

EUROPARC SIGGEN SEMINAR 2024 Report

Catching the wave:
How can we achieve more effective
management in Marine Protected Areas?

4 to 6 March
Gut Siggen, Germany





During this year's Siggen Seminar, experts in Marine conservation gathered at Gut Siggen in Germany to look at what is needed for a more Effective Management of our Marine Protected Areas.

Catching the wave:

How can we achieve more effective management in Marine Protected Areas?

Every year Alfred Toepfer Stiftung generously hosts EUROPARC members, in their excellent centre in Gut Siggen, North Germany. Here, we enjoy an intense and practically orientated seminar, examining and sharing expertise in a given aspect of Protected Areas' work. You can find previous Siggen Seminars [here](#).



The EU Biodiversity Strategy set an ambitious target for 2030, with at least 30% of land and sea to be legally protected (with 10% of the area to be strictly protected) by 2030. Furthermore, it clearly identifies the urgency to ensure that all **Protected Areas across Europe are effectively managed**, with the realisation of conservation objectives and appropriate monitoring. As such, in the marine environment, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have an important role to play and are called to make a serious effort to improve their effectiveness.

But what do MPAs need to do to reach this target, and how can progress be monitored and assessed? What guidance, tools and methods would be helpful to improve the management of our MPAs?

10 Marine Conservation experts started working on answers to these questions by exchanging experiences and co-learning. Representatives from the following organisations were present:

- NatureScot (UK)
- Lower Saxon Wadden Sea National Park Authority (DE)
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Institute for Environment and Nature (HR)
- Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife (FI)
- Environmental Board of Estonia (Keskkonnaamet) (EE)



Furthermore, **Sue Wells**, expert in management effectiveness in MPAs, provided specific support during the course of the seminar. Sue has worked with IUCN, WWF and many other organisations on the topic of Management Effectiveness and she is currently a member of IUCN WCPA Marine Management Effectiveness Task Force.

The framework of the seminar

Whilst the necessity to protect our marine environment effectively goes beyond political desire, there are a lot of policy measures and frameworks that promote further, and better, protection of our seas:

- **CBD Global Biodiversity Framework** (2022): commonly known as 30x30 is a global target to protect 30% of the planet for nature by 2030. Furthermore, it states these areas should be effectively conserved and managed.
- **Bern Convention** - Strategic Plan for Action to 2030 (2023): it reflects the CBD target and also explicitly mentions the importance of 'effectively managed' sites.
- **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030** (2020): also aims to reach 30% of land and seas to be effectively protected. Member states will need to submit pledges and demonstrate how Protected Areas are managed effectively.
- **EU Habitats Directive** (1979): Natura 2000 sites have to be managed effectively.

It is clear there is not a lack of policy effort to ensure Protected Areas, including the marine ones, are further designated and better managed in order to preserve nature. Furthermore, the inefficient management of Protected Areas has been identified as one of the factors hindering the progress in achieving the conservation targets, and specific attention to it is given in some of the aforementioned strategies. However, there are different challenges and gaps, which have also been [identified by the European Environmental Agency](#), to turn this into reality, like:

- Insufficient and inadequate implementation of existing EU environment legislation.
- Lack of awareness on the importance of Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME).
- Difficulty to monitor and assess progresses towards targets at EU level.
- Natura 2000 sites reports (art17) targets only species and habitats status, not the effectiveness of measures.

During this seminar, participants looked beyond the policy framework, at the **practical reality for MPA managers** and asked the question: how can we achieve more effective management of our Marine Protected Areas?

