- They are physically open systems whose environmental flow (water) causes materials to dissolve, mobilize and disperse at great speed, meaning that physiochemical dynamics are highly variable in time and space.
- They are biologically open systems, so the organisms living in them are constantly moving, their associations are determined by ecological variables, and their interactions, mobility or use of alternative habitat in the coastal and marine system are practically constant.

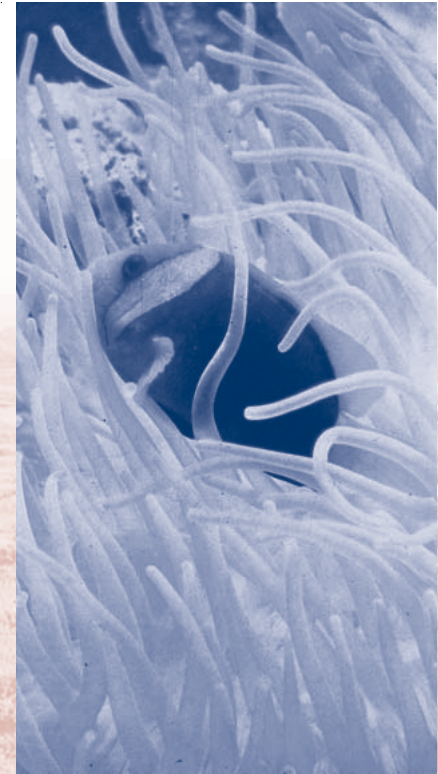
- As opposed to regular ownership or access patterns, these systems are subject to an "open resource" tradition with no limit placed on demand by users. Because there is no possibility of use or access rights, users exploit resources to the maximum to obtain the most benefit in the least time.

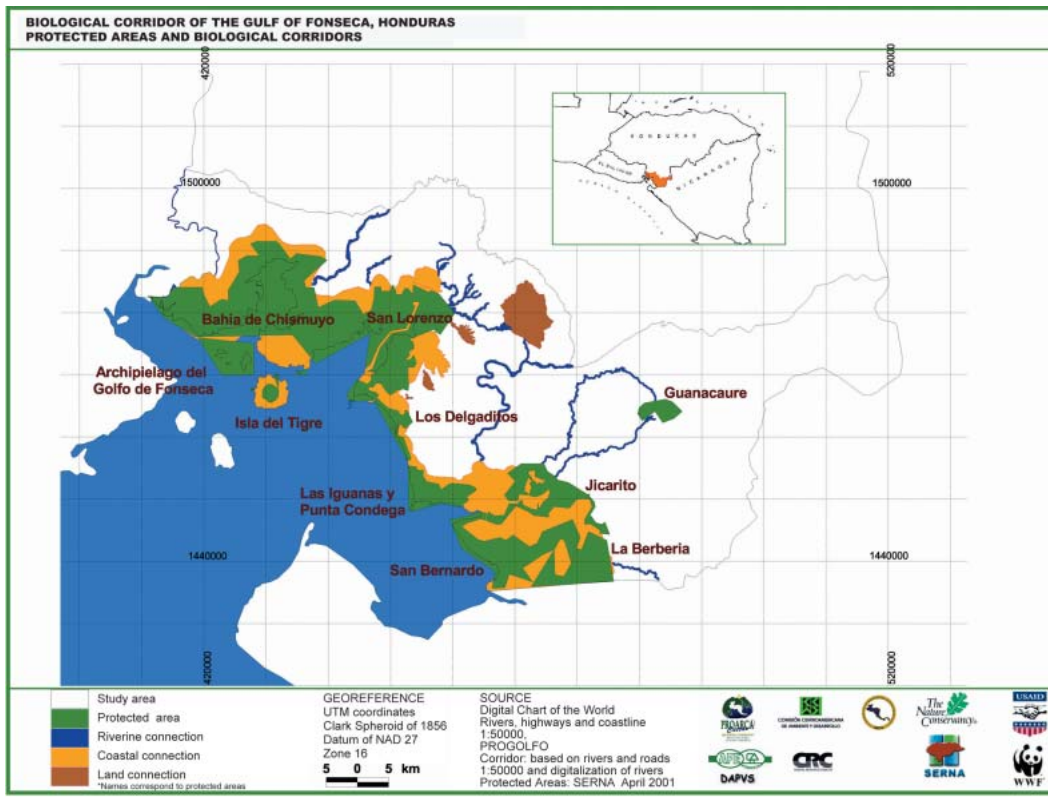
These characteristics of coastal and marine systems and patterns of resource use in them have made coastal and marine zones the most endangered areas in Central America.

## 1.2 | CONSERVATION IN PROTECTED AREA SYSTEMS

Protected areas constitute portions of territory in a country or region where special administrative regimens are applied. These special regimens aim to consolidate the dominion of public welfare over individual welfare in order to achieve certain objectives important for society as a whole. Protected area systems must consequently respond to an array of objectives and strategies defined in the political sphere and upheld by the pertinent legislation.

Clearly, because they are protected zones where public welfare is being promoted, participation is key to achieving such an ambitious objective. This is particularly true in Central America where the opportunity costs for neighboring communities can be very high.





### 1.3 | IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTED AREA CATEGORIES

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Protected areas carry out a wide variety of roles primarily defined through two instruments: (a) the assignment of different management categories and (b) the preparation and implementation of management plans and use regulations.

