Progress, Priorities and Challenges for Large-Scale Marine Protected Area Management: Report on a Global Survey of Managers

September 2025

Please cite as: Gray, N.J., Gruby, R.L., and Lewis. N. 2025. *Progress, Priorities and Challenges for Large-Scale Marine Protected Area Management: Report on a Global Survey of Managers*. https://doi.org/10.17604/7yv9-fy10

Funding: This project was supported by: Big Ocean, the Blue Nature Alliance, and US Fish and Wildlife Service US Marine Monuments Program, Pacific Region, and the National Philanthropic Trust

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Acknowledgements:
The authors gratefully acknowledge all those who generously took the time to share their valuable knowledge and perspectives throughout this research process, including at the Ocean Managers Xchange in 2022, as survey respondents, and as participants in co-production workshops. We especially thank King Sam, who provided a manager's perspective throughout the process, and Jon Day, Steffan Howe, and Jacqui Evans, who helped us to pilot and refine the survey instrument. We acknowledge The Institute for Research in the Social Sciences (IRISS) at Colorado State University, who provided support for data processing and analysis. Finally, we thank Bárbara López González, who assisted with workshop facilitation, translation, and data processing, and Emilie Wiehe, who assisted with compiling the report. Mahalo nui.

Executive Summary

Large-scale marine protected areas (LSMPAs), those areas >100,000 km^2 that are managed for the purpose of conservation, play an outsized role in global marine conservation efforts. While only a small fraction of the total number of MPAs worldwide, they constitute the majority of the world's marine conserved area and thus play a critical role in meeting conservation targets, such as the '30x30' target of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In addition to the numeric goal (30% of marine area conserved by 2030), this target also calls for areas to be effectively conserved and managed and equitably governed, recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities. While research is increasingly examining the conservation outcomes of MPAs, including LSMPAs, and there is growing attention to the equitable governance of smaller MPAs, this study responds to two intersecting needs identified by the LSMPA community of practice: (1) to understand the current status, challenges and opportunities related to effective management and equitable governance of large-scale sites; and (2) to generate data *with* and *for* LSMPA managers, in order to represent their collective experiences and support their unique journeys in managing at scale.

Our research process was grounded in relationships built within Big Ocean's network of large-scale MPA managers, with deliberate intention to honor those relationships and further stregthen them. This meant working closely with managers to develop a global survey and to interpret survey results through knowledge co-production workshops. Co-production refers to research conducted with, by, and for communities, designed to address their needs. A total of 45 managers representing 30 sites completed the survey, and 9 of these managers representing 14 different sites subsequently participated in the co-production workshops. While this dataset may seem small, it represents 70% of the 43 LSMPAs[1] that comprise the vast majority of global MPA coverage. Participants were selected based on their knowledge and experience managing specific sites. Managers from 30 of the 37 sites where contacts were identified participated in the study, indicating strong interest and commitment to the research across the field. The individuals who participated in this study contributed their time, experience, institutional memory, and deep contextual understanding to advance their shared field of large-scale marine conservation. They are among the few people in the world with a broad and first-hand view of LSMPA management in practice. The result is a rich data set that highlights managers' perspectives and can be used to support their ongoing collective efforts.

Thus, this report should *not* be interpreted as a report card. Instead, it offers a snapshot of a field in motion – one that is still relatively young, still defining itself, and still working to

[1] We excluded 2 LSMPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction from this study given that management in ABNJ is distinct from management within Exclusive Economic Zones. There were 43 LSMPAs within national jurisdiction at the time the data were collected.

implement systems and structures for long-term success. The motivation of this research was to take the pulse of LSMPA management at a field level and amplify managers' perspectives within global policy and funding decisions in ways that can support and strengthen their ongoing work – not to judge or penalize it. The sites and practitioners who contributed to this effort are engaged in difficult, long-term work. The sites are at different stages of development, with different capacities, constraints, and histories. Of the 30 participating sites, only 11 (37%) are over ten years old. In this context, it is crucial to interpret our results not as a static evaluation, but as an input to collective learning that must continue over time as the field evolves.

The key findings are summarized below, while the remainder of the report offers more details about the project and includes the data from the survey and workshops.[2]

Key findings include:

- **Management Structure**: While government agencies at the federal/national level are involved in governing the majority of LSMPAs, half of the sites in the study are governed by more than one agency and/or organization. Collaborative governance is common.
- **Management Progress**: Sites have a range of management objectives related to natural values (100% sites), economic values (66% sites), social values (73% sites), and cultural values (80% sites). Sites vary in their progress, from 'achieving most or all objectives' to 'objectives are under development,' which is expected given the age range of the sites. Most sites are making more progress in meeting management objectives for natural values than for social or cultural values.
- **Level of Protection and Threats**: Rules and regulations were assessed for seven specific activities (mining/oil and gas exploration; dumping and dredging; anchoring; infrastructure; aquaculture; fishing and harvesting; and non-extractive activities such as tourism), along with the perceived threat of these and other activities not regulated by sites (climate change, pollution, invasive species, land-based activities). Level of protection does not always correspond to level of perceived threat. For example, while industrial fishing is *allowed* in 40% of sites, managers *perceive the threat from fishing* as high in 7% sites, medium in 29% sites, and low in 46% sites, with no impact from fishing in 19% sites. Across sites, the highest perceived threats come from processes and activities that sites alone cannot regulate. Respondents report that climate change, pollution, and invasive species pose high to medium threats to more than half of LSMPA sites globally.
- **Climate Change**: While climate change poses a significant threat, a majority of sites report that they are addressing challenges associated with climate change "acceptably" or "well" (64.3%). Missing equipment, data, and/or practical

[2] For all key findings, indicated percentages are calculated based on the specific n for the relevant question. Please see subsequent sections of the report for the data that underlie these numbers.

knowledge are the largest barriers to incorporating climate change adaptation strategies into site management (71.4% of sites).

- **Management plan:** A majority of sites have a current management plan (53.9%) or are in the process of developing one (37.5%).
- **Science, Monitoring and Adaptive Management:** While most sites have at least minimal monitoring in place, adequate monitoring is happening for natural values at 24% of sites, economic values at 15% of sites, social values at 5% of sites, and cultural values at 13% of sites. Generally, there is less monitoring of human dimensions than of natural values, though the question of who should monitor human dimensions and how (especially cultural values) is not straightforward. The majority of sites either have a science/monitoring plan (36%) or are in the process of developing one (61%).
- **Budget and Funding**: While the available budget is 'acceptable but could be improved to achieve effective management' at 19 sites (68%), it is not sufficient to meet all management needs at any of the sites. In workshops, many participants reported budget challenges, noting that budgets had remained static or inadequate for years, even as management responsibilities had increased. There is no dedicated budet at 4 sites (14%) and a budget that is 'inadequate to fulfill basic management needs' at 5 sites (17.8%). This finding generated significant discussion during the co-production workshops, largely because most workshop participants were surprised by the data and felt they do not reflect their experience. There was a sense that these data might reflect how survey respondents understood the question, reflecting budgets that are adequate for basic management activities, but not sufficient for all of the things they should be doing or would like to be doing. Non-governmental sources of funding are either equally important or more important than government sources at almost half of the sites (48%).
- **Staff Capacity**: Staff capacity refers to both the number of personnel and the adequacy of their training and technical skills in relation to management needs. Managers report that staff capacity is adequate at 50% of sites. Many sites face high staff turnover and/or reliance on partners for particular skills or roles.
- **Surveillance and Enforcement Capacity**: Surveillance and enforcement capacity, which includes the ability and resources to monitor use of the site and to enforce all rules and regulations for the MPA, has major deficiencies or is entirely absent at more than half (57%) of sites. The main challenges to achieving more effective surveillance and enforcement are lack of necessary equipment (e.g. patrol vessels) (60% sites) and insufficient budget (60% sites). This has been a longstanding issue for many sites.
- **Equitable Governance**: Eight indicators of equitable governance were assessed across three categories: recognition (of culture, knowledge, and rights), procedure (satisfaction with decision-making, transparency, and Free Prior and Informed Consent) and distribution (of harms and benefits). For each indicator, sites were assessed as equitable, no impact, or inequitable. We found mixed outcomes regarding equitable governance. Managers report that for a majority of equity

indicators, most sites are not meeting the bar for equitable management. However, fewer than half the sites are assessed as 'inequitable' for each of the eight indicators. Assessments of 'no impact' were common: one third or more of responding sites fell into the 'no impact' category for five indicators, which means the site is neither advancing nor undermining equitable governance. Sites are doing best with 'recognizing culture' and 'distribution of benefits' and there is most room for improvement on decision-making, which measures managers' perspectives on stakeholder and rightsholder satisfaction with decision-making processes. While these indicators offer a general snapshot of equitable governance in LSMPAs, managers agree this is a complex topic and that this data must be interpreted with extra care. For some indicators, there were relatively high percentages of "not relevant" or "I don't know" responses. This suggests that not all indicators (which were developed for smaller protected areas) may be appropriate for LSMPAs. In workshops, managers identified three key challenges to equitable engagement: the site's political and legal context, the number and capacity of rightsholder and stakeholder groups, and difficulties engaging groups with indirect relationships or who are re-establishing cultural connections to the site.

- **Outreach and Engagement**: Outreach and engagement was reported as either 'good' (50%) or 'excellent' (36%) for the included sites. Managers offered many specific examples using a range of modes of outreach and collaborative approaches, including with scientists.
- **Political Context**: While political support for sites was perceived as either 'very high' or 'high' for 69% sites, support among economic sectors is lower, with 79% sites reporting support as 'low' or 'very low.' In the next five years, site downgrading was perceived as 'somewhat likely' at 14% sites, while site downsizing was perceived as 'somewhat likely' at 11% sites.
- **Key Management Priorities**: When asked to rank their management priorities over the next five years, managers identified their top three priorities as: increasing scientific knowledge about their site; improving monitoring; and finding new sources of funding.
- **Management Effectiveness**: We assessed management effectiveness by examining a variety of indicators included in the categories above. While approximately 2/3 of sites are meeting thresholds for effective management related to implementing management objectives for natural, economic, and social values, only half of sites are meeting objectives related to cultural values. However, a majority of sites are struggling to meet effective management thresholds for monitoring and adaptive management, across all four types of values. It will be important to continue to monitor effective management over time, given how many sites are still young. Managers emphasized that it is also important to reflect on what is feasible or possible for any given site, given the resources available, as well as the specific challenges for improving management.

Interpreting the above findings in collaboration with managers, during co-production workshops, highlighted several key points that quantitative data alone do not capture:

- Progress is not linear. Making improvements in management (e.g. moving from 'below' to 'above' a threshold for effective management) often requires significant effort, time and investment that is not captured in quantitative measures. Likert scales (measures of perspectives based on level of agreement with statements in a survey) can miss the effort expended trying to 'move the needle'.

- Partnerships are critical at many sites. Partnerships (between management agencies and other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other groups) are key for a range of management activities, including generating funding for budget lines, for supporting outreach, for conducting monitoring and scientific research, for political support, for building/providing staff capacity, and for surveillance and enforcement, among others. Management effectiveness often relies on effective partnerships.

- Manager perspectives are critical to consider. At the same time, there are some aspects of management where managers lack necessary information (e.g. site conditions for natural, social, economic, and/or cultural values) or recognize their perspective must be considered alongside other perspectives or sources of information (e.g. regarding cultural values, equitable governance).

- There are important synergies among different areas of management, such that improvements in some aspects can support other areas as well. For example, scientific research, site outreach and engagement, managing for cultural values, and partnerships can all be mutually reinforcing when approached collectively.

It is crucial to continue working with managers to monitor management efforts over time, ideally through repeating the survey/workshop process every two years. Many sites are still young and the field of large-scale marine conservation continues to evolve, while the broader context in which management takes place also continues to change rapidly. In order to meet global targets, it is important to document both the status and changes in LSMPA management, to best support managers in their ongoing efforts.

Managers emphasizes that it is unrealistic to expect 100% effective and equitable management across all sites. A more important question might be what is realistic for any given site, and how is the site doing in relation to what is feasible. In future work, it will be critical to complement global surveys like this with more in-depth site-specific work to assess sites in relation to their own context and management journey and to understand the specific barriers they face in achieving more effective and equitable management. The value in these data are not in assessing any individual site, but in illustrating the state of the field of large-scale marine managed areas collectively.

