

PROJECT NAME: Enhancing Co-Benefits of Marine Protected Areas

- 1. Project duration:** 36 months
- 2. Budget (C\$):** 590,000 (over 3 years)
- 3. Short statement of the issue(s) under this topic, need/gap identified; the project objective(s) and activities to address the issue; and expected outcomes and benefits/beneficiaries:**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are key to conserving and restoring coastal and marine ecosystems, delivering many natural and socio-economic co-benefits. Over several projects, the CEC has provided a unique forum for North American MPA practitioners, bringing them together to identify and describe the marine ecoregions of North America and priority conservation areas; communicate the vital roles MPAs play for communities, the economy, scientific knowledge and conservation; gather scientific information on the impact of climate change on MPAs; and develop tools to assess conditions and identify vulnerabilities in coastal and marine ecosystems and respond to these vulnerabilities, contributing to strengthened capacity to apply these and other tools, and thus improve resilience locally and the ability to share knowledge across seascapes.

Building on the resulting informal networks and the North American Marine Protected Area Network (NAMPAN), the CEC is well positioned to contribute further to developing tools, best practices and other solutions that meet ecological and social needs through local, seascape-level, and North American collaboration focused on providing opportunities for inclusive and diverse engagement. Thus the project aims to enhance co-benefits by increasing Indigenous and local leadership in MPA networks; facilitating seascape-level conservation through collaboration; and identifying and sharing best practices for climate change adaptation and mitigation, habitat restoration, and blue carbon and other critical habitat work.

By providing a platform to learn from Indigenous and community-led conservation and for practitioners to identify opportunities for adaptation, mitigation, conservation and restoration in their MPAs, within shared seascapes, and across the marine ecoregions of North America, the project will support the development of an ecologically and socially inclusive MPA network across North America, for the benefit of coastal and marine ecosystems, coastal communities, and a more resilient North America.

4. Select the strategic pillar(s) from the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan that the project addresses:

- Clean Air, Land and Water
- Preventing and Reducing Pollution in the Marine Environment
- Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management
- Shared Ecosystems and Species
- Resilient Economies and Communities
- Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws

5. Describe how the project uses strategic cross-cutting approaches in its implementation: Innovative and Effective Solutions and/or Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation (including gender and diversity effects and opportunities, and youth):

The project promotes adaptively managed coastal and marine protected areas as nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and mitigation, with many socio-economic benefits to fisheries, tourism, and other sectors. Recognizing the critical role of Indigenous and local communities in the management and conservation of coastal and marine areas, the project will engage with the communities to learn from their approaches to coastal and marine conservation through knowledge sharing sessions and workshops. Elevating and sharing experiences from Indigenous-led and community-led conservation will further highlight Innovative and Effective Solutions, while contributing to Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement.

6. Explain how the project can achieve more impact through trinational cooperation:

The marine environment is inherently connected, and threats to biodiversity conservation are experienced at the local, regional and global scale since species distributions and migrations are transboundary in nature. Additionally, climate change impacts have increased the need for collaboration, as they are affecting the distribution and movement of species and causing habitat shifts. As a result, there is an urgent need to compile, create and disseminate knowledge among practitioners, and weave scientific and Indigenous knowledge systems to effectively manage our changing MPAs as elements of larger marine and coastal systems, and minimize negative impacts on communities. The CEC is a unique channel for this seascape- and marine ecoregion-level work, as it provides the framework to gather and share knowledge concerning MPA adaptation strategies and strengthen capacity across the network of North American MPAs, building on previous projects and collaborations.

7. Describe how the project complements, or avoids duplication with, other national or international work:

This builds on previous work by the CEC, published in *Scientific Guidelines for Designing Resilient Marine Protected Area Networks in a Changing Climate* (CEC 2012), the Rapid Vulnerability Assessment Tool (CEC 2017), the Climate Adaptation Toolkit (2019, updated in 2021) and accompanying training module (2021), and the Blue Carbon work (2013–2021). Together, this body of work provided new tools, knowledge and data developed with and for MPA practitioners in the three countries. The current project provides a unique opportunity to broaden the impact and scope of this work by delving deeper into best practices for MPA adaptation, blue carbon, habitat restoration and understanding ecological connectivity. The CEC has a strong track record of effectively sharing MPA project results and best practices through MPA networks, conferences, and partnerships. This project leverages the opportunities for collaboration offered by the International MPA Congress (IMPAC5) and other events to increase the leadership of Indigenous and local representatives in regional and international MPA networks. It will result in a more ecologically and socially inclusive NAMPAN.