Management categories represent instruments for recognizing certain attributes of an area under a special administrative regimen. As such, different management categories will imply different conservation targets and different management styles. Table 1 presents the management categories accepted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). On a more detailed level, management plans and use regulations make it possible to establish the guidelines for assigning management uses or modalities within the protected area.

As can be noted in Table 1, different management categories make it possible to assign different intensities of use, for example, passive and low-impact uses such as contemplative tourism at low densities, recommended for wildlife refuges, or modification of particular ecosystems if this will benefit the species that motivated the zone's declaration as a protected area.

IUCN	NAME	OBJECTIVE
I	Strict Nature Reserve/Wildlife Area	Protect the wildlife area and its ecological processes and preserve them for scientific study
II	National Park	Protect representative samples of a particular ecosystem in a country and preserve them for low-impact use and public education
III	Natural Monument	Protect a natural feature because of its spectacular or outstanding characteristics; can be observed but not disturbed
IV	Managed Nature Reserve	Protect one or a group of species in particular, and where management is permitted in order to benefit habitat
V	Protected Landscapes/Seascapes	Extensive areas of functional landscapes conserved in order to maintain key ecological processes and for recreation
VI	Resource Reserve	To ensure the management potential of certain resources, such as game and fishing preserves, forest reserves, etc.

## ABSOLUTE PRESERVATION

The different protected area categories make it possible to place these regions under special administrative regimens with different types of use, consonant with their objectives and with needs related to the provision of goods and services for society.

1. A production system is considered as the aggregate of productive activities of different origins, either sustainable or unsustainable, making up the economy of a social group.

Other higher impact activities such as active ecotourism at resorts or mountain climbing in national parks, in areas set aside for these purposes, respond to recreational and environmental education objectives. By placing an area in the category of forest reserve, forestry resources can be managed sustainably or used wisely based on management plans. Biosphere reserves are complex territorial systems with protected zones in different categories and multiple use areas where wise use is the rule of thumb for socioeconomic development involving production systems.

The question that must be addressed regarding coastal and marine protected areas is how to achieve wise resource use associated with local or national economies and thus make them part of the process

of national development given the following conditions:

- a) The areas are suitable for achieving national conservation objectives corresponding to the Protected Area System.
- b) The category assigned in each case is suitable in terms of the uses permitted.

Ideally, conservation objectives of the system should be achieved, making coastal and marine protected areas key instruments for conservation, but without limiting local and national socioeconomic development. If none of these objectives are achieved it will be very difficult to justify the need for conserving the area. This is especially important for countries with transition economies and for





developing countries where "natural capital" frequently represents a critical element for economic development.

The next question, then, is how to transform coastal and marine areas protected by law into important zones for both biodiversity conservation and development.

## 2. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS

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## 2.1 | WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

Different regions and countries have a notably different vision of what participation means, not so much in terms of the concept but very much so in the practice.

It is often said that public consultation processes represent opportunities for the participation of civil society. This is established in Venezuelan law, for example, where protected area planning requires that communities be consulted about their opinion of management plans in protected areas. This practice represents an advance in the participation process, but is still a long way from making it possible for communities to own and thus follow the recommendations of a plan when making their own internal decisions.

Below we present some advantages and disadvantages of community consultation and participation in protected area planning, for purposes of comparison. Obviously this is not an exhaustive analysis, but it does provide an important element for evaluating the extensive advantages of participatory planning based on the experience of PROARCA/Costa.

Active participation is considered much more effective than consultation. In this document participation is understood as a process through which civil society, in all its diverse forms of organization, may express itself and directly contribute to the identification, formulation and implementation of actions modifying its own behavior and the environment.

### **PUBLIC CONSULTATION IS NOT PARTICIPATION**

Participation is understood as the process through which civil society in all its diverse forms of organization may express itself and contribute directly to the identification, formulation and implementation of actions modifying its own behavior and/or its environment—in other words, granting power and participation in the different decision-making processes.

Participation will thus take different forms in different social, cultural, legal, administrative and political settings. However, the factor common to all of these settings can be summed up by the fact that societies participate in defining the rules that govern them and are thus responsible for carrying out their own decisions. In brief, they assume ownership of the decision process about management. This facilitates and in many cases ensures effective participation in the execution of the proposed management actions.

METHOD PARTICIPATION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
CONSULTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides a forum for incorporating local knowledge</li> <li>-Allows local communities to become suitably informed and to express their opinions about the scientific information available</li> <li>-Facilitates dialogue between communities and administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Is a vertical information system in which communities are receptors and thus passive</li> <li>- Disagreements are addressed in a confrontational manner since proposals are presented as a finished product</li> <li>- Requests or suggestions for changes in the proposals signify delays at a very advanced stage of the planning process</li> <li>- Communities do not own the proposals, even though they may agree with them.</li> </ul>
PARTICIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides a forum for incorporating local knowledge</li> <li>- Allows local communities to become suitably informed and to express their opinions about the scientific information available</li> <li>- Makes it possible to develop parallel processes of local organization</li> <li>- Allows communities to make proposals and express their opinion about planning proposals directly and indirectly affecting them</li> <li>- Develops a total ownership of the process and its outcomes</li> <li>- Establishes dialogue between communities and administrators</li> <li>- Conflicts are addressed and joint solutions with mutual responsibilities are sought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The process normally takes longer.</li> <li>- Costs are higher in terms of time, personnel and funding.</li> </ul>

### 3. PARTICIPATORY PLANNING OF COASTAL AND MARINE AREAS



### 3.1 | MANAGEMENT PLANS: WHAT ARE THEY AND PURPOSE DO THEY SERVE?

A management plan, master plan or development plan is a planning instrument for resource use in an area under a regimen of special administration. It is a policy guide orienting the administration of natural resources and the ecological processes that sustain them. It includes clear indications regarding the uses that are permitted, restricted or banned, derived from its objectives and its legal, institutional and political context. The scope of use should include a clear reference to delimited geographic areas and the social and cultural context to which they apply.