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1. Project Overview

Since the Human Dimensions Thank Tank was held in Honolulu in 2016, there has been increasing awareness of – and research on – the human dimensions (social, economic, cultural, governance) of large-scale marine conservation and management. This project was motivated by observations and discussions in the broader community of practice associated with large-scale marine protected areas (LSMPAs), including:

- A concern that LSMPA managers are left out of, or insufficiently involved in, many research projects, whether desk-based studies or field-based research;
- A desire to better understand LSMPA management challenges and make them visible;
- A desire to build connections among managers and generate greater awareness of the field as a whole; and
- An expressed need for collectively generated data to support management journeys and long-term tracking of the field of large-scale marine conservation and management.

In order to address these needs, we adopted a co-production approach anchored by a global survey of LSMPA managers. Co-production refers to research conducted with, by, and for communities, designed to address their needs. In this case, the 'community' is the international LSMPA community of practice. However, given the goal of making LSMPA management progress and challenges visible to a global policy community, it was important to ensure that the project engaged with existing global tools, targets, and conversations. The co-production process included the following steps:

- June-August 2021: Develop and implement an initial survey and discuss results with managers during an online summit
- September 2021: Publish survey report: Gruby, R.L., Gray, N.J., Lewis. N. 2021. Management progress and priorities for large-scale marine protected area management. DOI:10.6084/m9.figshare.16699732
- November 2022: Refine research questions and survey topics with managers during an in-person Ocean Managers Xchange
- May to July 2023: Refine survey to incorporate managers' priorities as well as integrate existing global tools and indicators, such as the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool and equity indicators
- August 2023: Pilot survey and seek further input on survey details from three current and former managers
- January to May 2024: Distribute survey to managers
- August to December 2024: Analyze survey data
- January 2025: Share survey data with managers during two online co-production workshops and discuss their interpretations and feedback
- July 2025: Finalize report

The purpose of this report is to summarize and share the data collected through the survey and co-production workshops. Discussion and reflection on these results will be contained in a separate, forthcoming publication.

1.1 Survey Details

We aimed to include survey managers of all LSMPAs greater than 100,000 km^2, whether or not they are members of Big Ocean. As of May 2023, there were 45 sites listed in the World Database on Protected Areas[3] database that fulfilled this criterion. Two of these sites are in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) – we therefore excluded them from the survey, as management in ABNJ is distinct from management within Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Leveraging Big Ocean's network, we were able to identify a contact person at 37 of the remaining 43 sites. We circulated the survey to 78 people at these 37 sites in 3 languages (English, Spanish, and French). A total of 45 responses representing 30 sites were received.

SURVEY

Sent to 78 people - at least one manager at each of 37 sites

 # RESPONDENTS:

45 responses – some managers answered for more than one site

 # SITES: 30

Respondents were managers working with 30 LSMPAs representing 16.6 million km2 (~55% of global MPA coverage)

 # LANGUAGES: 3

Respondents answered in English, Spanish, or French

Through extensive piloting we took care to ensure clarity in wording, sensitivity to language differences, and thoughtful framing of questions to accommodate a wide range of contexts. Still, like all surveys, this one has its limitations. Terminology may be interpreted differently depending on language, training, or institutional setting. The knowledge base and perceptions of survey respondents—even from within the same site—can vary. This doesn't diminish the value or validity of the findings, but should be kept in mind when interpreting results.

Subsequent sections include the results from the survey. For sites where there were more than one respondent, each response was weighted so that every site – whether it had one

[3] The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) is the most comprehensive global database on terrestrial and marine protected areas. It is available on the Protected Planet website: https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/wdpa?tab=WDPA

or several respondents – would hold equal weight for any questions where data are reported by site. Weighted responses are rounded to the nearest whole number, in order to report the number of sites. Because not all respondents answered all questions, the weighted n (number of sites) varies across questions.

1.2 Survey Respondents

The 45 survey respondents represented the 30 sites listed below (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Each of these respondents works as part of an LSMPA management team. We asked our contacts at each site to identify 2-4 people who are most knowledgeable about site management – we then invited these people to complete the survey. In some cases, those identified initially referred us to other individuals. At some sites, only one individual was identified. Of the 45 respondents, 30 work for a government agency or office directly responsible for site management, 10 work for a supporting government agency or office, 5 work for a non-governmental organization (NGO), 2 work for a community-based or cultural organization, and 6 have a position with an 'other' organization (including customary government, elected representative, or public-private partnership).[4]

Respondents work in a variety of positions across these management agencies and organizations, including in director or assistant director positions or in policy and analysis related positions, followed by managerial or administrative positions. Of the 45 respondents, 12 people had less than two years of experience working in LSMPA management, 13 had 3-5 years of experience, and 13 had more than five years of experience, with 7 respondents not indicating their years of experience.

Table 1: Sites represented in survey

On Map	Site	Number of respondents
1	Aldabra Group Marine National Park (Seychelles)	1
2	Argo Rowley Terrace Marine Park (Australia)	1
3	Asencion Island Marine Protected Area (UK)	1
4	British Indian Ocean Territory Marine Protected Area (Chagos) (UK)[5]	1
5	Christmas Island Marine Park (Australia)	1
6	Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Park (Australia)	1
7	Coral Sea Marine Park (Australia)	1
8	Del Bicentenario - Area Marina de Manejo (Marine Management Area) (Costa Rica)	1

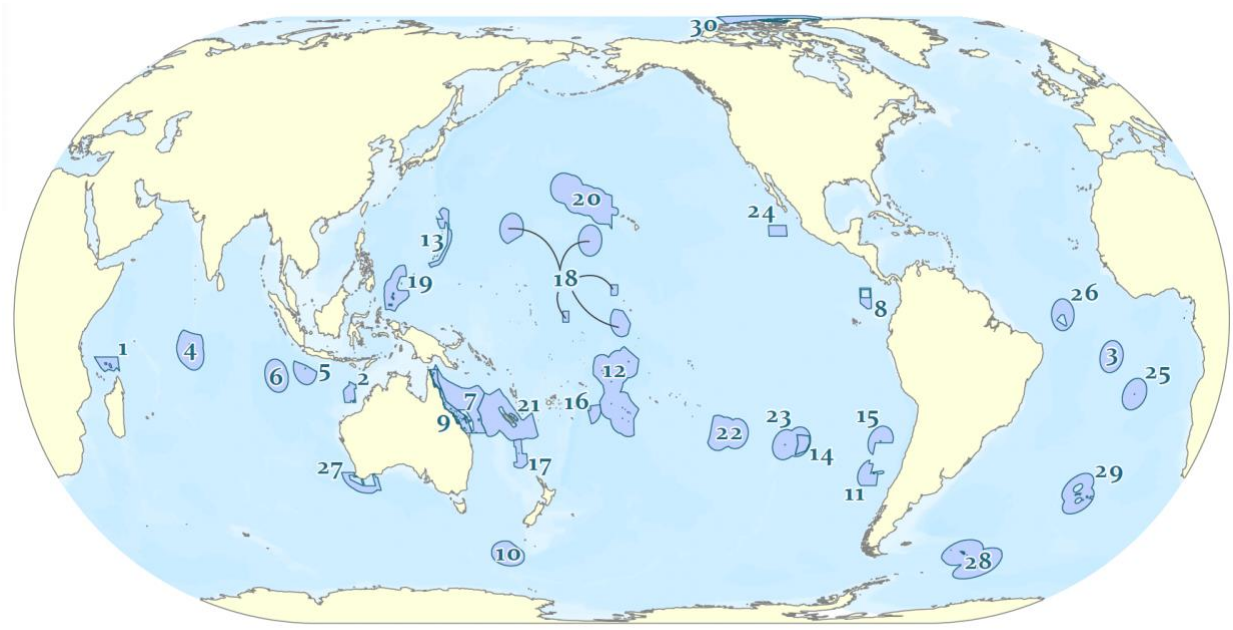
[4] Respondents could select multiple answers so n>45. Some respondents are affiliated with multiple agencies and/or organizations.

[5] Name and jurisdiction at the time of the survey. In October 2024, the Governments of the Republic of Mauritius and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement, agreeing that Mauritius has sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

9	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Australia)	4
10	Macquarie Island Marine Park (Australia)	1
11	Mar de Juan Fernández - Parque Marino (Marine Park)	3
12	Marae Moana Marine Park (Cook Islands)	3
13	Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (USA)	2
14	Motu Motiro Hiva - Parque Marino (Marine Park) (Chile)	1
15	Nazca-Desventuradas - Parque Marino (Marine Park) (Chile)	1
16	Niue Moana Mahu Marine Protected Area (Niue)	1
17	Norfolk Marine Park (Australia)	1
18	Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (USA)[6]	1
19	Palau National Marine Sanctuary (Palau)	2
20	Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (USA)	3
21	Parc Naturel de la Mer de Corail (Natural Park of the Coral Sea) (France – New Caledonia)	2
22	Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve (UK)	1
23	Rapa Nui Área Marina Costera Protegida (Marine and Coastal Protected Area) (Chile)	4
24	Revillagigedo - Parque Nacional (National Park) (Mexico)	1
25	São Pedro e São Paulo Área De Proteção Ambiental (Environmental Protection Area) (Brazil)	1
26	South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands MPA (UK)	1
27	South-west Corner Marine Park (Australia)	1
28	St. Helena Marine Protection Zone (UK)	1
29	Tristan da Cunha Marine Protection Zone (UK)	1
30	Tuvaijuittuq Marine Protected Area (Canada)	1
	Total	45

[6] Name of the site at the time of survey completion. In January 2025, the site was re-named to Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument.

Figure 1: Map of sites included in survey (refer to Table 1 for site names)



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, USGS

1.3 Co-Production Workshop Details

In January 2025, we hosted two 1.5 hour co-production workshops, one in English and one in Spanish. Workshops were held online, with all survey respondents invited to attend. Participation in these workshops was voluntary and also necessarily constrained by logistical factors (time zone, participants' other responsibilities and availability, etc).

During these workshops we shared select survey results and facilitated discussion of key findings, focusing on management effectiveness and equity. Similar to focus groups, we posed specific questions to workshop participants. We also invited them to offer examples of whether and how the results resonated with their experiences in managing their respective sites.

In total, 6 managers participated in the English workshop and 3 managers in the Spanish workshop, collectively representing 14 of the 30 sites included in the survey. Participants who agreed to be named included:

- Laura Beauregard, Fish and Wildlife Service, USA
- Gonzalo Gómez, Sernapesca (National Fisheries Service), Chile
- Carlos Kirkwood, Sernapesca (National Fisheries Service), Chile
- Amy Mulcahy, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Australia
- Kaipo Perez, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA
- Mark Read, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia
- King Sam, Palau International Coral Reef Center, Palau

1.4 Ethics

All participants (both survey respondents and participants in the co-production workshops) gave informed consent. Survey respondents were promised confidentiality – this means that we do not report data at a site level, nor do we name survey respondents. Participants in the co-production workshops gave their consent to be named, with the understanding that no comments would be attributed to individuals or sites. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Miami and the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph.

1.5 Report Structure

The remainder of this report summarizes the data collected through both the survey and workshops according to the categories and topics included in the survey. These include:

- *Management Structure and Plan*
- *Management Progress*
- *Level of Protection and Threats*
- *Climate Change*
- *Science, Monitoring, and Adaptative Management*
- *Budget and Funding*
- *Staff Capacity*
- *Surveillance and Enforcement Capacity*
- *Stakeholders and Rightsholders*
- *Equity*
- *Outreach and Engagement*
- *Key Management Priorities*
- *Role of Big Ocean*
- *Management Effectiveness*

For each survey question, we present the data. For several survey questions from across the categories, we have further assessed the data in relation to thresholds for management effectiveness. These are included in Section 16. Key points from the co-production workshops are included throughout the report in relevant sections as "Workshop Comments."

2. Management Structure and Plan

All sites have been officially designated through relevant national processes. However, it is important to note that the categories in the following two questions do not perfectly capture all governance mechanisms for these sites. In addition, the interpretation of the question by participants, as well as the interpretation of the answers, will ultimately be informed by the complex socio-political histores and present day relationships among on-

the-ground management regimes, communities, and overlapping (sometimes conflicting) legal systems. In short – many governance arrangements are complex and these numbers are indicative of an overall pattern rather than specific site-level details.

2.0 Legal measures through which the site is protected

Most sites are protected through national law or policy (26/30 sites) and 4/30 sites were protected by traditional or customary law. One site was protected by international agreement or designation and one site 'other'.