Case studies

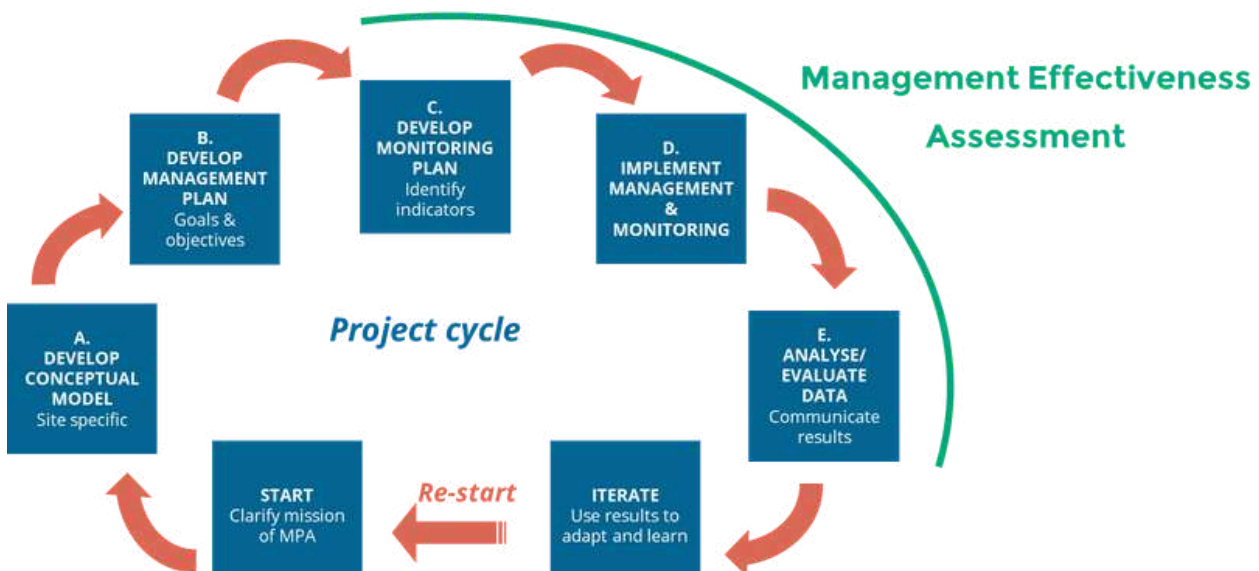
To ensure a practical approach, three real case studies were presented:

- **Thea Hamm presented the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea National Park, Germany.** [Find her presentation here.](#)
- **Lasse Kurvinen presented the Bothnian Sea National Park, Finland.** [Find his presentation here.](#)
- **Josefine Gottschalk presented the Pomeranian Bay – Rønne Bank Nature Conservation Area, Germany.** [Find her presentation here.](#)

These case studies then formed the basis for the group exercises during the rest of the seminar.

So, what is Management Effectiveness?

Assessing Management Effectiveness itself is part of a larger cycle of **adaptive management**. It is something that should be continuously implemented, and cannot be done only once. In fact, assessment is something that we do all the time and our management plans should be adapted accordingly.



A representation of the Adaptive Management cycle, with the aspects concerning Management Effectiveness highlighted.



Overall, there are four components to Management Effectiveness that should be considered when assessing: **Governance, Sound Design and Planning, Effective Management and Conservation Outcomes.**

To ensure we are all working with the same terminology, the seminar started off with the following three questions:

- *What does Management Effectiveness mean to you?*
- *Why do you think it is important to integrate Management Effectiveness?*
- *How is Management Effectiveness integrated into your MPA, if at all?*

Participants provided their feedback to these questions in a 'world café' style setting. This allowed them to build upon the thoughts of others, whilst also providing space to learn from different experiences. These were the main outputs:

What does Management Effectiveness mean to you? → It is a framework to analyse progress and provide a long term commitment. It can help clarify the role of the MPA, communicate its role and ensure the MPA is inclusive and equitable.

Why do you think it is important to integrate Management Effectiveness? → It is important because it helps improve management practices, understand your impacts, compare results and communicate these results to your community. Furthermore, in doing so, it can help secure funding for MPAs.

How is Management Effectiveness integrated into your MPA, if at all? → It is usually done in cycles, typically every six years. However, it is not a standardized process and tends to be carried out in different styles, for different purposes, by different people. Issues arise when results are then not adapted into the overall management cycles and the scale at which the ME is done is not appropriate for the MPA.

Following this exercise, participants discussed what needs to be done to improve Management Effectiveness in their MPAs. Main outcomes were:

- Conservation objectives need to be **clear**.
- **Stakeholder involvement** is essential, both when setting the MPA's (conservation) objectives, but also in the subsequent measurement of effectiveness:
 - For this we need **good communication**. This also includes using language that resonates with your target audience to help them better understand why the MPA is important.
 - If we better understand the **needs and interests of our stakeholders**, we can link these to our objectives.
- **Clear indicators** are needed to accurately assess the effectiveness of measures taken.
- Measures need to be actually **enforced** in the MPA.