In general terms, and with certain variations, all planning methods lead to a document with similar contents. Consequently, in this methodology we will limit ourselves to an emphasis on the participatory planning methodology as a social process, without referring to technical planning elements that have

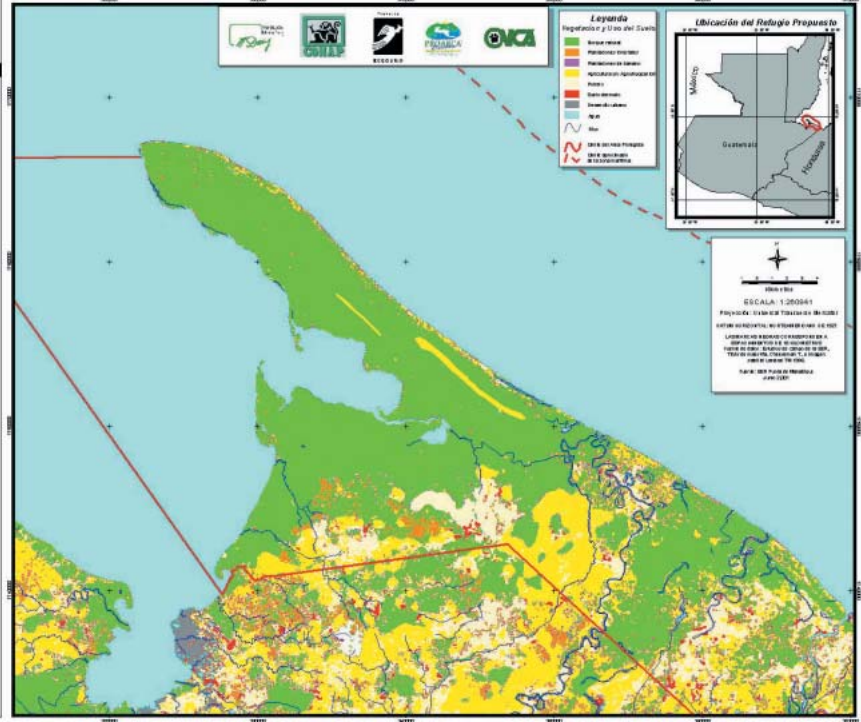
been described extensively by other authors in other documents.

Traditionally, management plans are written by a technical team that proposes zoning and regulations for resource use. This is based on land use capacity and current use in the area. The team consults local stakeholders regarding the proposal and makes certain changes to incorporate their comments. The disadvantage of this methodology is that stakeholder groups feel regulations are being imposed, which usually elicits reactions and intensifies conflicts over resource use. This is why we are proposing the use of participatory planning as an investment that helps avoid such conflicts and offers an approach to planning as a common objective for the well-being of all stakeholder groups related to the protected area.

**Special Protection Area  
Punta de Manabique**

**Current Soil Use**

Master Plan 2001 - 2006





## 3.2 | PLANNING PARTICIPATION AND GENERATING GREATER OWNERSHIP

### Who participates and how are participants selected?

To ensure an orderly and systematic participation of local stakeholders, it is necessary to find people who legitimately represent them and bring those representatives together in a specific structure, hopefully one that is recognized and respected by their constituents and by the authority responsible for management of the protected area. This is not an easy process, and it is never perfect. Ideally, outside facilitators are familiar with the local context and have a sense of what is going on, as opposed to being just spectators, so that they can facilitate (without influencing) the process of designating representatives.

Once stakeholder groups are identified, they are asked to choose a representative. Frequently divisions

arise in the group and representatives are not selected by 100% of their constituency. If possible, it is better to intervene on behalf of better representation if it exists and if actors in the group permit such a possibility. What is most important is that facilitators always respect the process and the representatives. This lends credibility, which is critical during the initial phases. A new actor can always be incorporated in the future if required by communities or other actors and to continue improving representativeness. Often, not all stakeholders are interested at the beginning, but once people see that the group is making decisions and that its decisions are followed, interest in participating grows.

### Who are the ideal representatives?

Representatives should be people who are respected in their sector and who can participate in working on ideas about the declaration and management of the reserve. Some important questions are:

- Are the stakeholder groups organized?
- Who are the most powerful/most respected people in the zone?
- Which people are most respected in each sector and why?

It is necessary to base this work on leaders who are positive and avoid the negative leaders frequently found in our areas of work or identify mechanisms for neutralizing them.

Typically, stakeholder groups consist of groups that are in charge, groups of beneficiaries and groups of people who have been affected or harmed.

Organizations are considered in charge if they have legally granted authority and responsibility for the management and administration of resources or processes related to the protected area. Examples include the directors of protected areas in the environmental authority, maritime authority or port captaincy, fishing department, etc.