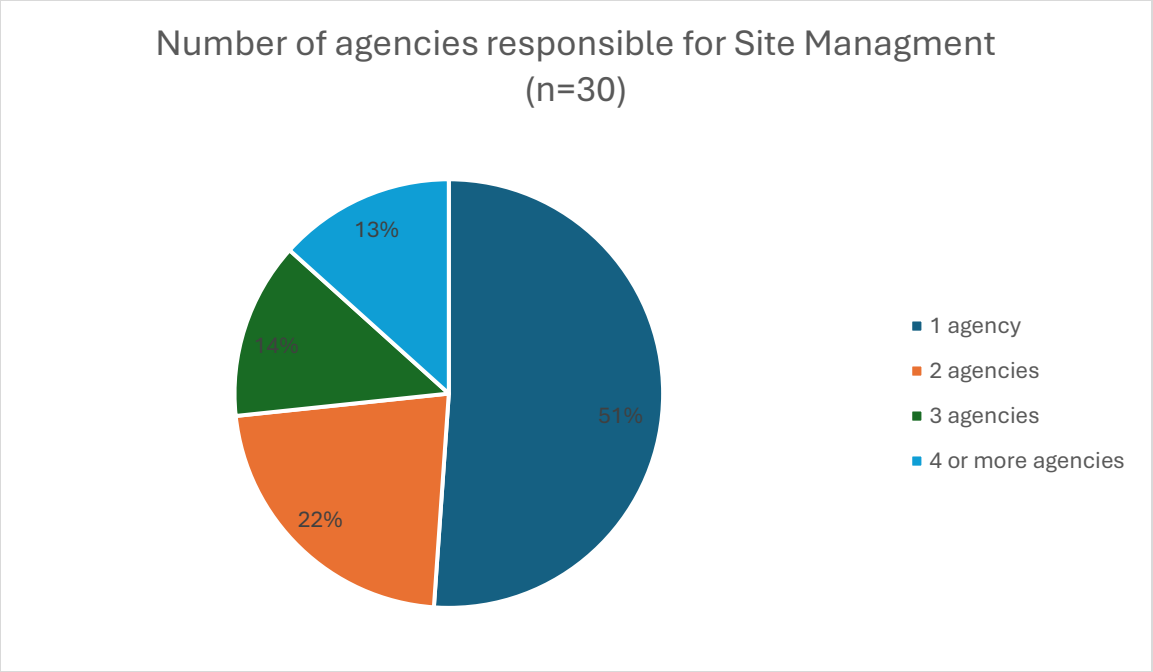
	Number of sites[7] (n=30)
National law or policy	26
Traditional or customary law	4
International agreement or designation	1
Other	1

2.1 Which type(s) of agencies or organizations are officially responsible for management at this MPA? Respondents could select multiple answers.

Type of agency	Number of sites[8] (n=30)
Government entities at federal/national level (e.g. agency, authority, quasi-governmental organization)	24
Government entities at sub-national level (e.g. state, territorial, provincial	10
Local level governments (e.g. municipality, village council)	5
Community-based organizations	5
Customary or Indigenous governments	3
Non-governmental organizations	2
Other	2

The majority of MPAs (81.6% of sites) report being governed by a government agency at the federal or national level, followed by government agencies at the subnational level (32.2%). Forty-nine percent of sites were governed by more than one agency and/or organization.

[7] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total does not correspond to the number of sites
[8] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the sum of all responses is greater than the number of sites



2.2 If there are challenges coordinating across management bodies and/or levels of government, how would you describe these challenges?

Respondents could select multiple answers.

Types of challenges of coordination	Number of Sites (n=30)[9]
There are no challenges like this	9
Lack of effective collaboration mechanisms	9
Unequal organizational capacity or resources	9
Divergent organizational cultures or missions	6
Political differences (e.g. different political parties in power across levels/organizations, different political priorities)	5
Other	5
Lack of clarity regarding responsibilities	3

[9] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total number of responses does not correspond to the number of sites

Disagreements related to use of funding	3
Cultural differences	3

2.3 Does your MPA have an approved management plan(s)?

The majority of sites had a current management plan (53.9%) or were in the process of developing one (37.5%).

Approved management plan?	Number of sites (n=30)
Yes, and it is still current	16
Yes, but it has expired and there is not yet a new plan	3
No but there is one being developed	11
No	0

2.4 When was an approved management plan(s) first used at this MPA?

For those sites that responded, almost half (9 sites) approved their management plan between 2016 and 2020, and another four between 2020 and 2024.

Management Plan First Used	Number of sites (n=19)
Before 2000	1
2000-2005	2
2006-2010	1
2011-2015	2
2016-2020	9
2020-present	4

2.5 What is the main challenge to completing a management plan? (Please check all that apply).

For the 14 sites where the management plan had expired or was being developed (see 2.3), the primary challenges to completing a management plan included inadequate budget, lack of technical capacity, and a variety of additional reasons listed in the 'Other' category, including:

- Competing objectives and priorities
- Implementation and time needed to establish processes

- Lack of continuity and changes in leadership
- Obtaining input from other government bodies
- Sovereignty disputes

Main challenge to Completing Management Plan	Number of sites (n=14)[10]
Other	7
Inadequate budget	4
Lack of technical capacity	3
Lack of political will	2
Public controversy about the MPA	2
Disagreement among management agencies	2
Lack of clarity about whose responsibility it is to develop a management plan	1

2.6 Does this MPA have an advisory council(s) or similar group(s)?

Most sites have an advisory council or similar group (22 out of the 29 that responded to this question).

Site has Advisory Council	Number of sites (n=29)
Yes	22
No	7

2.7 Which groups or areas of expertise are represented in the MPA's advisory council(s)? (Please check all that apply).

The groups or areas of expertise most represented in advisory councils included science/technical persons (81.8%), followed by economic sectors (77.3%) and local NGOs and community organizations (63.6%), and culture (59.1%).

[10] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total number of responses does not correspond to the number of sites

Groups Represented on Advisory Councils	Number of sites (n=22)[11]
Science/technical	18
Economic sectors	17
Local NGOs and community organizations	14
Culture	13
Recreational users	11
Rightsholders (e.g. Indigenous peoples)	10
Other	4
International organizations	2

3. Management Progress

Several questions asked respondents about the natural, economic, social and cultural values associated with their sites. Survey respondents were given the following definitions of these values:

> ***Natural values*** may include biodiversity conservation, protection of threatened species, climate change resilience, improving water quality, and others
>
> ***Economic values*** may include higher income, national development, supporting local livelihoods, and others
>
> ***Social values*** may include providing educational or recreational opportunities, ensuring equitable access or inclusive governance, and others
>
> ***Cultural values*** may include upholding Indigenous culture and/or identity, protecting species or areas with cultural or religious meaning, and others

3.2 Which of these values is this MPA officially required to protect or enhance? (Please check all that apply).

We asked respondents to identify values in the legislation (or equivalent cultural protocol) that established the MPA or in the regulations, policies, or plans that guide management. The vast majority of sites included all values, with most prominently natural

[11] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total number of responses does not correspond to the number of sites

values being the ones that the MPA is officially required to protect (96.7% of sites),[12] followed by cultural values (80%), social values (73.3%) and economic values (66.7%).

Values which the MPA is officially required to protect or enhance	Number of sites (n=30)
Natural values	29
Economic values	20
Social values	22
Cultural values	24

3.3 MPAs typically have specific management objectives related to protecting/enhancing their values. How would you describe progress toward meeting current management objectives for each type of value you choose in question 3.2?

Respondents were only asked to answer this question for those values that they indicated they are officially required to protect or enhance as part of their management responsibilities. For each value listed below, the N thus corresponds to the number of sites that indicated they manage for this value (see Question 3.2 above).

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

	Mgmt objectives have not yet been discussed	Mgmt objectives are under development	Mgmt objectives are unlikely to be achieved	Achieving at least some mgmt. objectives	Achieving most or all mgmt objectives	I don't know
Natural values n =29	2	5	1	9	7	5
Economic values n=20	0	4	0	8	4	4
Social values n=22	1	5	1	8	3	4
Cultural values n=24	2	7	1	7	2	5

[12] At least one respondent at all 30 sites selected natural values. This is not 100% because two respondents did not select 'natural values' for unknown reasons. See Section 1.1 re weighting of responses.

Workshop Comments:

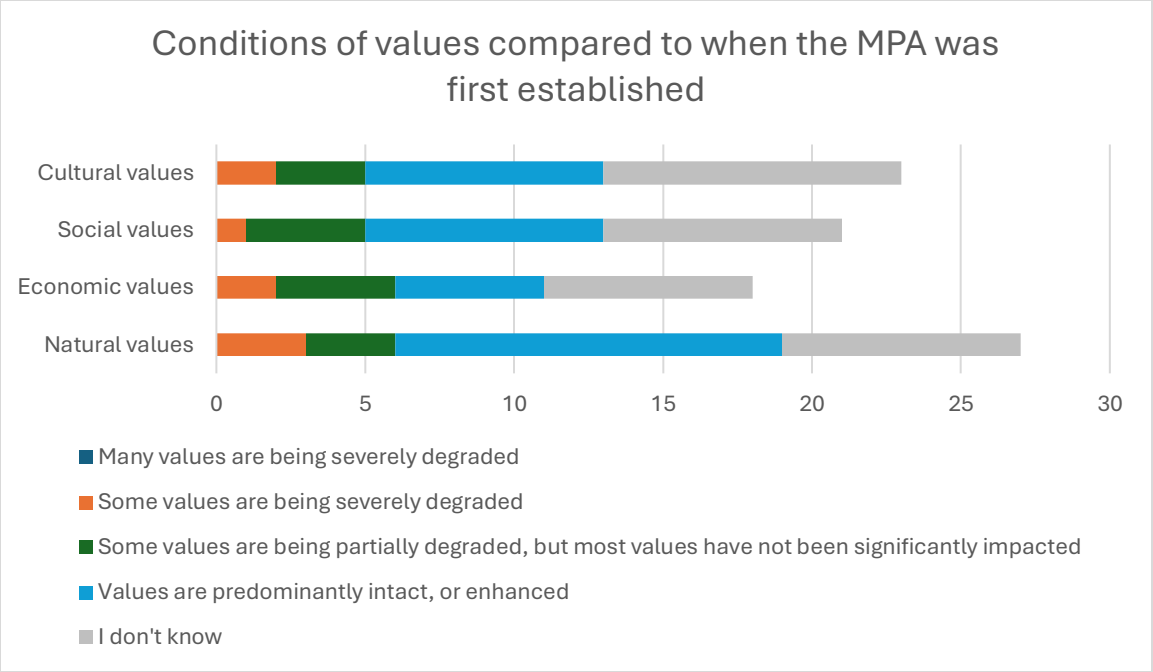
A few workshop participants commented that this pattern reflects their experience – that is, most managers are making more progress in meeting management objectives for natural values than for social or cultural values.

3.4 Consider the most important values this MPA is officially required to protect/enhance. What is the current condition of these values compared to when the MPA was established ?

Respondents were only asked to answer this question for those values that they indicated they are officially required to protect or enhance as part of their management responsibilities. For each value listed below, the n thus corresponds to the number of sites that indicated they manage for this value (see Question 3.2 above).

Compared to when the MPA was initially established, a minority of sites are reporting that the values they are managing for are predominately intact or enhanced: 44.8% of sites chose this response for natural values; 25% for economic values 36% for social values; and 33% for cultural values. This may be due in part to lack of sufficient monitoring (see section 6). Though a few sites are reporting that relevant values are being partially or severly degraded, a relatively high percentage of respondents indicated "I don't know" about current conditions compared to when the MPA was established, ranging from 27% for natural values up to 41% for cultural values. No sites indicated that "many values are being severely degraded".

Current conditions compared to when the MPA was established	Natural Values (n=29)	Economic Values (n=20)	Social Values (n=22)	Cultural Values (n=24)
Many values are being severely degraded	0	0	0	0
Some values are being severely degraded	3	2	1	2
Some values are being partially degraded, but most values have not been significantly impacted	3	4	4	3
Values are predominantly intact, or enhanced	13	5	8	8
I don't know	8	7	8	10
No answer	2	2	1	1



4. Level of Protection and Threats

The following questions asked about the rules and regulations for specific activities in the MPA. If the MPA is zoned, respondents were asked to answer for the zones that allow the activities. The data are thus only representative of the most permissive zones within zoned MPAs, in contrast with other analyses that consider each zone within an MPA separately.[13] Given the length and complexity of the survey, it was not possible to ask respondents to answer these questions for each zone within the LSMPA.