8. Describe how the project engages traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) experts or Tribal/First Nations/Indigenous communities, if applicable:

Indigenous peoples have inhabited coastal areas of North America for thousands of years and have a long history of stewarding the marine and coastal environment and adapting to changes. This project will build on existing Indigenous engagement structures and processes (where applicable) and ongoing and upcoming opportunities to learn from Indigenous and local knowledge and conservation approaches, and to elevate and increase their engagement and participation in MPAs and MPA networks. It will also provide an opportunity for the inclusion of Indigenous and local community perspectives, and for collaboration and networking among Indigenous peoples involved in coastal and marine management and adaptation across the three countries.

9. Describe how the project engages new audiences or partners, if applicable:

The project includes activities specifically focused on the intentional engagement of under-represented Indigenous and local communities at the 5th International MPA Congress ([IMPAC5](#)) and follow-up events. It is expected to reach other new audiences through participation at IMPAC5 and continued engagement with NAMPAN.

10. Identify the designated partner agencies or organizations committed to implementing this project, as well as other organizations that could be involved, or benefit from it, including through outreach efforts, collaborations or partnerships (e.g., federal agencies, other levels of government, academia, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, and youth):

Lead agencies or organizations	Country
Federal: Parks Canada	Canada
Federal: Conanp	Mexico
Federal: NOAA	United States
Other organizations/individuals (if applicable)	Country
North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN)	Canada, Mexico, United States
UN Environment – North America Region	International
IMPAC5 Steering Committee	International
IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (Marine)	International
REDPARQUES	Latin America and the Caribbean
MPA networks and partnerships, particularly those adjacent to North America	International
Stakeholder groups engaged in the previous projects (e.g., MPA advisory councils, Indigenous governments and organizations, universities and NGOs)	Canada, Mexico, United States

11. In the following table, describe: the project objective(s) and the activities and subtasks planned to achieve the objective(s), the corresponding outputs, expected results and how they will be measured (performance measures), baselines (if known), and targets by end of the project, and the timeline and budget:

OBJECTIVE 1	Strengthen capacity to share and understand climate adaptation, blue carbon and other critical habitat conservation and restoration solutions, including those informed by Indigenous and local knowledge, for effective, resilient MPAs.	
Activity 1 Budget C\$165,000	Identify and share best practices for coastal/marine climate change adaptation, and conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats.	
Output(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop report on climate change adaptation gaps and opportunities for shared seascapes, inclusive of various knowledge sources - New reference tools on good practices, lessons learned and case studies for the conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats in a changing climate 	
Expected results, performance measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New tools and capacity-building to support the conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats in a changing climate - Regional communities of practice—inclusive of a diverse group of practitioners—are strengthened 	
Baseline (current status), if known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CEC blue carbon guidelines published in 2012, Climate Adaptation Toolkit (2019, updated in 2021) and accompanying training module (2021) 	
Target (by project end)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New reference tools—inclusive of diverse knowledge sources—communicating good practices and examples of climate change adaptation and mitigation, blue carbon, and other critical habitat conservation and restoration are made available. Communications material is disseminated to relevant audiences in the three countries. 	
Subtask 1.1	Hold online scoping workshop for the Steering Committee (SC) to design workplan for workshops under Activity 1	early 2022
Subtask 1.2	Hold regional workshops (2) on lessons learned, case studies, and opportunities for climate change adaptation, conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats for MPAs	mid 2022 – mid 2023
Subtask 1.3	Develop tools to communicate and share good practices and case studies regarding climate change adaptation in MPAs, and the	early 2023 - mid 2024

	conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats, inclusive of various knowledge sources.	
OBJECTIVE 2	Increase and support Indigenous and community leadership in marine conservation	
Activity 2 Budget C\$ 160,000	Build on existing approaches and ongoing and upcoming opportunities for Indigenous and community leadership and engagement	
Output(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indigenous-led and community-led knowledge exchange session on Indigenous and community coastal and marine stewardship at IMPAC5 - Participation of Indigenous and local representatives from underrepresented areas at IMPAC5 and parallel events - Capacity building workshop/material (based on needs identified by knowledge exchange session participants) 	
Expected results, performance measures	Indigenous and local representatives have strengthened networks; are newly engaged in MPA practitioner networks; and have self-identified needs for capacity building.	
Baseline (current status), if known	Indigenous and local community representatives in the three countries are actively engaged in marine conservation, but there is no knowledge community of practice established to weave and disseminate knowledge and knowledge systems across Canada, Mexico and the United States.	
Target (by project end)	<p>Under-represented Indigenous and local communities join and participate in the knowledge community of practice for coastal and marine conservation in North America:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 6 new Indigenous or local community members in NAMPAN - One training (either via a workshop or other material) is delivered to address Indigenous and local community self-identified capacity building needs 	
Subtask 2.1	Trinational knowledge and perspectives exchange on Indigenous-led conservation experiences (held at IMPAC5)	September 2022
Subtask 2.2	Support for the participation of Indigenous and local representatives at IMPAC5 and parallel events (focus on new engagement/ underserved areas such as Atlantic, Great Lakes and/or Arctic)	September 2022 –2024

Subtask 2.3	Capacity building (to be designed in cooperation with Indigenous or community representatives, according to self-identified needs, informed by workshop at IMPAC5)	Early 2023 – mid 2024
OBJECTIVE 3	Strengthen seascape-level conservation in MPAs by increasing socio-ecological connectivity	
Activity 3 Budget C\$265,000	Develop tools and facilitate connections to inform linking and managing adaptive, connected, and representative MPA networks.	
Output(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tools resulting from a participatory process for inclusive knowledge sharing, each focused on a shared seascape, outlining locations and scope of adaptation efforts, ecologically and culturally important features and services, blue carbon initiatives, Indigenous and community organizations and researchers engaged on MPAs, and potential linkages to inform gaps and help guide next steps following the workshop - Communications materials and tools to support the use of workshop results 	
Expected results, performance measures	MPA practitioners have information and tools to work together to implement guidance on ecological inclusivity and strengthen seascape-level collaborations.	
Baseline (current status), if known	Marine conservation practitioners from the three countries have participated in foundational discussions on connectivity, but seascape-level collaboration and guidance on connectivity in North American marine conservation networks is limited.	
Target (by project end)	Marine conservation practitioners have access to information and networks to continue to improve seascape-level collaboration with knowledge of the components of MPA networks (e.g. MPAs, other effective conservation measures, Indigenous conserved and protected areas) and their functional contributions, as well as ecologically important features and services in shared seascapes	
Subtask 3.1	Hold workshop on components of MPA networks and their functional contributions	late 2022
Subtask 3.2	Hold shared seascape workshops (in 2 pilot seascapes) to identify ecologically important features and services, using participatory tools for inclusive knowledge sharing	early to mid 2023

Subtask 3.3	Develop materials and tools to communicate good practices and case studies to support the use of workshop results by practitioners	mid 2023-mid 2024
Subtask 3.4	Facilitate inclusive and diverse engagement and leadership in North American marine and coastal conservation networks	2022-2024

12. Describe expected impacts post-project:

Expected impact (by when: month, year)	SMART performance measure(s)
By December 2025, MPA practitioners have tools to incorporate blue carbon and other critical habitats conservation and restoration into their management plans/activities.	Evidence of blue carbon and other critical habitat conservation and restoration integration in newly developed adaptation strategies of MPAs.
By December 2025, an informal network of Indigenous and local community representatives working on coastal/marine stewardship.	Evidence of Indigenous and local leadership and engagement in marine conservation networks, and integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in marine management plans.
By December 2025, tools for MPA practitioners to link and manage area-based measures.	Evidence of increased seascape-level collaboration in the three countries.