Beneficiary groups are those that benefit in one way or another from the presence of the protected area. In many cases these benefits are not perceived, and this will be one of the objectives of the process. Annex 3 contains examples of beneficiary groups.

Groups, people and institutions are considered to be affected or harmed if the regulations in a protected area impose limitations or restrictions on them in one way or another.

It is essential that these stakeholders be involved in developing the management plan so that they own it, make it theirs and respect it. If handled correctly, when the benefits of a protected area are established, the different actors will perceive the factors that unite them rather than those that separate them. This group, organized around an agreement to promote planning for the management of a protected area, is what we call a coalition for protected area management. This coalition has a common objective: to achieve efficient management of the protected area, since

this is what will allow them to obtain personal objectives.

### **Participation mechanism**

Once the group of local stakeholder representatives is formed, the idea is to create a coalition (the consultative group) that includes all of these sectors, assumes ownership of the participatory planning process and fathers the master plan. To exist and operate, the coalition or consultative group needs resources, mechanisms for communicating its decisions to different sectors and, to the extent possible, recognition or formalization from the pertinent authority to back up its decisions.

## 4. PROPOSED METODOLOGY FOR PARTICIPATORY PLANNING



The main components of the methodology are workshops where local stakeholders and organized stakeholder groups build their vision and a management proposal for the protected area, with facilitation by an external and independent element trusted by the stakeholder groups and guiding them toward common interests. The different phases of the process are described below, using typical planning elements and emphasizing the steps that are needed to make it participatory.

### **Contract or identify an external facilitator**

These processes can be carried out with just the people who are directly involved, without an external facilitator. However, having an external agent as a facilitator is a common factor in successful cases. The quality and the credibility of the person facilitating is what is most important, along with the participants' recognition of that person and his or her skill in handling issues that come up during discussions in an objective, technically sound and socially fair way. Frequently, the difference between success and failure in planning is due more to the capacity of the facilitator than to the actual will of the actors.

### **A facilitator should meet the following requirements:**

- Have no personal interest in the zone and no affiliation with any of the parties involved, especially if there are marked conflicts
- Extensive experience in protected area planning
- Enjoy the recognition and respect of local stakeholders in his or her area of expertise. If necessary the person can give some talks in his field of knowledge beforehand.
- Capacity for group management and administration and conflict resolution
- Capacity to give organized, clear and enjoyable presentations
- Capacity to synthesize information and write documents



### **Data collection and the possibility of conducting rapid ecological assessments**

A first step will be to gather pertinent information in studies, evaluations, theses, scientific publications, legal documents and other material related to the protected area, in order to document its general characteristics and collect descriptive, biological, physical and socioeconomic data. With this information on current and potential use, a summary appraisal can be prepared for validation with local communities or stakeholder groups.

The facilitator should have a very good grasp of this information so that on certain occasions he or she can provide support and guidance for group discussions based on the data and avoid conflicts

due to missing or inexact information. The facilitator thus ensures that the group will be making decisions that are as informed as possible.

In some cases there is not enough information to produce a management plan. The principle here is to go ahead and make do with the information available, while leaving it clear that this is a process and a flexible plan permitting revision and change. However, if there is enough time and resources it can be worth it to obtain more detailed scientific data providing the group with better guidance for its decisions about management.



It is important to define the themes of scientific investigation, using the following criteria:

- Cover the information gaps identified
- Prioritize themes of special importance for the protected area's management according to its management category and objectives
- Set priorities regarding conservation targets and main threats
- Consider the most threatened resources

### Approach stakeholders and prepare formation of the management plan consultative group

Exploratory meetings should be held with these leaders to ascertain their perception of threats affecting the success of their activities now and in the medium term, as well as their sense of what the zone will be like in five years, and the opportunities and disadvantages offered by the reserve.

Meetings should be held with each sector to find out the history, hopes, concerns and future vision of each, including:

- community representatives
- fishermen and/or aquaculturists
- ranchers and agribusiness representatives
- tourism investors
- representatives of GOs and NGOs

### Begin preparing inputs for the management plan

- Review of secondary information (documents, appraisal, summary, draft of the REA with maps)
- Digitalization of maps existing on paper (on geology, topography/bathymetry, watersheds, historical sites, land tenure, etc.)
- Preparation of the legal framework and technical framework with inputs from a lawyer for the national organization responsible for the protected area

The Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) methodology applied by PROARCA/Costas and developed by TNC has been extensively tested and is documented in several publications.

The information collected should be oriented toward its use in decision-making processes on management and conservation and provide answers to questions such as the following:

- Where do the best representations of coastal and marine systems occur?
- Which species are most important to the area? (i.e., species threatened with extinction, species with commercial value, endemic or rare species, etc.)
- What are the key habitats in these areas? (i.e., spawning zones (aggregations), resting or feeding areas, etc.)
- What criteria exist with respect to species mobility and connectivity between systems within the protected area or with other zones outside the protected area?



Socioeconomic information will also be key, both to promote discussion during the process and to contribute important data for planning and management. In this sense, socioeconomic assessments, analyses of community production systems associated with the protected area or participatory rural appraisals are all means to obtain a) important information for planning resource use and trends, and b) to incorporate communities in the process from the very moment this information is obtained.