4.2 Is mining, mineral oil and/or gas prospecting or exploitation allowed in any part of this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Is mining, mineral oil and/or gas prospecting or exploitation allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No it is not allowed	23
Yes it is allowed	1
Unclear – no current rules about mining at this site	4

[13] See Pike, E. P., MacCarthy, J. M., Hameed, S. O., Harasta, N., Grorud-Colvert, K., Sullivan-Stack, J., ... & Morgan, L. (2024). Ocean protection quality is lagging behind quantity: Applying a scientific framework to assess real marine protected area progress against the 30 by 30 target. *Conservation Letters*, *17*(3), e13020.

4.3 Are dredging and dumping allowed in any part of this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Are dredging and pumping allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No it is not allowed	14
Yes it is allowed, but only for infrequent and selective purposes (e.g. for navigation - shipping channels or ports, restoration, shoreline protection, etc.)	11
Yes, it is allowed and may have impacts that are incompatible with the conservation of nature (e.g. deliberate/ harmful discharge of noxious substances; direct untreated effluent from land, etc)	0
Unclear – no current rules about dredging and pumping at this site	3

4.4 Is there any anchoring allowed at this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Is there any anchoring allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No anchoring of any kind is allowed	5
Yes, but only small-scale, low impact (only in specified areas, e.g. sand/gravel)	19
Yes, and it has a large impact (e.g. unregulated anchoring, especially in sensitive habitats)	1
Yes, and it is incompatible with conservation (e.g. repeated anchoring by large ships in sensitive habitats)	0
Unclear – no current rules about anchoring at this site	3

4.5 Is infrastructure allowed in any part of this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Is infrastructure allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No infrastructure of any kind	7
Yes, but only minimal impact, small scale, for specific purposes (e.g. fixed moorings, navigation facilities such as buoys, facilities for recreational/cultural use)	18
Yes, and it has a large impact (e.g. ports, harbours, or marinas, large-scale tourism infrastructure)	0

Yes, and it is incompatible with conservation due to its impact/scale (e.g. large-scale ports, infrastructure that may leach pollutants, the use of toxic antifouling on structures)	0
Unclear – no current rules about infrastructure at this site	3

4.6 Is aquaculture allowed in any part of this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Is Aquaculture allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No aquaculture of any kind	15
Yes, but only low-impact, low-density, small-scale, unfed (e.g. low-density bivalves, sea cucumbers, algae, herbivorous fish)	8
Yes, and it has a large impact (e.g. fed aquaculture, commercial scale, fish cages or shrimp farms)	0
Yes, and it is incompatible with conservation due to the impact and/or scale (e.g. practices that convert/destroy habitats, cause hypoxia, or significantly degrade water quality, such as high density fish cages, shrimp farms)	0
Unclear – no current rules about aquaculture at this site	5

4.7 Is fishing or harvesting allowed in any part of this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Is Fishing or harvesting allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No fishing or harvesting of any kind	6
Yes, but infrequent use of only a few, low-impact gear types and activities (e.g. cast nets, gleaning, collecting, single lines, free diving, traps, subsistence fishing - if low impact)	9
Yes, and it has a large impact, but is NOT industrial (any gear or activity with a large impact, but no fishing permitted from industrial vessels >12m in length using towed/dragged gears)	1
Yes, industrial fishing is allowed (fishing is permitted from industrial vessels >12m in length using towed/dragged gears)	12
Unclear – no current rules about fishing at this site	0

4.8 Are non-extractive activities allowed in any part of this MPA (with appropriate permits)?

Are Non-extractive activities allowed?	Number of sites (n=28)
No non-extractive activities of any kind	2
Yes, only minimal to low-impact, low-density and/or small-scale non-extractive activities	23
Yes, moderate to high density and/or scale with moderate impact	1
Unclear – no current rules about non-extractive activities at this site	2

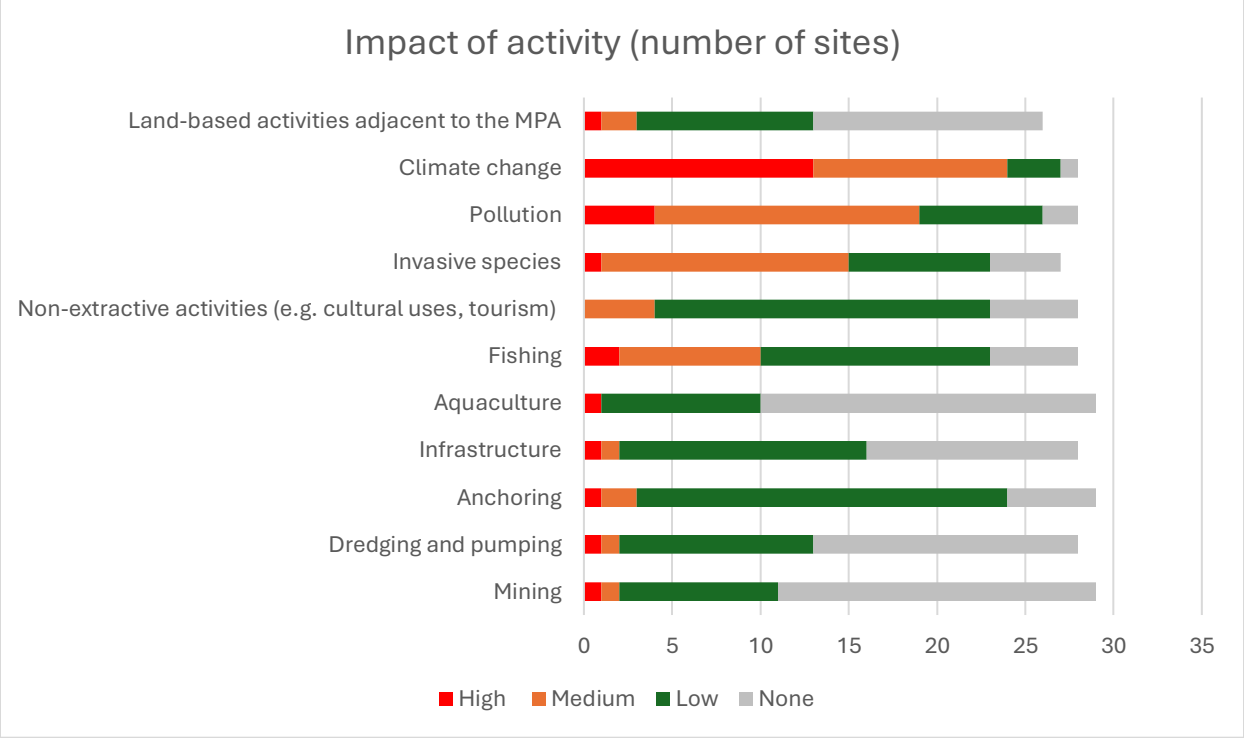
4.9 What is the extent of the threat posed by the following activities at this MPA?

The previous set of questions asked about rules at the MPA. This question asks about the impact of activities actually occurring in/near the MPA (whether legally or illegally). What is the extent of the threat posed by the following activities at this MPA?

Respondents report that climate change, pollution, and invasive species pose high to medium threats to more than half of LSMPA sites globally. Fourteen sites considered the impact of climate change 'high impact', which stands out in relation to all other activities. Pollution came in second with 4 sites considering pollution 'high impact', while 2 sites considered the impact of fishing 'high impact'. Pollution was considered 'medium impact' by 15 sites, followed by invasive species (14) and climate change (11). Activities posing the least threat are aquaculture, mining, dredging and pumping, and infrastructure, with 19, 18, 15, and 12 sites respectively finding 'no impact' for each of these activities.

Activity	High (widespread throughout MPA)	Medium (localized, affects some locations)	Low (very localized, affects limited locations)	None (this activity does not occur at this site)
Mining (n=29)	1	1	9	18
Dredging and pumping (n=28)	1	1	11	15
Anchoring (n=29)	1	2	21	5
Infrastructure (n=28)	1	1	14	12
Aquaculture (n=29)	1	0	9	19
Fishing (n=28)	2	8	13	5

Non-extractive activities (e.g. cultural uses, tourism) (n=28)	0	4	19	5
Invasive species (n=27)	1	14	8	4
Pollution (n=28)	4	15	7	2
Climate change (n=28)	13	11	3	1
Land-based activities adjacent to the MPA (n=26)	1	2	10	13



4.10 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with this statement:

"The management team has access to the information and data needed in order to manage the most severe threats at this MPA."

Sites are split relatively evenly on this:13 sites report having access to the information and data they need to manage the most severe threats while 11 sites report a lack of access.

Access to the data and information needed to manage?	Number of sites (n=29)
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	10
Neither agree or disagree	5
Agree	10
Strongly agree	3

5. Climate Change

Climate change could be accounted for in MPA management in a variety of ways. These may include strategies like adaptive management, accounting for species movement under different climatic conditions, or protecting climate refugia (locations where species, habitats, or ecosystems may be more likely to persist).

5.2 How well do management activities at this MPA address the challenges associated with climate change?

A majority of sites report that their sites are addressing challenges with climate change "acceptably" (60.7%).

Management activities address challenges with climate change	Number of sites (n=28)
Well – climate change is addressed comprehensively, across a range of challenges	1
Acceptably – climate change is addressed in relation to key challenges	17
Not sure – e.g. conflicting information about how climate change will impact the protected area and its stakeholders	4
Poorly – climate change is addressed in a superficial way	5
Not at all – climate change is not addressed in management activities	1

5.3 Which of the following are barriers to including climate change adaptation strategies in the management of this MPA?

'Missing necessary equipment and biological data at relevant management scales' and 'limited pratical knowledge about how to incorporate climate change adaptation in MPA

design' constituted the most important barriers to including cilmate change adaptation strategies in management, followed by 'lack of funding.'

Barriers to climate change adaptation strategies	Number of sites[14] (n=28)
Missing necessary equipment and biological data at relevant management scales	20
Limited practical knowledge about how to incorporate climate change adaptation in MPA design	20
Not enough funding	10
Conflicting information about best adaptation strategies to use	2
Governance structure limits ability to include key climate change adaptation strategies in MPA design	2
There is no political support for planning for impacts of climate change at this site	1
Other	1

6. Science, Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Monitoring of natural, economic, social and/or cultural values may be conducted at MPAs to inform management.

Examples include:
Natural values: monitoring resource conditions, biomass, species abundance
Economic values: monitoring local livelihoods, fishing revenue, tourism revenue
Social values: monitoring public perceptions, public awareness
Cultural values: monitoring cultural uses, access for cultural purposes

6.2 Is there monitoring at this MPA?

Respondents were only asked to answer this question for those values that they indicated they are officially required to protect or enhance as part of their management responsibilities. For each value listed below, the N thus corresponds to the number of sites that indicated they manage for this value (see Question 3.2 above).

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

[14] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total number of sites is >28.

	There is no monitoring	There is minimal monitoring	There is some monitoring	There is adequate monitoring	No answer
Natural values n=29	1	4	15	7	2
Economic values n=20	1	2	13	3	1
Social values n=22	3	3	14	1	1
Cultural values n=24	3	5	11	3	2

Workshop Comments

Participants were not surprised with these results. They interpreted these numbers as consistent with their experience, which is that monitoring is generally not sufficient and that natural values are better monitored than the other values. However, they also highlighted that in some contexts it may not be appropriate for managers to monitor cultural values, which are more appropriately monitored by rightsholders or cultural groups themselves. Rightsholders may or may not want to share certain types of cultural information and managers respect this.

6.3 Are current monitoring activities used to inform adaptive management?

Respondents were only asked to answer this question for those values that they indicated they are officially required to protect or enhance as part of their management responsibilities. For each value listed below, the n thus corresponds to the number of sites that indicated they manage for this value (see Question 3.2 above).

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	No Answer
Natural values n=29	1	5	12	10	1
Economic values n=20	0	2	10	7	1
Social values n=22	1	5	9	6	1
Cultural values n=24	1	4	11	5	3

6.4 Does the MPA have a science and/or monitoring plan? (This may be part of the management plan or a stand-alone plan).

Most sites did not yet have a science and monitoring plan, but had one in development (60.7%), followed by those who had a current one (35.7%). One site had a science and monitoring plan that was out of date.

