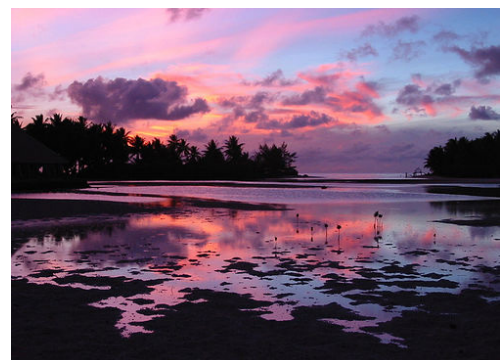
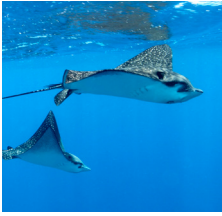
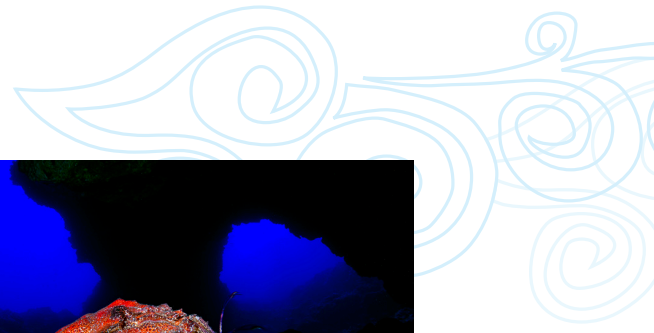




BIG OCEAN

A Network of the World's Large-Scale Marine Managed Areas

2021 NETWORK GUIDE



Overview

Big Ocean is the only peer-learning network created ‘by managers for managers’ (and managers in the making) of large-scale marine managed areas. Our focus is management and best practice. Our goal is to support individual Large-Scale Marine Protected Areas (LSMPA) and the broader field.

Purpose

To help grow capacity in the field by developing and expanding the professional standards of practice to ensure long-term, effective marine management at scale.

Aims

- ☉ Provide a forum for communication and networking through which managers of LSMPAs can increase their knowledge and improve their efforts
- ☉ Understand the unique social, cultural, and ecological values of large-scale marine areas
- ☉ Contribute to the protection of our world’s oceans by collaborating, sharing resources, and supporting effective management-driven, scientific research
- ☉ Communicate the conclusions and findings of the network’s efforts and advances from the broader field

Who we are

MEMBERS: Large-Scale MPAs are members, as represented by the site’s managers. Multiple managers from a single site can participate, but there must be one designated lead or point of contact. LSMPAs can become members by referral or recommendation of current members or partners. Unless there is a request to withdraw from Big Ocean, sites remain, members, even as managers change.

PARTNERS: Big Ocean members may invite additional partners to participate with them for the long term or at a single meeting or for a specific initiative. Partners can be NGOs, institutions, individual subject matter experts or experienced practitioners, or advisory board members.

COLLABORATORS: As the field of LSMPAs has more than tripled across the last two decades, a community of practice has emerged. Although Big Ocean focuses on management and seeks to limit formal membership to sites and active managers, the network fully supports robust engagement from a broader audience of practitioners, conservation professionals, and community leaders. For those working with LSMPAs or supporting marine protection at scale, the Collaborator tier allows engagement in almost every aspect of Big Ocean.

What we do

Big Ocean's current purpose and aims are adaptations of a framework created at the inaugural meeting by the six founding member sites. Managers in attendance that day identified **learning** (to exchange lessons and experience), **knowledge** (to develop, analyze and grow essential understandings), and **communication** (to share learning, knowledge, and progress within the field and externally) to be core needs of managers and the sites they steward.