**Some of the points to investigate are:**

-Community perceptions of an adjacent protected area

- Current and potential uses
- Perceptions of the benefits obtained from natural resources in the protected area
- Perceptions of the main threats to natural resources in the protected area
- The impact of extractive activities carried out for the family economy
- Use trends for key resources in the protected area
- Perception of the intrinsic value of coastal and marine resources, such as those in the protected area

All of this information should be placed in simple formats and presented to stakeholder groups in a clear, objective way so that it can be discussed and enriched based on their knowledge.

### **Form an advisory group and prepare a summary appraisal**

The formation and local recognition of an "advisory committee," "advisory council" or "consultative council" is a key step in this methodology, and will be the forum for stakeholder representation (with all stakeholder groups represented.) All of the information available will be discussed within this council, where proposals will be made and submitted for discussion and approval before being incorporated in the management plan. To form this group, first the initial group meets and the idea is presented. In response, participants, procedures and "rules of the game" will be determined. At this moment it will be necessary to:

- Explain the objectives of the planning process and the methodology proposed for participatory planning
- Answer questions from the stakeholder groups
- Develop with them the responsibilities and structure of the advisory group, the work agenda and calendar and (if they wish) the formation of an operational group (executive committee) in charge of following up on the decisions of the advisory group
- Generate the participatory development of a map showing current natural resource use
- Follow up on the workshop by visiting individual actors to ask their opinion about what was proposed in the workshop

In this phase of the process, mechanisms are formalized for the participation of local stakeholders in the planning process. At the same time, this phase is the beginning of the process itself and offers opportunities to learn work dynamics based on processes that do not greatly compromise participants. It becomes a kind of game where the objective is to obtain the trust and willingness of the participants, while also establishing the rules. These rules should be developed together by everyone and put into writing. A proposal can help in some cases but should not be seen as something imposed by the facilitator.

Ideally, this group will have received some type of formalization or endorsement from the authority in charge of protected area management so that its

decisions have political backing. In practice, however, we have learned that such formalization is difficult to obtain. Even so, groups that are strongly convinced of the importance of their role exercise an important influence in both management planning and implementation, developing a strong capacity of convocation and obtaining local recognition or informal recognition from authorities. This formalization and recognition is a desirable step, but their absence should not become an obstacle. What is important is that the group operates, with or without formalization. The formality with which participants approach their work will earn the group a corresponding respect at the local and national level.



**Present the results of the summary appraisal and the rapid ecological and socioeconomic assessment**

The most important part of this step in the methodology is to have local residents validate the information compiled in the summary and REA, if one was made. Usually the inhabitants of the area and its vicinity have undocumented but quite precise information on important biological events, such as where fauna aggregate, natural phenomenon occurring in specific areas or periods, spawning or nesting areas, unreported current uses, etc.

The workshop thus makes it possible to correct information obtained from other sources and to gather information about local people. During work sessions, be sure to:

- Present the map on current uses made by the advisory group at the first workshop
- Present the results of the REA and summary appraisal made by investigators
- Ask for input and critiques of the information presented and add inputs on transparencies placed on top of the maps prepared

It is very important for local actors participating in the process to realize that the comments obtaining consensus in the workshop are placed on the map and taken into account in the texts. This results in the following:

- enrichment of the information with undocumented data
- gives participants the assurance that their comments will be taken into consideration
- lends credibility to the process

Make sure that participants develop or prepare maps showing the physical location associated with their comments and inputs. Placing clear reference points on the map, such as communities, rivers, crags, mountains, roads and highways, is very helpful for people.

The maps are very graphic and anyone can participate in marking areas or events important to them. Local stakeholders should be allowed to make their own indications on the base or appraisal map. This makes it possible for participants to own the map, little by little, which is what we want. After each workshop a written report should be prepared with the main agreements, to be presented at the following workshops along with the draft maps, which should be placed on the wall. As maps are digitalized they should be shown to the advisory group to demonstrate that they reflect the draft maps that the participants themselves created.

### Present and analyze the legal and institutional framework

This step requires that all stakeholders know and understand who is in charge of managing the protected areas and how that responsibility was acquired, what the management rules and regulations are, and what laws provide legal backing for the protected areas. The advisory group should receive this information from the competent authority.

The following should occur at this stage:

- Review of planning methodology and presentation of the results of previous workshops
- Presentation of the legal framework by the

lawyer of the national authority in charge of protected areas

- Presentation of the institutional framework by the protected area authority and facilitator
- Review of the management objectives for the protected area in terms of its legal definition, or define them with the participants
- Clear understanding of the legal and institutional frameworks and how to work on the basis of these frameworks
- Avoid pessimism and show flexibility without creating false expectations

This workshop is extremely important, since this is when authorities will present the legal framework establishing the protected area. Legal matters are not negotiable. Within this framework of action, more possibilities should be found on how to achieve the



conservation objectives of the protected area, and to the extent possible, how to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the stakeholder groups. The facilitator must direct processes toward achieving this difficult balance, so he or she should not be the person who presents the legal or institutional framework. It should be presented by the respective authority, and always be kept in mind during difficult moments in the discussion about management options for the different zones or species of the area in question.