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

Science and/or monitoring plan?	Number of sites (n=28)
Yes and it is current	10
Yes but it is out of date	1
Not yet, but there is one under development	17
No, and there are no immediate plans to develop one	0

6.5 In addition to monitoring, scientific research is conducted at many MPAs. Considering any scientific research conducted at this site, how frequently is this research shared *in a format managers can understand and use?*

The majority of sites (53.6%) found that research was 'often' shared in a format that managers can use, or 'always' shared in a format managers can understand and use (17.9%). Two sites found that it was rarely in a format they could use, while 2 sites were not sure.

Research shared in a format managers can understand and use	Number of sites (n=28)
There is no scientific research being conducted at the site	1
Never shared in format I can use	0
Rarely shared in a format I can use	2
Sometimes shared in a format I can use	3
Often shared in a format I can use	15
Always shared in a format I can use	5
I'm not sure	2

Workshop Comments

One comment regarding scientific research made links to other items in the survey, including cultural values and outreach, noting that there are opportunities to establish partnerships with scientists and community members so that scientific research can also serve the purpose of making connections to culture and community, for example by including community members or rightsholders in offshore expeditions or sharing scientific research in a way that is meaningful to community members as well as managers.

7. Budget and Funding

MPA budgets may come from a variety of sources (including different government agencies, permits, entrance fees, donations, foundations or NGOs, etc).

In the following two questions, we asked respondents to consider all sources of funding available for management of this MPA.

7.2 How would you characterize the management budget at this site, relative to the current management needs?

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

	Number of sites (n=28)
There is no dedicated budget at this site	4
The available budget is inadequate to fulfill basic management needs	5

The available budget is acceptable but could be improved to achieve effective management	19
The available budget is sufficient to meet all management needs	0

Workshop Comments

This item generated significant discussion, largely because most workshop participants were surprised by the data and felt that they do not reflect their experience. Many participants indicated that at their sites, budget constraints are a challenge.

For example, participants said:

> "*The budget capacity… that's pretty interesting to me because, that's a big challenge for us*."

> "*The result that I found most surprising was around budget capacity, which is something we hear, time and again, the challenges with working in a limited or constrained budget*."

Several participants noted that budgets had remained static or inadequate for years, even as management responsibilities had increased. And several other respondents emphasized that their sites definitely lacked an adequate budget, highlighting the variability among sites as well as the fact that certain sites/countries have much larger budgets than others. One participant noted that other studies, including some from their country, have regularly shown a budget deficit for effective management of marine protected areas.

It was also noted that this response does not align with responses to questions about staff capacity (Section 8) or Monitoring (Section 6).

> *"[There are] a fair amount of sites saying they feel there's a sufficient budget, but then insufficient staff capacity or monitoring… it makes me ask, do people feel there's a budget reserve and you just can't hire people, or is the allocation of the budget in a particular area of management skewed… you know, there must be something between the budget and the implementation or other components… when those two things are not aligning."*

Overall, there was a sense that these data might reflect how survey respondents understood the question, reflecting budgets that are adequate for basic management activities, but not sufficient for all of the things they should be doing or would like to be doing. In other words, at the sites that indicated the budget is 'acceptable but could be improved to achieve effective management,' respondents may be viewing it "almost as a

glass half full versus a glass is half empty kind of situation." This is discussed further in Section 16, in relation to Management Effectiveness.

Finally, one participant noted that a focus on budget might miss some of the other ways that management effectiveness can be advanced.

> *"I think there's an expection that once you establish an MPA…and you develop a management plan for that particular site, the expectation is you're going to require additional funding every year for every component of management… and I think we fall into a trap where we're letting that process drive the demand for funding. And we forget that it might not necessarily be a significant amount of funding that really brings us towards effective management, but really looking at practical solutions that can be applied, to progress in a long term effort."*

7.3 How important are non-governmental sources of funding at this MPA?

Importance of non-governmental sources of funding	Number of sites (n=29)
Not at all important (there are no sources of non-governmental funding)	3
Less important than government sources	10
Equally important as government sources	7
More important than government sources	7
Not sure	2

Workshop Comments:

The role of non-governmental funding was discussed by several participants in terms of partnerships and their importance. In many sites, partnerships with non-governmental organizations, foundations, and industry/private sector are critical to supporting management activities. Sometimes this comes in conventional project funding or co-contributions, other times it is through more innovative financing mechanisms. As one participant noted, these kinds of partnerships are essential given the inadequate budgets at most sites, and may be part of the reason that budgets were seen as adequate, given that these additional sources of funding were included. They also noted that these kinds of partnerships and non-governmental funding sources are easier to develop or find at certain sites (i.e. iconic sites that attract a lot of attention, sites in more populated, wealthy countries) and not at others.

7.4 MPAs may also receive non-financial (in-kind) support, including volunteer hours, partnerships with non-profit organizations, etc. How important are non-governmental sources of non-financial support for management activities at this MPA?

Non-financial support	Number of sites (n=28)
Not at all important (there are no non-governmental sources of support)	4
Less important than government sources	5
Equally important as government sources	11
More important than government sources	6
Not sure	2

8. Staff Capacity

For the following two questions, staff refers to people whose jobs are all or partially dedicated to supporting MPA management.

8.2 Staff capacity refers to both the number of personnel and the adequacy of their training/technical skills to meet management needs. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with this statement: *Staff capacity at this site is adequate to meet management needs.*

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

Staff capacity at this site is adequate to meet management needs	Number of sites (n=28)
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	13
Agree	13
Strongly agree	1

Workshop Comments:

Participants noted two challenges related to staff capacity. First, in some sites and for some kinds of positions (e.g. vessel operators), it is difficult to retain qualified staff because they can earn higher salaries in the private sector. They therefore face high

turnover rates. Second, in some sites management relies heavily on other partners, so staff capacity in certain areas is dependent on those partners.

8.3 If staff capacity is lacking, which specific positions would need to be added or which skills would need to be strengthened to fulfill all management needs at the MPA? **(Please check all that apply).**

Positions to strengthen	Number of sites (n=27)[15]
Scientific/research	13
Compliance/enforcement	12
Education/ community outreach	10
Administration – general	10
Technical/IT	10
Lead managers or additional leadership	7
Grant writing	7
Culture and cultural competency	7
Administration – contract or financial	5
Other	3

9. Surveillance and Enforcement Capacity

Surveillance and enforcement capacity includes the ability and resources to monitor use of the site and to enforce all rules and regulations for the MPA.

9.2 How would you characterize the surveillance and enforcement capacity at this MPA?

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

	Number of sites (n=28)
There is no capacity to enforce regulations	2
There are major deficiencies in enforcement capacity/resources (e.g. lack of skills, lack of patrol vessel or budget)	14
There are minor deficiencies in enforcement capacity/resources	4
Enforcement capacity/resources are sufficient	8
Not sure	0

[15] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total number of responses does not correspond to the number of sites

9.3 Main barriers and challenges to surveillance and enforcement

Main barriers or challenges	Number of sites (n=20)[16]
Lack of necessary equipment (e.g. patrol vessels)	12
Insufficient budget to pay for surveillance and enforcement	12
Lack of comprehensive surveillance and enforcement strategy	9
Inadequate staff capacity	7
Interagency relationships and compliance coordination	6
Lack of technology	5
Other	5
MPA users not aware of rules	3
Lack of political will to prosecute those who violate rules	2

Workshop Comments:

Participants were generally not surprised by the deficiencies in enforcement capacity, with several people noting this had long been an issue at their site. As one participant said:

> *"I wasn't surprised on the enforcement capabilities, because that's been an issue for us since day one. We have objectives to try to have long distance monitoring and surveillance, and we just keep hitting walls, you know, the robots and things like that. The companies won't sell them to us. And the contracts are exorbitant. As a conservation agency, we can't afford it. It's not in any of our budget."*

9.4 When there are known violations of MPA regulations, how frequently are they legally prosecuted or addressed through another acceptable mechanism (e.g. warnings, tickets, other culturally acceptable protocols)? Consider for both **major violations** (e.g. illegal industrial fishing, dumping, spills, grounding) and **minor violations** (e.g. entry without permit, illegal recreational or artisanal fishing).

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

	Major Violations (n=28)	Minor Violations (n=28)
Never prosecuted or addressed	1	2
Rarely	4	3
Sometimes	2	4

[16] Respondents could select 'all that apply' so the total number of responses does not correspond to the number of sites

Often	2	3
Always Prosecuted or addressed	13	10
Not sure	6	6

10.Stakeholders and Rightsholders

Respondents received the following information before answering a series of questions on equitable management:

Equitable management is increasingly a focus for protected areas, including large-scale MPAs. Equity can refer to the fairness in distribution of positive and negative impacts among groups, respect for rights and knowledge of all groups in management, and inclusiveness in decision-making processes.

For the following questions:

Rightsholders refer to those groups who have distinct rights under international law (i.e. Indigenous peoples, traditional owners)

Local stakeholders refer to other groups who use the MPA or have a special connection to it (e.g. cultural practitioners, fishers and local fishing companies, tour operators, others). Local stakeholders do NOT include foreign or non-local users of the site (e.g. foreign fishing fleets, mining companies) or government.

These terms are used differently in different contexts - please answer to the best of your ability, based on your context.

10.2 Are there rightsholders at this MPA?

There are rightsholders at a majority of sites (18 of 30).

10.3 Are there local stakeholders at this MPA?

Even though many LSMPAs are remote, the vast majority nonetheless report having local stakeholders (29 out of 30 sites).

11. Equity in LSMPAs

11.1 Have the cultures and identities of local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups been acknowledged and respected in the design and implementation of management actions in the MPA?

	Number of sites (n=20)
No - there is at least one group who feels their culture or identity is not respected	2
Yes - all groups feel that their cultural or identity are respected	7
Yes - all groups feel that their culture or identity is respected AND their values incorporated into the management of the protected area, especially most vulnerable stakeholders and Indigenous people	9
Not relevant at this site	2

11.2 Are Indigenous and/or local knowledge systems used in the management of the MPA?

	Number of sites (n=27)
No - Indigenous and/or local knowledge systems are not used	2
Yes - Indigenous and/or local knowledge systems are incorporated to a limited extent in the management of the site	14
Yes - Indigenous and/or local knowledge systems are incorporated to a significant extent in the management of the site	6
Not relevant at this site	5

11.3 Do local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups retain their statutory and customary rights with the establishment or management of this MPA

	Number of sites (n=27)
At least one group has lost some rights with the establishment or management of the site – OR – Some groups have lost rights, while others have retained or gained rights	5
All groups have retained their rights	18

All groups have gained some rights	0
Not relevant at this site	4

11.4 Are local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups satisfied with how decisions are made in relation to MPA management?

	Number of sites (n=26)
There is some dissatisfaction with how decisions are made	7
All groups are mostly satisfied	8
All groups are satisfied with how decisions are made, including those who are most vulnerable	1
I don't know how local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups feel about how decisions are made	10

11.5 Are local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups able to access information about MPA management activities?

	Number of sites (n=27)
Information about management activities is not available to local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups – OR – They can access information about management activities if they request it	12
Information about management activities is available to them in one format only	1
Information about management activities is available to them in multiple formats and is accessible to people from different backgrounds (e.g. education, language, age)	14

11.6 Was Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) obtained from local stakeholders and rightsholders before the MPA was designated?

	Number of sites (n=27)
No - FPIC was not obtained	2
FPIC was not obtained but other consultative procedures with groups were used	12

Yes - FPIC was obtained for each group affected	8
I don't know	5

11.7 Are there actions to mitigate burdens to local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups who live in or near the MPA or who use the site?

