

The MPA Guide Expanded Guidance - Stage of Establishment

Version 1. (September, 2021)

The MPA Guide (1) organizes MPAs and zones within multi-zone MPAs according to two features: Level of Protection and Stage of Establishment. Further, it links these Stages and Levels to Outcomes that can be expected for biodiversity and human well-being, and it describes the Enabling Conditions that are prerequisite for durable, effective MPAs. As long as an MPA (or zone within a multi-zone MPA) meets the IUCN definition (2), it will fit into one Stage of Establishment and one Level of Protection at a given point in time. This system complements the IUCN Protected Area Categories that are based not on the level of protection, but on the area's management objectives and governance types (2). It builds from the IUCN MPA Standards (2). Zones must meet all qualifying requirements equally to entire MPAs, including guidance on both Level of Protection and Stage of Establishment.

This document focuses on Stage of Establishment. MPA establishment generally occurs as a series of steps taken by governing or other authorities based on their local and national context. *The MPA Guide* outlines minimum criteria for an MPA to achieve each Stage of Establishment and provides guidelines for best practices. In some cases, several years may pass from an announcement of the intent to create an MPA, to the time when *in situ* protection and management occurs. In other situations, an MPA may be Designated and Implemented simultaneously if the announcement has legal authority and management plans. It is important to note that MPAs that are Proposed/Committed and Designated but not yet Implemented will not accrue intentional biodiversity conservation benefit; protection starts accruing benefits when an MPA is Implemented.

The Stages of Establishment are summarized as follows:

1. Proposed/Committed: The intent to create an MPA is made public.
2. Designated: The MPA is established or recognized through legal means or other authoritative rulemaking.
3. Implemented: The MPA has transitioned from existence “on paper” to being operational “in the water” with plans for management activated.
4. Actively Managed: MPA management is ongoing, including monitoring, periodic review, and adjustments made as needed to achieve biodiversity conservation and other ecological and social goals.

Stage of Establishment	Minimum Criteria	Best Practices
Proposed/Committed	<i>The intent to create an MPA is made public.</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site of importance identified for conservation • Conservation is primary objective 	Site ideally identified based on traditional knowledge and scientific data, with clear goals and informed by stakeholder and rights-holder participation with Indigenous or other local and scientific knowledge of the social-ecological context
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced in some formal manner • Announcement is non-binding 	May be announced via a statement by a government, community, conservation organization, or other organizing group, with transparency and coordination across jurisdictions and sectors, for example via a conference or international meeting, a press release, or online
Designated	<i>MPA is established or recognized through legal means or other authoritative rulemaking</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPA has defined boundaries 	<p>Boundaries unambiguous, published, and known to local users</p> <p>Identified via WDPA ID, coordinates, published maps</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal gazettement or equivalent Indigenous/traditional authorization or customary recognition • Established for the long term 	<p>No sunset clause or review process that allows for rescinding protection shorter than 25 years</p> <p>MPA governance specified, including responsibilities for management and implementation</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly stated goals (for biodiversity conservation and other goals) and process to define allowed uses and associated regulations or rules to control impact 	<p>Consideration of key ecological and social design principles (e.g., size, spacing, incorporation of key habitats and species, recognition of pre-existing rights and uses, etc.)</p> <p>Collection of baseline data to measure MPA outcomes</p>