### Compare current and potential uses of the reserve

The following should occur at this phase:

- Review of the results of other workshops
- Presentation of basic maps providing inputs for the plan (i.e., base map, topography and bathymetry, watersheds, geology, distribution of coastal and marine flora and fauna, plant cover and current use, and historical/cultural sites with ecotourism potential)
- Presentation of potential uses of the land and marine area
- Comparison of potential and current uses (establish areas where there is use conflict)
- Identification of critical areas (i.e., those with great ecological importance, sites where



there is a conflict between current and potential use or conflict over uses of the natural resources, and areas where potential and current uses are compatible)

This workshop is usually the most important, because this is when the terms are defined for management of the protected area. The first step is to superimpose maps of current/potential use on resource maps with areas of particular importance for conservation targets or development of the protected area in question. One or several maps of critical areas will result from this discussion. These can be:



a) Areas that are critical because of their importance: zones of mass reproduction or critical in the life cycle of a species or group of species, an area of historical cultural value, etc. These can immediately be placed on the map as soon as they appear.

b) Areas that are critical due to use conflicts: areas where existing uses are clearly unsustainable and/or incompatible with the conservation objectives of the protected area. It is best to deal with these last, unless the group has an urgent need to work on them right away.

In other areas there can be perfect compatibility between use potential, conservation objectives and current uses. We recommend mapping these areas

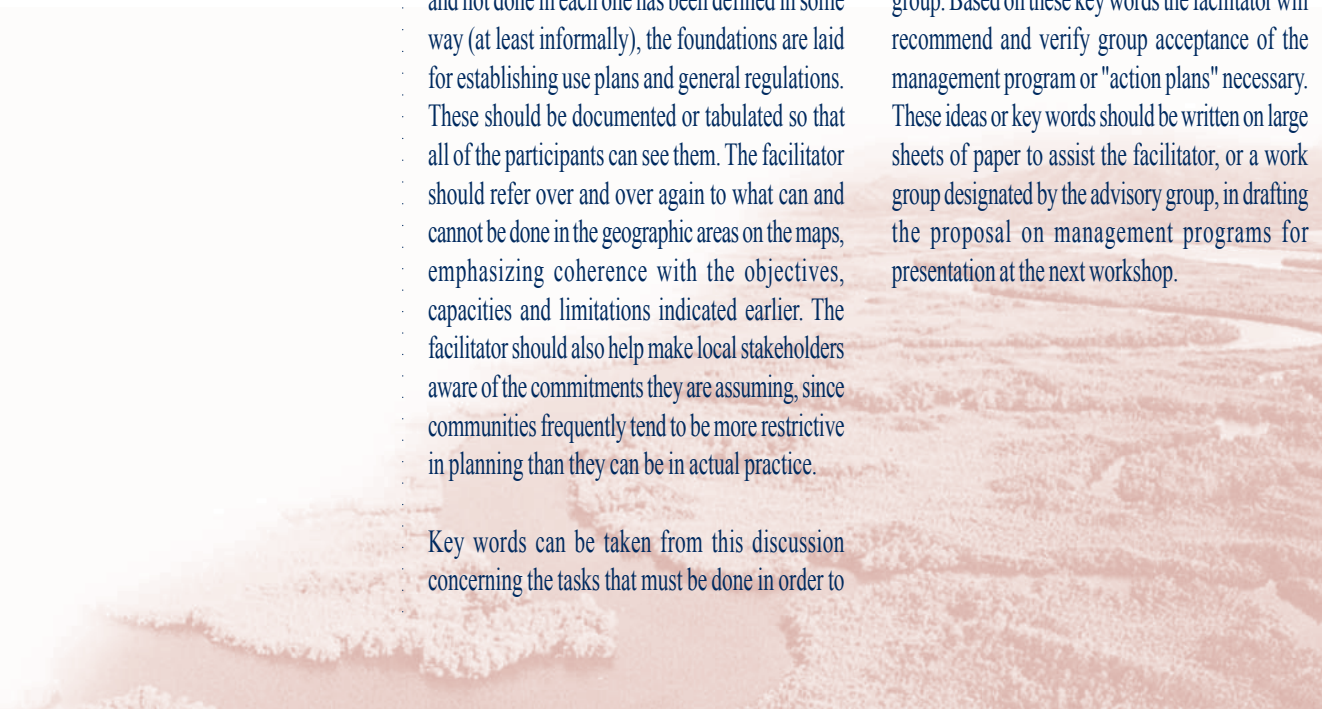
first in order to reach consensus quickly. This creates a very positive feeling of optimism and achievement in the group. After this it will be necessary to address more conflict-laden issues and try to find satisfactory management solutions consistent with the legal framework, conservation needs and the needs of the stakeholder groups.

Once all of the zones have been discussed and identified, the group can hold an open brainstorming session about names and the uses recommended, banned and permitted. This discussion will make it possible to give names and boundaries to the zones and move ahead in defining exactly what is to be achieved in each one. This is the first step in an almost imperceptible and natural determination of zoning.

### Use Regulations and Structure of Action Plans

The following products must be obtained in this phase:

- Review of the results from previous workshops, especially management objectives and zoning for the area
- Consensus, through dialogue, on what has to be done to achieve management objectives and zoning
- Draft/negotiate allowable, restricted and banned uses for each zone
- Make a list of the action plans needed in order to achieve the management objectives



Once zones have been located and what will be done and not done in each one has been defined in some way (at least informally), the foundations are laid for establishing use plans and general regulations. These should be documented or tabulated so that all of the participants can see them. The facilitator should refer over and over again to what can and cannot be done in the geographic areas on the maps, emphasizing coherence with the objectives, capacities and limitations indicated earlier. The facilitator should also help make local stakeholders aware of the commitments they are assuming, since communities frequently tend to be more restrictive in planning than they can be in actual practice.