	Number of sites (n=20)
Yes - there are actions to mitigate burdens for at least some groups that bear burdens	4
Yes - there are actions to mitigate burdens for groups that bear burdens, AND actions specifically directed to most vulnerable groups	3
Not applicable - there are no burdens for local stakeholder and rightsholder groups	10

11.8 Do local stakeholder and/or rightsholder groups benefit from the MPA?

	Number of sites (n=26)
No - they do not benefit	1
Yes some groups benefit	16
Yes - all groups benefit	9

11.9 As you answered the above questions about equity for local stakeholders and/or rightsholders, which specific groups were you thinking of at your site? Please list all relevant groups. (e.g. traditional leaders, fisherfolk, tourism operators)

Respondents who answered this question expressed that they were thinking of, amongs others:

- Traditional users and Indigenous groups
- Indigenous leaders
- Cultural practitioners
- Artisanal fishers
- Tourism operators
- Commerical and recreational fishers

- Recreational users
- Science researchers
- The shipping industry
- Local residents

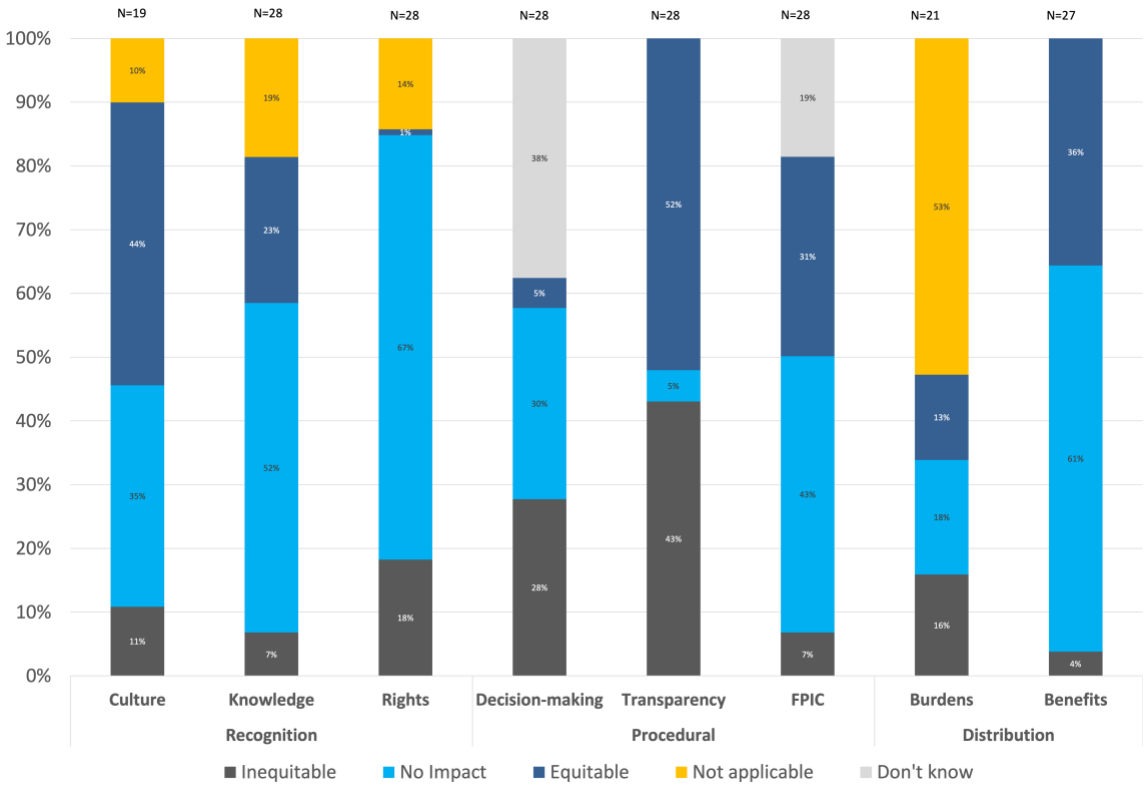
11.10 Equity Summary

Equity is typically assessed in terms of three categories – recognition, procedure and distribution. Our survey questions (11.1 to 11.8 above) drew on 8 common equity indicators for these 3 categories.[17] Questions 11.1 to 11.3 relate to recognition, questions 11.4 to 11.6 relate to procedure, and questions 11.7 and 11.8 relate to distribution. Figure 2 summarizes the results reported for these questions, showing the percentage of sites that fall into equitable, inequitable, and no impact (or do not harm) categories for each equity indicator.

Overall, the figure shows mixed outcomes regarding equitable governance. Managers report that for a majority of equity indicators, most sites are *not* meeting the bar for equitable management. For example, very few sites are delivering equitable governance (shown in dark blue) in relation to respecting rights and decision-making. However, for most equity indicators, the proportion of sites with inequitable management (shown in dark grey) is relatively small. For several indicators, the majority of sites fall into the 'no impact' category (shown in light blue), which means the site is neither advancing nor undermining equitable governance. It is also worth noting the large percentage of sites where managers indicate that certain measures are 'not applicable' (shown in yellow) or that they do not know how a site is doing (shown in light grey). For some sites and some indicators, conventional measures used for smaller protected areas may need re-thinking in relation to large-scale sites.

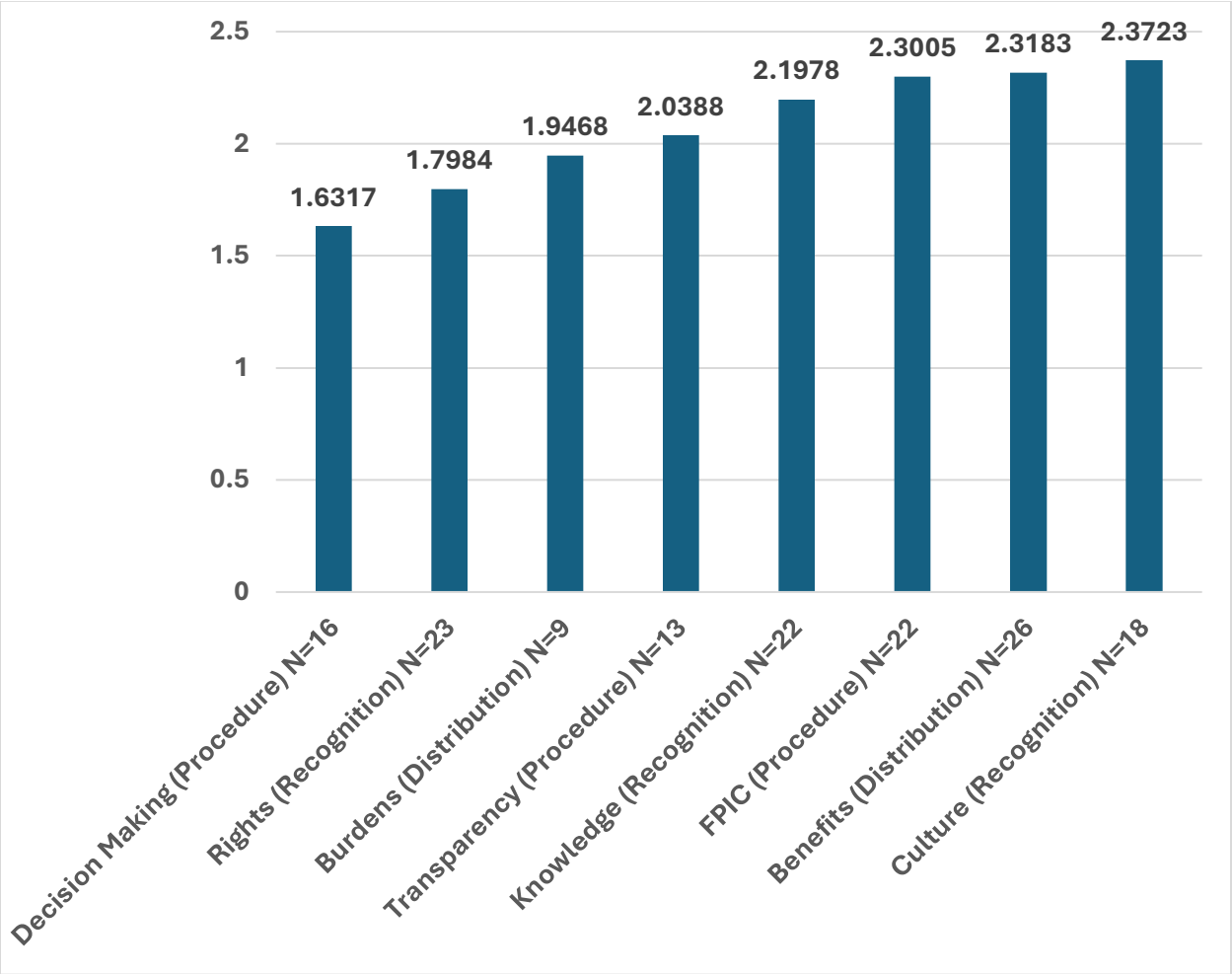
[17] See Zafra-Calvo, N., Pascual, U., Brockington, D., Coolsaet, B., Cortes-Vazquez, J. A., Gross-Camp, N., ... & Burgess, N. D. (2017). Towards an indicator system to assess equitable management in protected areas. *Biological Conservation*, *211*, 134-141 and Zafra-Calvo, N., Garmendia, E., Pascual, U., Palomo, I., Gross-Camp, N., Brockington, D., ... & Burgess, N. D. (2019). Progress toward equitably managed protected areas in Aichi target 11: a global survey. *BioScience*, *69*(3), 191-197.

Figure 2: Equitable governance indicators



Another way of summarizing the data on equity is to compare mean scores for each indicator on a scale from 1 (inequitable) to 3 (equitable). Figure 3 below illustrates these values for each of the eight equity indicators. When we look across equity indicators for the sites included in the survey, they are doing best with recognizing culture and there is most room for improvement on decision-making, which measures stakeholder and rightsholder satisfaction with decision-making processes.

Figure 3: Mean scores for equity indicators



Workshop Comments:

Participants identified several challenges in interpreting the data on equitable governance. First, they noted the importance of the specific political and legal context for each site in enabling or constraining certain types of engagement with rightsholders and stakeholders. In some cases this relates to the legislation that established the site and guides its management. Managers described legislation that "*means that we can't enter into FPIC"* or noted in spite of their desire to partner with rightsholders, it is "*difficult when we're restricted by the legislation."* Similarly, another participant noted:

> *"Generally speaking, the protected area legislation that we work under, most of it is relatively aged, from a legislative perspective it actually doesn't have the capacity*

for us to share information with rights holders. It's a government tool. And the information, generally speaking, stays within government."

Another participant noted that, beyond the specific legislation related to the establishment and management of the site, there is a broader issue related to the political and administrative system of the country.

> *"…there are countries, according to their governance structure as a country, where co-governance is not possible. On the other hand, there are others that have a more democratic character in their internal politics, so co-governance is more possible. So, there's also an issue here that I think is very, very important to know what the system of government is.."*

In other words, there are some countries that function in a way where more equitable governance is more likely or more feasible, and this is an issue that extends beyond the particulars of a how an individual site is managed. However, the specific history of each site also matters – whether it was initiated within and by a community or imposed in a top-down manner. As one participant said, with reference to specific sites they are familiar with:

> *"I think there is a better appreciation or feeling of equity on the part of the communities regarding decision-making and co-governance when the communities living in these areas are taken into account in the creation of a Marine Protected Area, not when the Protected Areas are imposed."*

Several participants shared the specific stories of how their sites had been established, in some cases reporting equitable processes and in other cases reporting problematic processes. Regardless, they emphasized the importance of including communities in a meaningful way.

A second context-specific challenge relates to the number and characteristics of rightsholders and stakeholders associated with a particular site. In order to engage in equitable governance, rightsholders and stakeholders must have the capacity and willingness to engage and trust in the process. In some cases, rightsholders or stakeholders may not have the capacity to engage effectively, or may have other constraints on their time and resources that prevent engagement, including "*consultation and engagement fatigue with many [rightsholders]."* It can also be difficult for managers to engage effectively in sites where there are many groups of rightsholders and stakeholders and not just a few, with different connections to a site, or where colonial systems have interfered with cultural connections to a site and they need to be re-established. Colonial legacies and systems often hinder equitable governance, an issue that is much broader than MPA management.

A third challenge related to some of the sites is the question of engaging effectively when groups are not directly connected to the space or where cultural connections are being re-

established. Even in sites where there is a broader political and cultural context of effectively engaging rightsholders in marine conservation and management, it may be difficult to translate these practices into offshore spaces. As one participant said:

> *"We found a model of success for how we've always managed our coastal and nearshore MPAs, so we want to replicate that model moving forward, [but] how do we make sure that they [rightsholders and stakeholders] continue to be part of the decision making process, where we're seeing a larger focus and priority on economically based decision making [for offshore spaces], which ultimately I think pushes away from the model that we're trying to protect… when you start moving offshore, then that sense of connection is no longer there. And that's where government… plays a more active role in the decision-making process, and not so much the communities."*

With respect to transparency, which was quite polarized, participants offered a few comments. This indicator assessed information sharing, with 43% of sites indicating that information is not available to stakeholder and rightsholder groups or only available on request and 52% of sites indicating that Information is available in multiple formats and accessible to people from different backgrounds.

> "*The issue of transparency is vital. I mean, if the community cannot access information, it generates distrust, and distrust in any form of human relationship makes it impossible to achieve good results*."