The importance of indicators



Sue Wells

As highlighted by the exercise on understanding what is needed to improve Management Effectiveness in MPAs, the **right indicators are of vital importance**. By setting them properly, we can better assess how measures are influencing both the ecosystem we aim to conserve or restore, but also if the government and management of the MPA is executed at a satisfactory level.

Expert Sue Wells helped to connect theory with practice. [In her presentation](#), she gave an overview of the many tools that are already out there to assess Management Effectiveness, before providing more information on indicators.

When speaking of indicators, often we think of the abundance, or lack thereof, of certain species. However, to properly assess ME a more **holistic approach is required, which goes beyond looking at ecological indicators**.

Sue explained that, **generic indicators** are indicators that, regardless of the size, location, and conservation status of a site, can be applied to assess Management Effectiveness anywhere. Examples of these are:

Good governance

- The governance structure is clearly defined.
- Stakeholders are involved in decision-making.

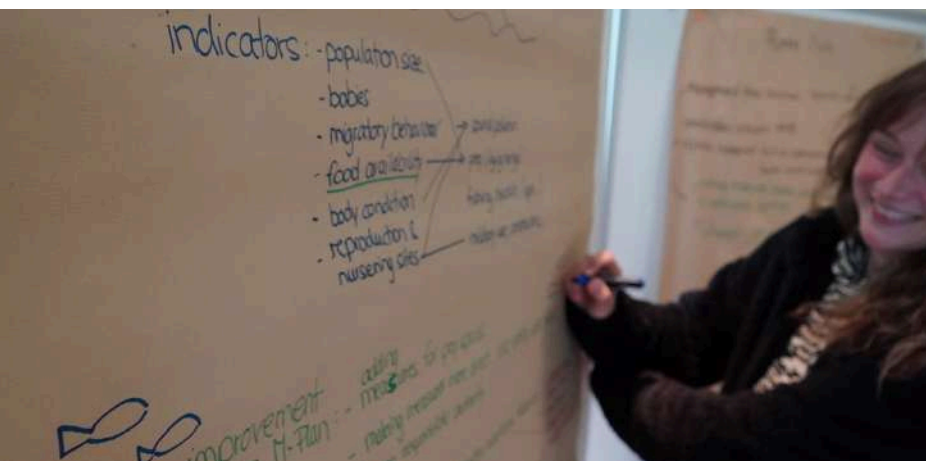
Sound design and planning

- The MPA is large enough and sufficiently connected to other habitats or ecosystems.
- The MPA is part of a network that meets representation, replication, connectivity, and resilience goals.

Effective management

- Current management plan or functional equivalent
- Management activities and policies can be demonstrated

After the overview provided by Sue, participants worked in groups on the three different case studies. Each group was tasked to identify proper indicators to assess one or two of the main components of Management Effectiveness in the MPA at case, **proposing solutions to overcome the existing challenges.**



In doing this exercise, it became clear that often (M)PAs are good at assessing the biological indicators referring to conservation status of species and habitats. However, assessing Effectiveness, Governance, Design and Operational Levels poses a challenge. Participants noted that this is sometimes **too abstract**, that more guidance is needed to understand how ME assessment can be performed in different contexts, as well as examples that help move from theory to practice. 7

Furthermore, when looking at indicators on governance and design, these sometimes do **not give an accurate representation of the reality**. One participant noted that, whilst the MPA did count with a management plan where (conservation) measures are named and addressed, these are then not implemented. This again underlines that a holistic approach to Management Effectiveness is essential.