Key words can be taken from this discussion concerning the tasks that must be done in order to

carry out recommendations accepted by the advisory group. Based on these key words the facilitator will recommend and verify group acceptance of the management program or "action plans" necessary. These ideas or key words should be written on large sheets of paper to assist the facilitator, or a work group designated by the advisory group, in drafting the proposal on management programs for presentation at the next workshop.

### Prepare action plans (management programs) for the management plan

In this phase the names of the management plans are formalized, along with the areas where they will be applied and their relation to the objectives, zoning, and uses that are permitted, restricted or prohibited in the protected area. The facilitator will present a compilation of ideas about the most important actions in each program and how they can contribute to the protected area and management objectives.

The coordinator or facilitator of the Master Plan will prepare these action plans using the language the consultative or advisory group has utilized. This phase is long and tedious, particularly for community representatives, so material should be



prepared beforehand with enough time to check it over, presented as quickly and simply as possible and oriented more toward the points under discussion.

### **Present and discuss action plans and the implementation timetable**

The following should be achieved at this meeting:

- Review of the results of previous workshops
- Presentation of action plans
- Establishment of the main activities in each program during a given period
- With the consultative group, match the activities in each action plan with their location on the zoning map (i.e., where more surveillance is needed, more research, etc.)
- Define infrastructure and surveillance needs

The most important thing in this phase is to clarify the role of the programs, their main actions, the organizations responsible for their implementation

and the most timely and realistic moment for them to take place. We recommend summarizing the timetable on a chart as a way to visualize the distribution of efforts in the years proposed.



### Prepare the development plan (infrastructure)

Based on the long-term objectives for the protected area, derived from the vision of the management plan and with input from participants, a strategy should be put together for the plan's implementation, identifying which actions are the most important during the different periods (normally years.)

The development plan can be accompanied by a map showing all of the infrastructure and services that will be available once the entire management plan has been implemented. In a certain way, this is an idealized vision of what the protected area should have and the corresponding geographic location, in order to implement all the actions designed for its management.

**Prepare the implementation timetable and budget**

In this phase the object is to obtain formal acceptance of the timetable in its final format by all of the stakeholder groups. The coordinator of the Master Plan prepares the corresponding budget plan based on all of the inputs already in place.

**Revise the entire process and submit the first draft of the plan**

This is an important validation of the process requiring the presence of local authorities and the organizations responsible for natural resource and protected area management in the country, in order to verify local stakeholders' participation and involvement in the plan's formulation, and so that authorities understand and respect the process.

Products obtained at this phase are:

- A review of the entire participatory planning process, especially the objectives of the master plan, the legal and institutional framework, management objectives for the area, zoning, main use regulations, action plans, the development plan and the budget
- Submission of copies of the draft plan to the members of the consultative group, for them to read and make comments

### Validate the management plan

This is a workshop to finalize the process and fine-tune points of agreement among the actors. After this entire participatory process to construct management strategies and actions, discrepancies do not normally crop up. In a certain way, this can be considered a formality providing closure for the actors.

The most important point to discuss here is the advisory group's role in the future management of the protected area. This is mainly because the group is formed for the purpose of providing an organized forum of participation for local stakeholders. However, if the process has been successful the group's decision-making power has been strengthened and it has an increased interest in

strengthened and it has an increased interest in participation. Normally, groups want to tackle other issues of a broader nature or plan an active role in materializing the hopes placed in the management plan.

After these processes, an "advisory committee," "support group" or "advisory group" is usually established; the name will depend on social, cultural or political factors in the country. No matter what it is called, the most important thing is to define this group's functions and scope, which should be recognized and formalized by the corresponding administrative authority. Ideally, the existence and role of these groups should be incorporated in the chapter of the management plan dedicated to administration, but this is not always possible since in some cases definition and formalization occurs after the plan is approved.



### **Present the final document to authorities and stakeholders and formalize**

This is the moment when the plan receives social approval, manifested before the administrative authorities. It may seem obvious, but the national administrative authority needs to review the document before it is formally submitted and approve it, if only verbally, to avoid the dangerous situation created by public rejection of what has been generated during the planning process. This would be a severe setback to the credibility of participatory processes.

It is ideal when the presentation is accompanied by letters of endorsement and requests for approval from the communities and stakeholder groups participating in the planning process. It is to be expected that this process will be followed by the

government's due formalization of the management plan. Evaluations for learning purposes have shown that the greatest frustration in planning processes is the absence of government approval or formalization, with the expectation that minimal resources will be allocated for the plan's implementation.





## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

### **From a methodological perspective**

We should not forget that participatory planning is nothing more than a different style of carrying out planning for protected areas. The inputs and techniques are essentially the same as those typically used. What PROARCA/ Costas aims to contribute with its experience is a more effective way of implementing and using those same techniques in processes that are more democratic and transparent, but firmly based on scientific information and cultural respect.

### **With respect to planning structures**

Participation mechanisms and structures do not end with the preparation of the management plan document. On the contrary, we have learned that

document. On the contrary, we have learned that once participatory planning has been carried out, stakeholder groups try to maintain an active role in the implementation phase of the management plan.