> *"When decisions are made suddenly behind closed doors without considering the communities, this can lead to a lack of information, a lack of transparency. Because when decisions are made together, in the end, the territory is informed, and when you are well-informed, you care about the issues too. When something is imposed, it feels like maybe you don't care to know what's happening."*

Participants agreed that transparency is always a challenge, but that in some sites it is better managed.

> *"I think that although transparency is a challenge, I believe that at least for the [site], there is total transparency because the co-management table includes… six state institutions and seven community representatives. I mean, all of these actors together built an annual operational plan for the various activities to be carried out regarding the management of [the site]. So, decisions have been made completely together with the community in an open manner, generating consensus for each of these activities, to prioritize activities within this co-management. There has been a lot of transparency. I believe this is good, and I see that the community also appreciates it very positively."*

Overall, it is worth noting that in many sites, significant work has to be done – either by managers or by others in the broader political and legal system – before progress will be possible on some indicators of equitable governance. These indicators alone cannot assess whether or how that supporting work is going, which misses the opportunity to assess where sites are at in relation to their own context and management journey. It is important to understand the specific barriers that sites face in order to engage in more equitable governance. In some cases it may simply be a lack of funding (insufficient budget) to support more equitable processes (e.g. sharing information in multiple formats, for diverse stakeholders and rightsholders). In other cases, major legislative changes are necessary, or even more significant changes are necessary to the broader political and administrative systems in a country. The question of who is responsible for addressing these barriers is also important, as in many cases it is beyond the capacity of managers.

12.Outreach and Engagement

12.1 How would you describe public engagement at this MPA?

See Section 16 for further discussion of this question in relation to management effectiveness.

	Number of sites (n=28)
None - key audiences (stakeholders and rightsholders) have not yet been engaged	0
Needs Improvement - a limited amount of public engagement has occurred in the past 3 years	4
Good - key audiences (stakeholders and rightsholders) have been identified and engaged in the past 3 years	14
Excellent - there is a comprehensive plan in place for ongoing engagement of key audiences (stakeholders and rightsholders) in ways that are adapted to meet different groups' needs	10

Workshop Comments

Participants largely agreed that public outreach and engagement is going well for most sites. As one participant said, “those things are going right… for [our agencies and sites], our public outreach, to me, has been outstanding.” They commented on the variety of

modes of outreach (online, in person), using different media and approaches, and also emphasized efforts to partner with local agencies, community groups, and others.

Another aspect of outreach and engagement that participants from several sites highlighted was their work partnering with scientific research and exploration, to ensure that, in addition to scientific outputs, this work leads to communication products that resonate with local communities. Several participants also discussed producing materials in multiple languages, including Indigneous languages, and the importance of physical spaces such as visitor centers where people can learn about the site.

13. Political Context

13.1 Overall, how would you describe the current level of support for the MPA among relevant elected and high-level government officials (e.g. Ministers)?

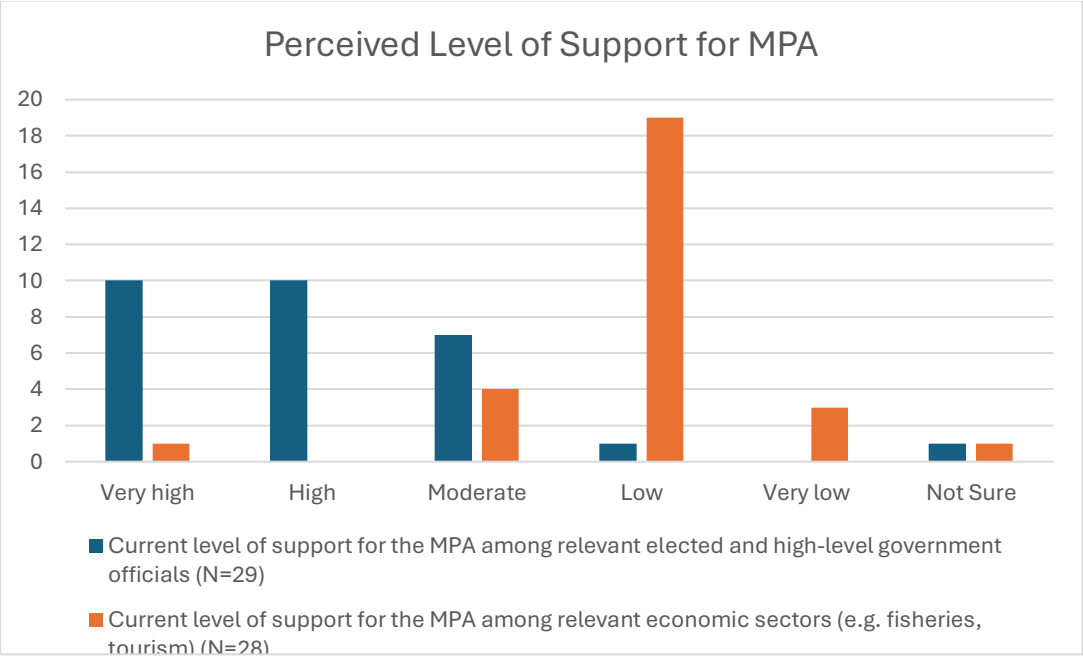
Political support for the sites included in the survey was generally very high (10) or high (10), with 7 sites showing moderate support and only one site with low support (one site was ‘not sure’ ; n=29).

13.2 How would you describe the current level of support for the MPA among relevant economic sectors (e.g. fisheries, tourism)?

In contrast, support for sites among relevant economic sectors was lower, with only one site very high, no sites with high support, 4 sites with moderate support, 19 sites with low support, and 3 sites with very low support (one site was ‘not sure’ ; n=28).

These results are illustrated below.

Figure 4: Perceived level of political support for sites



13.3 For each of the following statements, please indicate how likely you think it is to occur within the next five years.

A large majority of sites found that it was not at all likely that the MPA will be downgraded downsized, or degazetted in the next five years. Increasing influence of foreign governments and companies is also perceived to be not at all likely for the majority of sites.

	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
The MPA will be downgraded (some legal protections for the MPA will be removed or decreased) (n=28)	24	4	0
The MPA will be downsized (decrease in area of the MPA through a legal boundary change) (n=28)	25	3	1
The MPA will be degazetted (loss of legal protection for the entire MPA) (n=28)	27	0	1
Foreign governments will become more influential in decisions that affect MPA management (n=28)	23	3	2
Foreign companies will become more influential in decisions that affect MPA management (n=28)	25	3	1

14.Key Management Priorities

14.1 When you consider management priorities at this MPA over the next 5 years, how would you rank each of these?

Respondents were asked to indicate how they would rank a selection of management priorities, on a scale from 'not a priority' to 'top priority'. In order to assess how these priorities compared to one another, the mean score was calculated for each item, using the values 0 (not a priority), 1 (low priority), 2 (moderate priority), 3 (high priority), and 4 (top priority). In the table below, these priorities are listed from highest priority (highest mean score) to lowest priority (lowest mean score).

Increasing scientific knowledge, improving monitoring, and funding new sources of funding are the highest priorities.

Priority	Not a priority (0)	Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Top (4)	Mean Score
Increase scientific knowledge about the site (n=28)	0	0	4	15	9	3.18
Improve monitoring (n=21)	0	1	4	8	8	3.10
Find new sources of funding (n=21)	0	2	4	6	9	3.05
Improve public education / outreach (n=21)	0	2	4	11	4	2.81
Build capacity for surveillance and enforcement (n=20)	0	2	5	8	5	2.80
Improve stakeholder input to decision-making (n=20)	0	0	8	8	4	2.80
Increase staff capacity (n=19)	0	0	9	5	5	2.79
Deliver on promises made or expectations raised during MPA designation process (n=21)	1	3	6	4	7	2.62
Increase political support (n=22)	0	3	7	10	2	2.50
Improve equity for local stakeholders and rightsholders (n=20; mean = 2.4)	0	3	8	7	2	2.40

15.Role of Big Ocean

15.1 Big Ocean is a network of managers of large-scale MPAs. In the next five years, are there any specific activities that Big Ocean could facilitate that would be most helpful for you/your MPA?

Respondents suggested a range of possible interventions and collaboration with Big Ocean around three major themes:

(1) Building capacity of staff, increasing resources, support for spatial planning
(2) Networking and sharing of experiences and lessons learned
(3) Identification of opportunities for, and support towards, securing additional funds

The detailed comments provided are included in Appendix 1.

16.Management Effectiveness

We summarized and categorized the results from multiple categories in order to assess overall management effectiveness of the sites included in the survey. There are a variety of definitions of management effectiveness, along with a range of tools and methods for assessing it. Here we follow Gill et al. (2017) in assessing management effectiveness.[18]

Management effectiveness was assessed first by examining progress toward meeting management objectives (see 3.3), monitoring (6.2) and the extent to which monitoring informs adaptive management (6.3) for each of the values that sites are designed to protect, and determining whether each of these measures was above or below the threshold for effective management per Gill et al. (2017).

Figure 5 below illustrates that approximately two thirds of sites are reporting successful implementation of management objectives related to natural, economic, and social values, while half of sites are meeting objectives related to cultural values. However, a majority of sites are struggling to meet effective management thresholds for monitoring and adaptive management, across all four types of values. For example, only a quarter of sites report adequate monitoring for natural values and many fewer are reporting adequate monitoring for cultural, social, and economic values. Additionally, about one third of sites are reporting that monitoring informs adaptive management for natural and economic values and this drops to about a quarter of sites for social and cultural values.

[18] Gill, D. A., Mascia, M. B., Ahmadia, G. N., Glew, L., Lester, S. E., Barnes, M., ... & Fox, H. E. (2017). Capacity shortfalls hinder the performance of marine protected areas globally. *Nature*, *543*(7647), 665-669.

Figure 5: Percent of sites meeting threshold values for effective implementation, monitoring and adaptive management