Today, Big Ocean considers the core principles of learning, knowledge, and communication in all of its endeavors but now groups its activities within three main themes to more effectively accomplish its objectives with members, partners, and collaborators—they are:

CAPACITY: Expand the skills and professional experience of LSMMPA management staff to improve operations on the ground and enhance the network's functioning. **Examples include** hosting network meetings, presentations and workshops, peer-learning and site-to-site exchanges, liaisons between and amongst LSMMPA management teams with related or complementary needs and challenges.

COMMUNICATION: Enhancing the development, collection, analysis, and sharing of information and knowledge, internally and externally. **Examples include** membership surveys, digital newsletters, outreach materials, press releases, coordinating the publication of research, maintaining a presence on the web and across social media, and presenting at international conferences.

DESIGN: Develop products, tools, services, and approaches that increase the effectiveness of management actions and further professionalize the field of marine management at scale. **Examples include** designing frameworks and strategies for site diagnostics, workshops, and peer exchanges; producing high-impact research papers, agendas, guidelines, and capacity-building worksheets.



Big Ocean inaugural meeting held in Honolulu, Hawai'i on December 6th, 2010.

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Activities & Products

NETWORK MEETINGS

Held at least once a year, coincidentally to premier international meetings (or virtually if necessary), these gatherings are open to members, partners, collaborators, and guests with a small closed session to address administrative topics. Usually lasting one full day, the standard schedule includes site updates, reviewing current initiatives, refining products in development, and discussing the growth and needs of the network and the broader field. Additional days are scheduled when members request a Learning Exchange or capacity-building activity, and if the other resources and time are available.

PEER LEARNING

Big Ocean members developed the Learning Exchange concept to provide hands-on, peer-based learning opportunities, which quickly went from half-day sessions within business meetings to a desire for week-long site exchanges. As relationships between and amongst sites grew more robust, so did managers' willingness to support more direct and frequent engagement. Today, Big Ocean has various peer learning activities, namely—site diagnostics, site exchanges, and symposia and workshops.



2nd Business Meeting held in Victoria, B.C. Canada in conjunction with the 2nd International Marine Conservation Congress, 2011.

SITE DIAGNOSTICS

Originally envisioned as a side activity, these small group intensives focusing on a site's most significant pain points have become an essential service for the broader field. Beginning with an informal meeting about the Chagos Archipelago (following the 2nd Business Meeting in Canada), holding such 'diagnostic' discussions with sites in early development has become standard practice. These peer consultations have primarily focused on on-site design, planning, and implementation strategies and vary from single meetings to multi-day site visits.

SITE EXCHANGES

The most immersive and complex capacity-building activity that Big Ocean engages in is Site-to-Site Exchanges. In this context, Big Ocean acts as the facilitator in partnership with a host LSMPA team to welcome guest practitioners from one or more additional sites. An Exchange usually occurs across a week (5-8 days) and includes topical presentations, site visits, and meetings with cross-sector partners, community organizations, and relevant policymakers. The overarching format of each gathering is similar (e.g., opening and closing events, a mix of classroom work and hands-on experiences, field trips, etc.), but the content and activities can vary greatly. No two Exchanges are alike; the program for each is customized to the needs and strengths of the participating LSMPA management teams.

Exchanges have also happened through at-sea research expeditions, so the ability to be creative within this format is significant. Gatherings require substantive planning, more so if the invite list includes participants from multiple sites and countries. Exchanges are only recommended for sites that are far enough along in the design and management phase (legally established or not) that learnings can be immediately employed to improve the participants' daily experience when they return home.