This process obviously takes place through a smaller group that can operate more easily, something like an executive committee that represents the stakeholder groups. In some countries it is called an advisory committee, in others a technical committee or collaborating group. Whatever the name, however, this group is given responsibility for cooperating with the administration of the protected area and is formalized along with the formalization of the management plan itself or in express and independent form by the agency in the country responsible for the area's management of the area.

### In relation to the products obtained in the protected area

Participatory planning might be considered a slow and expensive mechanism for obtaining a management plan document as its product. Nevertheless, as mentioned at the beginning, these processes generate numerous products and thus generally make the following possible:

- Communication and understanding among the stakeholder groups, resulting in efficiency and saving time in the future
- Management processes begin even before the document is finalized
- The organization and formalization of stakeholder groups addressing specific themes in order to achieve representativeness while simultaneously contributing to improvement

of their own management practices (for example, fishermen, associations of gatherers, etc.)

- Ownership by local stakeholders, thus avoiding subsequent costs for information or to promote concepts or decisions with other actors. Making decisions on a joint basis saves resources required by other, non-participatory methodologies, such as time and other valuable and limited resources.

In the experience of PROARCA/ Costas, participatory planning is an initial investment that definitely seems to pay off in the medium and long term in terms of savings and greater management effectiveness.

## ANNEX: RESPONSABILITIES OF THE PLANNING TEAM

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### Technical Coordinator of the Management Plan

- Prepare the management plan document and maps in accordance with the guidelines of the national environmental authority and the objectives of the administering NGO (if there is one), with the support of a technical team and based on inputs developed in participatory form by the consultative group
- Ensure that nothing is omitted in the process and that all important ecological and biological aspects have been taken into consideration; provide data for more informed decisions.

### Participatory Planning Specialist

- Support the development of participatory planning methodology
- Facilitate at least one of the sectoral workshops to train the facilitator in carrying out community (or sectoral) workshops and to generate support from the personnel of the administering organization (GO or NGO, depending on the case) for application of this methodology
- Co-facilitate the workshop to create the consultative group for the plan.

**Participatory Planning Facilitator (generally a hired consultant)**

- Facilitate sectoral workshops to ascertain the interests of each group related to the reserve and their visions of the future
- Co-facilitate all of the workshops in the participatory planning process
- Support the resolution of conflicts that arise during the planning process through dialogue with specific sectors

**Responsibilities of the Facilitator**

**Responsibilities of the Facilitator**

- Co-facilitation of sectoral workshops
- Make field visits to become acquainted with the area and with some of the leaders of the different sectors
- Prepare the agenda and materials
- Facilitate the workshops
- Prepare the proceedings of each workshop

**Facilitation of the workshop to create the consultative group**

- Prepare the agenda and materials
- Facilitate the workshop
- Prepare the proceedings
- Document and distribute the determinations of each group

**Facilitation of consultative group workshops**

- Prepare the agenda and materials together with the Technical Coordinator
- Facilitate the workshop
- Prepare the proceedings

**Conflict Resolution**

- Facilitate small meetings (in between meetings of the consultative group) to promote dialogue between the specific sectors if necessary to resolve conflicts

**Academic and professional requirements**

- Licentiate degree in a field related to natural resource management
- Experience in participatory planning and preferably in conflict resolution

### **Responsibilities of Personnel in the Administering Entity (GO or NGO, depending on the case)**

- Approach all the sectors, ascertain their interests in the area and how the reserve's creation and management can benefit or harm them, and win their confidence
- Convoke or coordinate the convocation to workshops and meetings
- Ensure good flow of information between the consultant team and actors in the area regarding the objectives of the process and progress, including the reproduction and distribution of materials produced by the team
- Point out conflicts in the area while maintaining neutrality in the role of mediator, presenting problems/conflicts to the

consultative group so that they can be aired and then resolved

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	RESERVE'S POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO EACH GROUP
1. Local communities	Better management and marketing of their fish, security for their lands Identify new production options
2. Ranchers	Land security Avoid natural risks to production
3. Tourism micro-entrepreneurs	Protection of the landscape they are marketing Guidance to improve their activity Access to new markets
4. Aquaculture fishermen	Protection of habitats critical for maintaining fishing Identify fishing areas for their exclusive use Assistance and training
5. Tourism investors	Protection of landscape and tourist attractions Recommendation on integrating other actors in their interests Connections for carrying out their operations

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	RESERVE'S POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO EACH GROUP
6. Agribusiness companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protection of the natural barrier against hurricanes and other natural disasters</li> <li>Possible certification of their bananas through collaboration with the initiative</li> <li>Identification of mechanisms to consolidate their role in another sphere</li> <li>Avoidance of poorly oriented efforts resulting in losses</li> <li>Avoidance of environmental risks to their production systems</li> </ul>
7. GOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of their administrative authority when applicable</li> <li>Ordering of activities and uses associated with natural resources in the area</li> <li>Legalization of lands and productive activities</li> <li>Establishment of ties necessary with other sectors</li> <li>Identification of important partners for management</li> </ul>
8. NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation of biodiversity, sustainable development and image of the organization</li> <li>Institutional growth</li> <li>Strengthening of ties with local stakeholders</li> </ul>
9. - Port authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More support for environmental management in their areas of work and navigation</li> </ul>