Additionally, participants underlined the importance of **investing in digital solutions** for monitoring on biodiversity like e-DNA, drones and remote sensing.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

After having created a good understanding of Management Effectiveness and the need for good indicators throughout this process, the rest of the Seminar focused on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). **Sue Wells took participants through what it takes to create a M&E plan.**

The M&E plan is an essential component of Management Effectiveness, as it actually lets site managers assess the effectiveness of their work. It is important to ensure the **MPA objectives are as SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based) as possible and that managers know the **expected conservation outcomes**. Other elements to consider, when developing a M&E plan, are:

- **Select the indicators** to be monitored.
- Are there suitable **existing methods and protocols**? Don't re-invent the wheel!
- Is part of this work **already taking place**? Try to use the existing data and actions in place as much as possible, creating synergies when possible.
- What will be the **frequency of data collection**? This will vary depending on the indicator.
- What **equipment and resources** will be needed?
- **Who will do what?** Staff, researchers, local fishers and stakeholders, volunteers? Will training and additional funding be needed?
- Keep the plan as **simple as possible**, but the results should be useful and credible; do you require a series of smaller plans within the overall M&E plan?
- How will the **data be stored and analysed**?
- How will the results of the M&E be **integrated in the MPA management plan**, if at all?
- To whom and how will these results and derived changes in the management **be communicated**?

[Access Sue's full presentation here.](#)

Sarah Cunningham of **NatureScot** then provided participants with an example of how they are monitoring and assessing management effectiveness in Scotland's Marine Protected Areas. Among other things, Sarah gave interesting examples of **how communities are involved in the collection of data.** [Discover more in her full presentation here.](#)



Sarah Cunningham

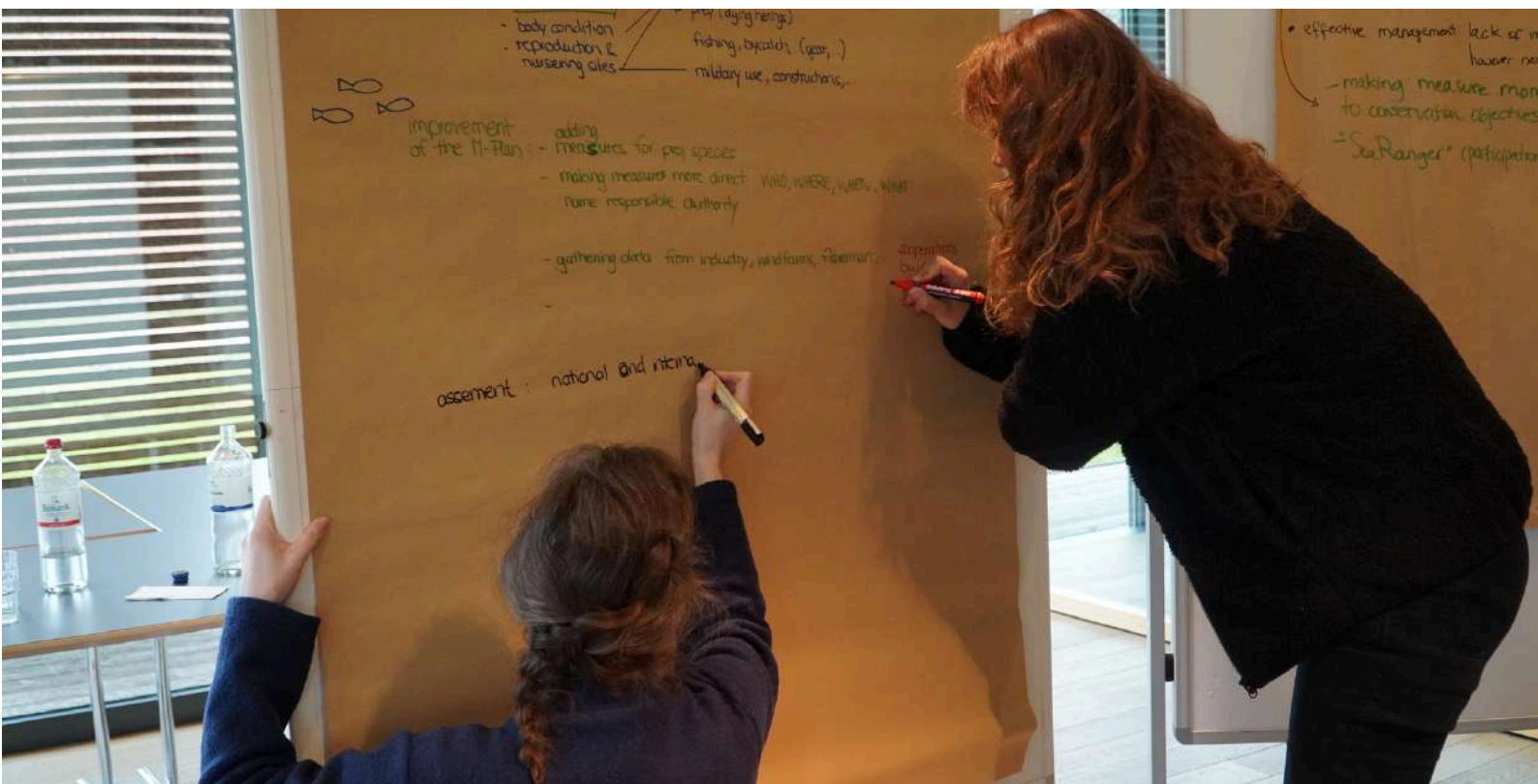
Participants then returned to their groups and case studies. Using the information on indicators collected before, participants were asked to explore how, in the MPAs at hand, monitoring plans can be improved and what the assessment and evaluation process should look like. Some reflections and highlights from the exercise:



- It is important to consider the **frequency of monitoring activities** according to the objective. Frameworks, like MSFD, OSPAR, Habitats Directive etc. which have already established monitoring frequencies, may not be adequate in other context or to detect minor changes. Therefore, monitoring plans should be adapted to each situation and setting.

- The effectiveness of conservation and management measures should **not be assessed only on the status or evolution in time of a species or habitat**, since many factors can affect the latter. e.g. a decrease of the population of a certain species should not be taken as the only evidence of an unsuccessful conservation measure, since this can be due to natural population flows and other factors.
- To make monitoring feasible, it is essential to **create cooperations and build trust**. Whilst MPAs often rightfully focus on working with citizens, fisherman and tourism providers, a newer and important entity are, for example, windfarm organisations. They hold a large amount of data that is not openly available. How can we better work together with these organisations?
 - Payments schemes and trainings might be necessary.
 - Furthermore, how can we evaluate if we have built trust with stakeholders? Assessing this should also be part of monitoring and evaluation.

Overall, when implementing M&E it is also of great importance here to **move beyond species and habitats**. We need to find ways to **assess and evaluate our governance, our communications, and our stakeholder engagement**, whether through surveys, attendance to round tables or community activities.



Concluding remarks

It is clear, that 1,5 days of workshop cannot tackle all elements of Management Effectiveness and its evaluation in MPAs. Nonetheless, rich discussions highlighted both the complexity of the topic, and knowledge gaps. Considering the global biodiversity targets, the topic of Management Effectiveness will continue to grow in importance. Furthermore, with the scheduled increase of Protected Areas on land and sea, good governance, equity, and stakeholder engagement will be essential, and are all topics to assess and evaluate when speaking about Management Effectiveness.

EUROPARC will build on this work with the new Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (PAME) LIFE project, starting in September 2024, as well as during our e-Forum on the 7th of November, which will focus on Management Effectiveness.

All handouts and presentations of the Seminar can be found [on the EUROPARC website here.](#)





Gut Siggen Seminar Center, Heringsdorf, German

We would like to take this opportunity to again thank all participants to the seminar for their valuable inputs. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to expert Sue Wells for her kind support and precious help in pulling the different parts of this event together.

About Siggen Seminars and the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung

Bringing together Protected Area professionals to learn together, share experience and knowledge in various aspects of Protected Area management and innovate new ideas is at the heart of the EUROPARC Federation's work.

Thanks to the generosity of the [Alfred Toepfer Stiftung](#) F.V.S. we have access, annually, to their private seminar centre at Gut Siggen in North Germany, hugging the Baltic Sea coast. Alfred Toepfer Stiftung's founder was also one of the Federation's founders and played an important role in its growth and development. Read the outcomes of previous Siggen Seminars [here](#).

About the EUROPARC Federation

The EUROPARC Federation is the largest European network of Protected Areas with more than 400 members from 40 countries. Our members are directly or indirectly managing thousands of National and Regional Parks, Marine Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites. Our organisation is working on different levels to improve the management of Protected Areas in Europe to the benefit of nature and people. www.europarc.org

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