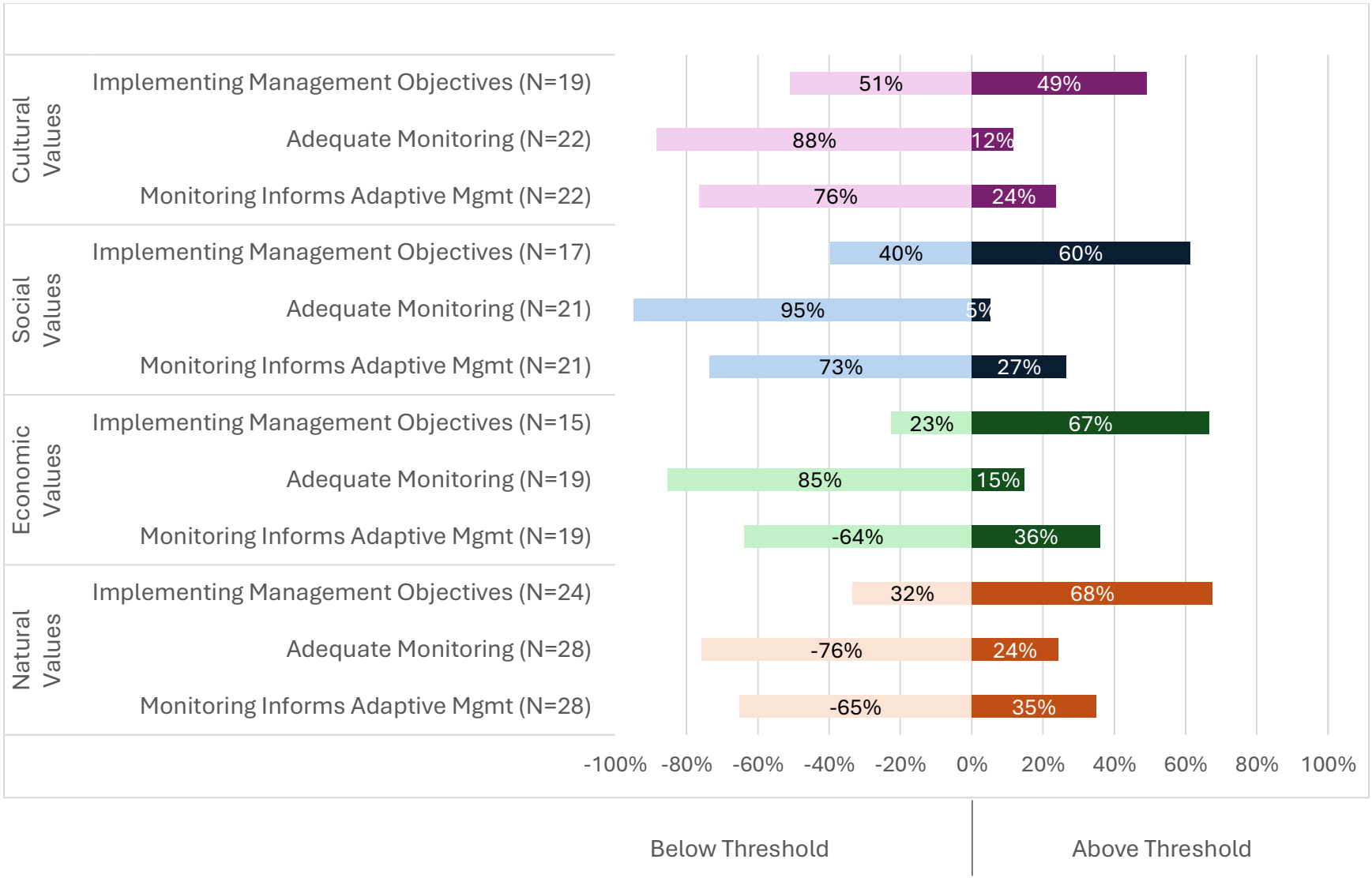
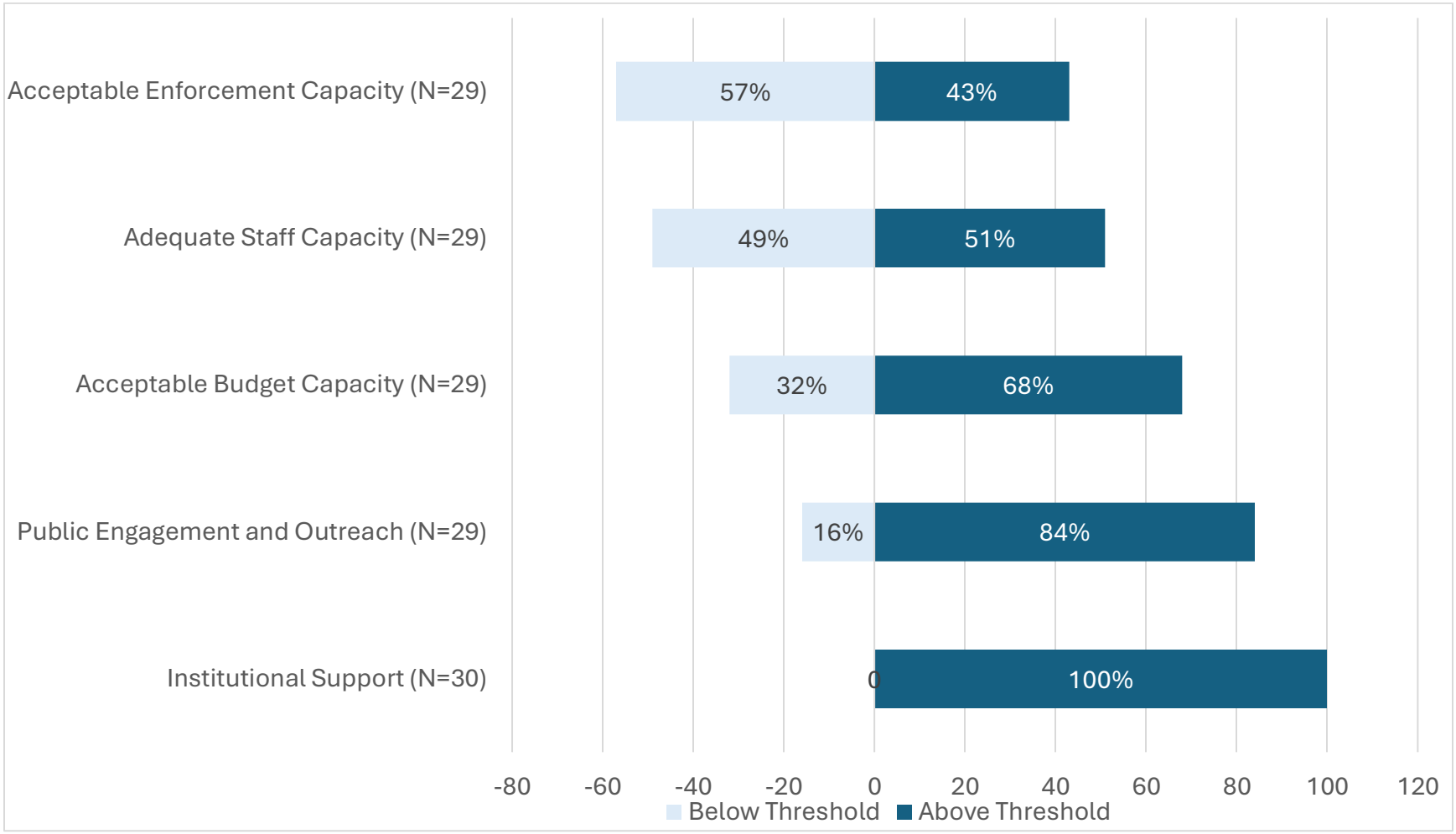


Figure 6: Percent of sites meeting threshold values for indicators of effective management



Next we assessed management effectiveness in relation to several additional indicators of effective management identified by Gill et al. Figure 6 illustrates these results (as tabulated in sections 7.2, 8.2, 9.2, 9.4 and 12.1), ordered from the lowest to highest percentage of sites meeting thresholds for effective management. Many sites are struggling with enforcement capacity and staff capacity – 50% or more of sites are not meeting thresholds for effective management on these indicators. However, 68% of sites *are* meeting the threshold for effective management in terms of budget capacity. This result was unexpected and is discussed further in Section 7. It is worth noting that *no sites* reported that their available budget is 'sufficient to meet all management needs.' Sites are also reporting that they are doing relatively well on public engagement and outreach, with 84% of sites meeting the threshold for effective management. Finally, all of the sites report having institutional support in the form of formal legal designation through national law or through traditional law or custom, and/or international agreement.

Participants agreed that some aspects of management are easier to make progress on than others, and some aspects are easier for managers to do themselves while others require partnerships and coordination, which often makes them more difficult and complex to achieve. On the other hand, if partnerships are easy to create then some management activities might be more easily achieved (e.g. monitoring). While participants did not use the phrase 'enabling conditions,' this concept captures their assessment of what is often underlying these measures of management effectiveness.

One participant reflected on what these measures assess, which is often what is required for a particular site rather than what would be ideal.

> *"The implementation of objectives reflects or is quite related to the fact that there's regulation that forces the country to do things. Right? But what this is telling us here is that even though those things have been done, they are insufficient, meaning there's something missing, something lacking from the perspective of quality. So, that small gap left is quite difficult. I think that growing from zero to implementing things is much easier than going from implementation to improving quality."*

Given how many sites included in the survey are younger sites, it is important to continue to monitor management effectiveness over time, to see whether and how sites are able to 'go from implementation to improving quality.'

The workshop discussions also reflected on the idea of management effectiveness, including the implicit assumption that achieving effective management (all indicators above the threshold) is possible. One workshop participant explained that:

> *"We always aspire to try and meet all our key performance indicators in any given year, but acknowledge that we're never going to be able to do that 100%. So, management effectiveness for us means that we're… doing as much as we can, hitting as many of the key performance indicators, but… we're not going to get it right*

100% of the time. So… I suppose that [there is an] underlying acceptance that the task is always too big and we just have to accept that."

It is unrealistic to expect 100% effective management across all sites. A more important question might be what is realistic for any given site, and how is the site doing in relation to what is feasible. As discussed in relation to equitable governance, it is important to assess sites in relation to their own context and management journey and to understand the specific barriers they face in achieving more effective management. The value in these data are not in assessing any individual site, but in illustrating the state of the field of large-scale marine managed areas collectively.

Appendix 1: Activities that Big Ocean Could Facilitate for Managers

The following comments are copied verbatim from survey responses. References to specific sites were removed to protect confidentiality.

English:

- Maintain and improve on the established relationships within the LSMPA Network and continue to share information and strategies towards protecting 30 per cent of the world's ocean and land areas by 2030.
- "Sharing among MPAs of experiences and learnings around processes/tools/technologies related to:
    - Co-design with Traditional Owners of co-management related projects, programs, and processes
    - Development and use of leading-edge technology and data science tools in MPA management decision-making, e.g. AI, decision support tools."
- Support in marine spatial planning (though there is also support being received for this from others such [deleted]). Support in comms, best practices, knowledge exchange and lessons learned, creative solutions, etc.
- Creating a network of Scientists who may need to do research in the [site]. Deep sea ocean monitoring and research is necessary. Marine spatial planning and activities to be ongoing. Access to vessels that can undertake research and build capacity. Resource management and how to actually carry out the work to be able to value marine resources.
- Community meetings
- Provide remote surveillance and monitoring information (analysis of purchase v. contracts for wave gliders/sail drones/ remote operated vessels). Review of dark vessel threats and unregulated fishing. Public information re: deep-sea mining threats adjacent to MPAs. (sediment plume threats to natural resources) Avenues for funding opportunities.
- Helping to give us maintained visibility on the international/global stage to assist with sustainable financing fundraising efforts, that will in turn ensure we can achieve some of the many areas we are lacking (science capacity, enforcement, monitoring, management, opportunities for sustainable development, etc).
- Continue to support our networking with stakeholders who have connections to the [site]
- Provide additional opportunities for government agencies tasked with management of LSMPAs to actively engage.
- Advocate for more funding and staff. Share lessons learned between MPAs
- LSMPA/Big Ocean conferences are an excellent way to learn and engage with partners across the Pacific.

- We are somewhat different to other MPAs [deleted]. Identification of alternative funding streams will be key going forward.
- Yes. Exchange of experiences on: monitoring fishing and vessels; monitoring pelagic biodiversity; management plans; reduction of by-catch; conservation of large pelagics species; technologies used by other MPA. Technical and financial support.
- Potentially act as external stakeholder participants as the next 5- yearly MPA review scheduled for 2029
- "Helping us with support with a vessel to monitor our [site] MPZ, [deleted] Vessels have been sighted within our [site] and have not been picked up by AIS.
  There is not much point in declaring an [LSMPA] if it's not going to be protected, you may as well have fishing activity within the [site]
- Ongoing dialogue about other MPAs and interaction in relation to faciliated indigenous dialogue

Español (Spanish):

- Intercambio de experiencias.
- Capacitaciones a líderes locales
- "Principalmente veo la falta de presupuesto como el principal problema. Con buen presupuesto se puede contratar personal y obtener herramientas para vigilancia.
- No obstante, la capacitación continúa y conocer otras experiencias es clave para comprender otras realidades y aplicarlas en el plano local. "
- "Intercambio de experiencias y aprendizajes con otras AMP.
- ES IMPORTANTE CONOCER LAS EXPERIENCIAS ADQUIRIDAS EN OTRAS AREAS EXTENSAS DONDE YA SE HAYAN INSTALADO LOS INSTRUMENTOS DE PLANIFICACIÓN TERRITORIAL Y DONDE HAYAN TRANSITADO EFICIENTEMENTE POR DIFICULTADES DE ADMINISTRACIÓN Y GESTION DE LAS AREAS. TAMBIEN ES IMPORTANTE APOYAR LAS ACTIVIDADES DE DIVULGACIÓN AL INTERIOR DE LA COMUNIDAD RESPECTO DE LA IMPORTANCIA DE LAS AMPs DE MANERA DE INSTALAR UN Y REFORZAR UN SENTIDO COMUN EN LA POBLACIÓN DE AFECTACIÓN DIRECTA E INDIRECTA.
- Para nosotros en [site] somos nuevos en la administración de las AMP y siempre es importante intercambiar experiencias de otros lugares que llevan mas años de administración y de experiencia, es importante poder aprender de [otros] en como han podido avanzar en una buena administración, gestión e implementación, siempre es bueno aprender, aprender y aprender, estamos abiertos a capacitaciones, intercambios de experiencias todo lo necesario para ir mejorando cada día.
- Claro, el intercambio de experiencias, capacitación, difusión de acciones, financiamiento, son acciones que serían de gran utilidad.
- Podremos dar más noticias y novedades posterior al mes de junio
- Compartir Casos de éxito. Fortalecimiento a caopacidades del personal,
- Intercambio de experiencias con otras AMP exitosas.

French:

- Poursuivre les temps de rencontres et d'échanges entre les membres du reseau pour s'enrichir des expérience des différents gestionnaires.