SYMPOSIA AND WORKSHOPS

While Big Ocean can provide peer-learning and support to managers of large-scale MPAs, there remains a lack of official events (workshops, conferences, symposiums, etc.) focusing on the needs, challenges, and benefits of LSMPAs. As such, the network seeks to take advantage of opportunities to foster greater capacity and further professionalize marine management at scale. The following are two examples of Big Ocean's efforts in this area:

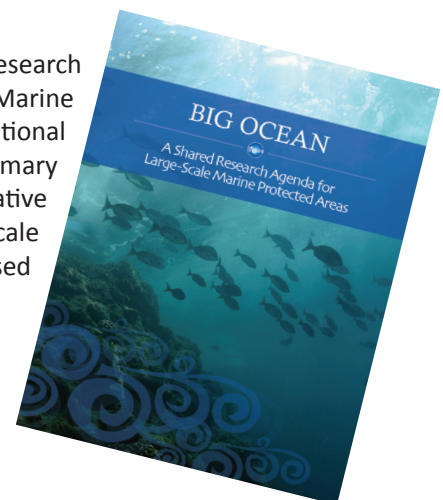
- **Marine Think Tank** — In 2011, Big Ocean hosted an unprecedented gathering of managers and scientists at a 3-day Marine Think Tank held in conjunction with the 25th International Congress for Conservation Biology in Auckland, New Zealand. The workshop's purpose was to build the framework for a shared research agenda specific to large-scale MPAs by identifying knowledge gaps, scientific needs, and research priorities shared among Big Ocean and other large-scale sites.
- **Think Tank on the Human Dimensions of LSMPAs** — In February 2016, Big Ocean and multiple partners convened a Think Tank on the Human Dimensions of LSMPAs in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Leadership from 10 established sites, plus more than 100 other participants from 17 countries, and representation from 16 academic institutions, the Think Tank helped address critical knowledge gaps. A crucial output from this Think Tank was a research agenda to improve how managers, NGOs, policymakers, donors, and scientists incorporate and consider human dimensions in their work.

PUBLICATIONS

From the network's first Managers' Communique in 2010 and dozens of collaborative research papers to global guidelines produced in partnership with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Big Ocean utilizes publishing to increase and share knowledge and increase best-practice standards within the field. The following are two of the most impactful products to date.

SHARED RESEARCH AGENDA

In February 2013, Big Ocean published the world's first-ever Shared Research Agenda for Large-Scale MPAs. Resulting from discussions at a 3-day Marine Think Tank workshop held in conjunction with the 25th International Congress for Conservation Biology in Auckland, New Zealand, the primary aims of this Shared Research Agenda is to capitalize on collaborative research opportunities based on the unique scientific needs of large-scale MPAs, and to identify a set of research priorities to be jointly addressed by Big Ocean member sites.





GLOBAL GUIDELINES

Big Ocean's premier publication, [*Large-Scale Marine Protected Areas: Guidelines for design and management*](#), is the only guidebook of its kind. The foundation of its advice comes from the lived experience of managers and managing agencies who championed marine conservation at scale when there was only a handful of sites globally.

Publishing the guidelines was a collaborative effort with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) LSMPA Task Force. Released in 2017 at the 4th International Marine Protected Area Congress in La Serena, Chile, the guidelines provide a starting point, complementing current resources for MPA managers. Composed of four chapters—design, management planning, active management, and evaluation—the publication is targeted for marine managers working at scale and their teams. However, as LSMPAs can impact a

broad spectrum of rights-holders and stakeholders, the Guidelines is also relevant for elected officials, government decision-makers, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities contemplating “going big” with their marine protection efforts.

The publication was also peer-reviewed by an international team of MPA professionals and conservation experts and IUCN's editorial board. The hope is that the guidelines help build institutional and individual capacity to manage protected area and protected area systems effectively, equitably, and sustainably.



Researchers head out in the waters off the remote Motu Motiro Hiva Marine Park for the area's very first scientific assessment. Photo by Alex Muñoz.

Our Impact

Although only a handful of large-scale MPAs has existed long enough to offer guidance across the full spectrum of management needs and challenges, there is now an opportunity for learning and synergy between and amongst the full range of MPA communities. In the last twenty years, the field has gone from less than ten sites to more than 30. With this in mind, Big Ocean focuses on capacity-building activities and best-practice processes to help translate real-world experience into enhanced management and decision-making, improving ocean governance.