		<p>Administrative structure for enforcement, such as fines, penalties</p> <p>Governance and administrative structures for management, implementation, and sustainable financing should be specified (e.g., in management plans)</p>
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Stage of Establishment	Minimum Criteria	Example Best Practices
Implemented	<i>The MPA has transitioned from existence “on paper” to being operational “in the water” with management plans activated</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPA has plans for regulating activities 	<p>Management plan (or equivalent) includes information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing regulations and procedures that have been updated as appropriate - Zones, if present, defined with clear rules, rights and boundaries - Identification of key habitats and species to protect - Identification of key threats - Planned activities to mitigate abatable threats and achieve conservation goals - Identified measurable targets - Plan exists for monitoring activities, such as collection of ecological & socio-economic data, monitoring of economic activities (e.g., fisheries, tourism, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of management body/team 	<p>Management enacted through sufficient and organized staffing and funding, with local engagement (may be with governmental or NGO partner)</p> <p>Management agency is empowered to regulate activities that negatively impact the biodiversity values of the site, or partners with other agencies to manage activities outside their jurisdiction</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource user awareness of MPA regulations 	<p>Mechanisms to promote compliance and enforcement exist with sufficient capacity in staff, budget, and infrastructure to enforce the MPA rules if they are broken (e.g., control of access or resource use through permits)</p> <p>System in place for compliance and enforcement</p> <p>Plan for regular surveillance (e.g., by patrols, remote surveillance, or an</p>

		<p>offense reporting system) that addresses any MPA-specific challenges due to size, location, and/or zoning</p> <p>Local stakeholders and rights holders are partners in MPA management</p> <p>Plan for managing users outside the system (e.g., unintended use or activities from unregulated sources)</p>
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Stage of Establishment	Minimum Criteria	Example Best Practices
Actively Managed	<i>MPA management is ongoing, including monitoring, periodic review, and adjustments made as needed to achieve biodiversity conservation and other ecological and social goals.</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active/ongoing monitoring 	<p>Ecological monitoring at appropriate spatial and temporal scales for identifying existing and emerging threats and their ecological impacts</p> <p>Social monitoring at appropriate spatial and temporal scales to measure human dimensions of MPAs, including uses</p> <p>Ecological monitoring to measure progress towards measurable biodiversity conservation targets</p> <p>Regular summary reports of monitoring results</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active/ongoing community engagement 	<p>Established process for co-management with local leadership from stakeholders and rights holders</p> <p>Ongoing efforts to build trust and partnerships with local users</p> <p>Ongoing consideration of cultural values, traditions, and activities in site management</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active/ongoing management evaluation 	<p>Flexible governance and decision-making in a structured, continual process for adaptive management in the face of uncertainty</p> <p>Use of monitoring and learning feedbacks that inform changes to management rules, zoning systems, or MPA boundaries as needed to achieve goals/targets</p>

Notes:

- The Proposed/Committed stage can encompass everything from promised protection of a percent of a country's EEZ, to a vague area of interest, to a more formal proposal

of actual boundaries and possible regulatory structure. Not all of these will be shared and thus this category will include a broad spectrum.

- An MPA or zone may progress through these Stages of Establishment in a non-linear way or skip steps. For example, an MPA may go from Proposed/Committed straight to Actively Managed. Or, an MPA that is Designated may go back to Proposed/Committed if a change in governance results in changed spatial management priorities.
- See the IUCN Green List (4) and the Blue Parks Program (5) as examples of comprehensive systems to evaluate Actively Managed, effective MPAs.

References:

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2. IUCN, WCPA, “Applying IUCN’s Global Conservation Standards to Marine Protected Areas (MPA). Delivering effective conservation action through MPAs, to secure ocean health and sustainable development.” (Version 1.0, Gland, Switzerland., 2018).
3. J. C. Day, N. Dudley, M. Hockings, G. Holmes, D. Laffoley, S. Stolton, S. Wells, L. Wenzel, “Guidelines for applying the IUCN protected area management categories to marine protected areas. Second edition.” (IUCN, Gland, Switzerland., 2019), (available at <https://www.iucn.org/content/guidelines-applying-iucn-protected-area-management-categories-marine-protected-areas-0>).
4. UNEP-WCMC, World Database on Protected Areas. *Prot. Planet* (2020), (available at <https://www.protectedplanet.net/marine>).
5. Marine Conservation Institute, Global Ocean Reporting System Criteria: 2019 (2019), (available at https://globaloceanrefuge.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/GLORES_2019_Criteria_web_190207.pdf).