



The Role & Feasibility of Marine Conservation Agreements

An analysis of opportunities in the Coral Triangle, Gulf of California, Gulf of Mexico and Eastern Tropical Pacific

PROJECT SUMMARY

Objectives

- Determine ocean and coastal management frameworks within which MCAs may be applied.
- Determine how and if MCAs can be used to complement existing conservation efforts.
- Identify in-water MCA projects (and implementers) that can be undertaken in the next 1-3 years.

Geographic Focus

- Coral Triangle: Indonesia
- Gulf of California: Mexico
- Gulf of Mexico: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and east coast of Mexico
- Eastern Tropical Pacific: Panama and Costa Rica

Timing

- September 2009 – December 2010 with the following focal periods:
- CT: Oct – Feb 2010.
- GCA: Feb – May 2010
- GMX: Jun – July 2010
- ETP: Aug – Nov 2010



Fish drying on beach, Komodo National Park, Indonesia. Photo credit: © Ron Geatz/TNC

PROBLEM & SOLUTION: Private for-profit ventures often acquire rights to marine and coastal areas for purposes that degrade ocean resources. Such ventures include various fishing activities, sand and gravel mining, energy facilities, marinas, utility lines, aquaculture, and cruise lines. Recently, The Nature Conservancy and other organizations have sought opportunities to acquire or direct rights to ocean environments through Marine Conservation Agreements (MCAs) for purposes that protect ocean resources and improve local communities.

MARINE CONSERVATION

AGREEMENTS: MCAs include any formal or informal understanding between two or more parties in which the parties obligate themselves, for an exchange of benefits, to take certain actions, refrain from certain actions, or transfer certain rights and responsibilities to achieve agreed-upon ocean or coastal conservation goals. MCAs can be entered into by governments, local communities,

indigenous groups, and private parties. MCAs can include leases, easements, management agreements, purchase and sale agreements, concessions, and contracts. For more on MCAs, see: www.mcatoolkit.org.

PROJECT OVERVIEW: While MCAs can play complementary roles to traditional MPAs and fisheries management, their use globally has been limited. With funding provided by the Walton Family Foundation, The Nature Conservancy will address this limitation by working with our partners in four priority geographies—the Coral Triangle (CT), Eastern Tropical Pacific (ETP), Gulf of California (GCA), and Gulf of Mexico (GMX)—to analyze the role and feasibility of MCAs. In the first three geographies we will identify priority field projects, local implementers, determine indicators of success, and develop action plans. In the Gulf of Mexico, we will review current ocean conservation activities to establish the connections with MCAs.

PROJECT PROCESS: The project will run September 2009 – December 2010 with the

following focal areas and periods: CT from September – February 2010; GCA from February – May 2010; GMX in June - July 2010; and ETP from August – November 2010. Outreach and communication to relevant entities will precede information collection. In-person interviews and workshops will then be used to explore issues in detail. Interim reports will be circulated for review. After review, the reports will be consolidated and finalized. Our goal is to propose moving forward with 2-3 foundational MCA projects within the CT, GCA, and ETP.

PROJECT CRITERIA: Areas best suited for MCAs will have: identified conservation targets, threats and strategies; identifiable and assignable ownership/management/use rights; supportive legal frameworks; capable implementing organizations; resolvable stakeholder issues; and reasonable costs.

NOTE: We make no assumption that MCAs will be feasible in all areas and, when feasible, that TNC will necessarily be the implementer of future in-water MCA projects.

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For more information, please contact us.

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Activities by Region	2009				2010											
	sep	oct	nov	dec	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec
Coral Triangle																
Outreach, communication, and information collection																
In-country interviews, site visits and workshop																
Information analysis and report writing																
Gulf of California																
Outreach, communication, and information collection																
In-country interviews, site visits and workshop																
Information analysis and report writing																
Gulf of Mexico																
Outreach, communication, and information collection																
In-state meetings																
Information analysis and report writing																
Eastern Tropical Pacific																
Outreach, communication, and information collection																
In-country interviews, site visits and workshop																
Information analysis and report writing																

The timing of activities identified in the project work plan may be adjusted as the project progresses.

Important Geographies

CORAL TRIANGLE: The Nature Conservancy has partnered with several entities to promote the ecological integrity of Coral Triangle ecosystems for more than 15 years. Our Coral Triangle Center, based in Bali, leads these efforts to safeguard the vital species and habitats in marine and coastal areas for the benefit of people and nature. Exploring the experiences with MCAs to date and potential opportunities for additional MCAs within the Coral Triangle has great promise. It is timely for such an exploration as governments of all six Coral Triangle countries launched the 'Coral Triangle Initiative' Regional Plan of Action in May 2009.

GULF OF CALIFORNIA: The MCA analysis in the Gulf of California will build upon previous work and current strategies. Research to date has revealed that private citizens and entities can acquire coastal land only if it lies 20 meters above the high

water mark. Land below this mark can be used by private citizens and entities if they obtain a concession or other authorization, normally from the federal government. The MCA analysis in the Gulf of California will determine if these and other authorizations can be used for conservation purposes.

GULF OF MEXICO: The Gulf of Mexico borders five U.S. states to the north and Mexico's eastern shoreline and the Yucatán Peninsula to the south. Because of its considerable size and diversity of habitat types, the Gulf of Mexico is home to a highly diverse and valuable array of natural resources. Development and implementation of a strategic approach to MCAs in the Gulf of Mexico must take into consideration the number and nature of state and federal agencies and NGOs operating in the area. While different forms of MCAs have been contemplated, and in several cases implemented in this area, what remains

unclear is how a collaborative and comprehensive approach to private, market-based transactions based on conservation agreements in the Gulf of Mexico can complement other strategies to protect ocean and coastal biodiversity.

EASTERN TROPICAL PACIFIC: Long a focus of public and private conservation efforts, the Eastern Tropical Pacific is one of the most productive oceans in the world. MCAs could catalyze even greater coordination among stakeholders, increasing conservation results at local and regional scales. MCAs can promote specific conservation goals within fishing sectors and, by strengthening local governance, can foster important relationships between local communities and marine protected areas. In this region, we will assess opportunities for MCAs relating to fisheries and zoning in conjunction with existing efforts.