As technology opens up new possibilities, it will also increase pressures on the ocean, which could also challenge even the most robust management regimes. Combined with an increased global protection target of 30 percent of land and sea by 2030 (CBD COP 15), Big Ocean aims to leverage its expertise in support the development of additional tools and resources for existing and new LSMPAs.

Although there are thousands of MPAs globally, of all scales, more than 95 percent of current ocean protection comes from the less than forty large-scale sites, and the High Seas. This fact underscores that best-practice models of LSMPAs and other vast marine protection initiatives are critical in the effort to achieve the new 30 percent global conservation targets in meaningful ways.

Big Ocean aims to leverage its experience bridging management, science, education, culture and community to more effectively:

- 🕒 Increase the quantity of and accessibility to best-practice management resources
- 🕒 Support sites to share the costs of scientific exploration and facilitate learning between sites
- 🕒 Frame key issues and needs for new audiences and the general public
- 🕒 Support nations to scale up marine protection coverage
- 🕒 Expand supportive NGO partnerships
- 🕒 Provide and promote informed guidance
- 🕒 Work with regional fisheries
- 🕒 Engage and understand the needs of broader stakeholders and rights-holders

Highlighting the benefits of this unique genre of marine protection is also important – member managers agree they are:

- 🕒 Protecting whole ecosystems, seascapes, and ocean corridors for migratory species
- 🕒 Increased understanding of ocean systems, and protection of remote marine areas, which are less understood but more representative of the majority of the world's oceans
- 🕒 Serving as sentinel sites to measure environmental and climate change
- 🕒 Enabling conservation and sustainable use in the protection of both natural and cultural heritage
- 🕒 Protecting and perpetuating cultural heritage and traditions inclusive of indigenous peoples, local communities, scientists, and educators
- 🕒 Holding the best potential to restore and rejuvenate ocean health at a large scale



Chagos Reef. Photo by Anne Sheppard

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Connect & Engage

If you are interested in learning more or want to connect with Big Ocean, please take one or more of the following actions.

- **Visit our website BigOceanManagers.org** to learn about member sites, activities past and present, and gain quick access to digital resources and media or email the network. You can also contact the network if you have questions.
- **Follow [@bigoceanmanager](#)** on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- **Listen to our podcast**, How to Save and Ocean, on any platform, including Apple Podcasts and Spotify.
- **Sign up for our periodic e-newsletter**, OPEN OCEAN, by visiting our [website](#), entering your email, and hitting the subscribe button on our main page.
- **Request to participate in our listserve**, “LSMPA community,” by filling out the [Google Form application](#) accessible from our website’s Connect & Participate page. This group is curated and limited to those who can or need to share information, ask questions, and seek or offer support specific to LSMPA management.
- **Inquire about membership and collaboration** by emailing naia@bigoceanmanagers.org.

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Partners & Sponsors

In addition to the contributions of member sites, ongoing coordination, product development, and special events have been made possible with the support of these core partners and sponsors:

CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL



BLUE NATURE
ALLIANCE

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
PRISTINE
SEAS

THE OCEAN
FOUNDATION



OCEANA

Support Big Ocean

Although Big Ocean has strong ties to its member sites and long-standing partners, the network aims to grow the field and the professional capacity of practitioners and marine managers (and managers-in-the-making) working at scale. With such a global mission, there is an ongoing need for support and resources. From financial to technical, the contributions from partners, collaborators, and individuals allow Big Ocean to continue designing and implementing collaborative research projects and workshops, plus larger convenings to engage the broader community of practice.

Supporting Big Ocean's work is supporting best-practice marine governance and conservation globally. If you or your organization are interested in collaborating or learning about the network's current wish list please email info@bigoceanmanagers.org or contact our coordinator directly at naia@bigoceanmanagers.org.

For direct donations, please visit our ['project page' with The Ocean Foundation](#).

