MPA Certification Workshop

Report & recommendations

May 2012

When quoted this report should be referred to as:

Summary of workshop recommendations:

1: Develop a single IUCN externally-visible approach within which to promote certification of MPA manager skills and certification of management effectiveness. This should encourage a 'direction of travel' for all and set a common 'end destination' for all. The MPA workshop considered that a headline initiative around 'delivering professional management of protected areas' might be a good overall phrase to consider and embed at a high level in WCPA and IUCN strategy and products.

2. At a strategic level ensure that links between global (e.g. CBD) and regional conservation targets and IUCN WCPA initiatives such as the Green List are made clearer and more visible. A scaling up of ambition needs to be achieved to process large number of site evaluations – this could be helped by exploring how analogous schemes are able to process high evaluation decision throughputs annually. Understanding whether certification is voluntary or a requirement is also particularly important to clarify.

3: Within an overall approach of professional management of protected areas, elevate the professionalisation of manager skills to the same conceptual level as the Green List. The workshop suggested that for marine aspects 'MPA Pro' is a good phrase to use to capture a customer-facing essence of what this area of work is about.

4. Embrace and express the full suite of services that a profession of protected area managers entails including standards, specialized training, certification for on the job performance, a code of ethics and networking of members to promote leadership and innovation.

5. In developing approaches to professional management of protected areas ensure that where possible language and approaches are harmonised so that in the eyes and experience of IUCN Members and partners the work 'fits together' and is as practical, easy to understand, and implementable as possible.

6. WCPA should develop a brief strategic overview document for wide public consumption setting out how the various major global initiatives unite to provide forward-looking multiple techniques, approaches and engagement points to safeguard nature throughout the environment.

7. Provide 'training for trainers' to ensure that a united and consistent approach is provided through all relevant avenues when rolling out initiatives such as the Green List and MPA Pro.

8. Ensure that professionalization provides reward and recognition at all levels and for all backgrounds of MPA managers and seek opportunities with and through strong partner organisations and IUCN Members to roll out appropriate programmes.

9. Ensure that any professionalization programme encompasses a range of learning experiences to appeal and apply across all regions of the world.

10. IUCN WCPA should also consider an 'Investors in Nature and People' award to organisations that display excellence in delivering effective site management and/or investment in protected area staff.

11. The Green list be further developed to become the only visible part of a broader outcome driven process to move many more sites towards effective management by including the notion of a grey (un-assessed) and tentative (white) list, giving all sites the opportunity to engage in this initiative.

12. In developing the Green List consideration should be given to what products and approaches that are very simple but effective can be directed at un-assessed sites with limited resources to start them on the pathway to effective and equitable management.

13. From the outset of developing the Green List it should be explicit in how sites may remove themselves or be removed from the list in order to encourage sustained vigilance and effort on effective management.

14. IUCN WCPA need to think deeply about the professional roll-out of the Green List and what actions are needed to create the right 'value set' in our target audience to ensure good, sustained and effective voluntary take up of this approach. A 'flag' or badge is important in some locations, but is not wanted in other situations and alone is insufficient a value for people to always 'want' to participate.

15. Work should continue on developing the underlying Green Listing criteria to build in marine requirements as soon as possible and also to develop a longer-term strategic approach to criteria development

16. Further consideration is given jointly with marine and terrestrial colleagues in IUCN WCPA on the nature of the framework envisaged within which the Green List would be implemented around the world.

17. IUCN WCPA is encouraged to consider at implementation on vesting greater responsibility and authority in Green List Authorities to increase the 'value set' associated with Green Listing and to thereby create greater capacity to successfully deliver this initiative.

18. Further thought is needed to encouraging self empowerment through the Green List process through per- and self- assessment processed and by making the whole process available online through multiple access points including hand-held devices.

19. Further consideration is given to branding and synergistic opportunities with other certification processes to grow a greater 'value' for the Green List and MPA PRO process and a wider array of potential partners to support and work with IUCN at global and regional scales.

Introduction

Within the last few years there has been a growing interest in developing standards for the certification of protected area management standards, and similarly for the professionalisation of protected area manager skills. Both related areas of interest stem from a desire to set and recognise such standards in order to improve recognition and reward for effective, well managed sites and for capacity building and the quality and qualifications in associated staff.

Progress is already underway to develop such schemes through, for example, the IUCN Green List for terrestrial protected areas, sectoral marine initiatives such as the Blue Flag Awards, through regional initiatives on certification of MPA manager skills such as the Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS), and also through recent proposals to develop a global partnership for professionalising protected area management. Development of such initiatives is fundamental to supporting the delivery of global targets agreed for terrestrial and marine protected areas.
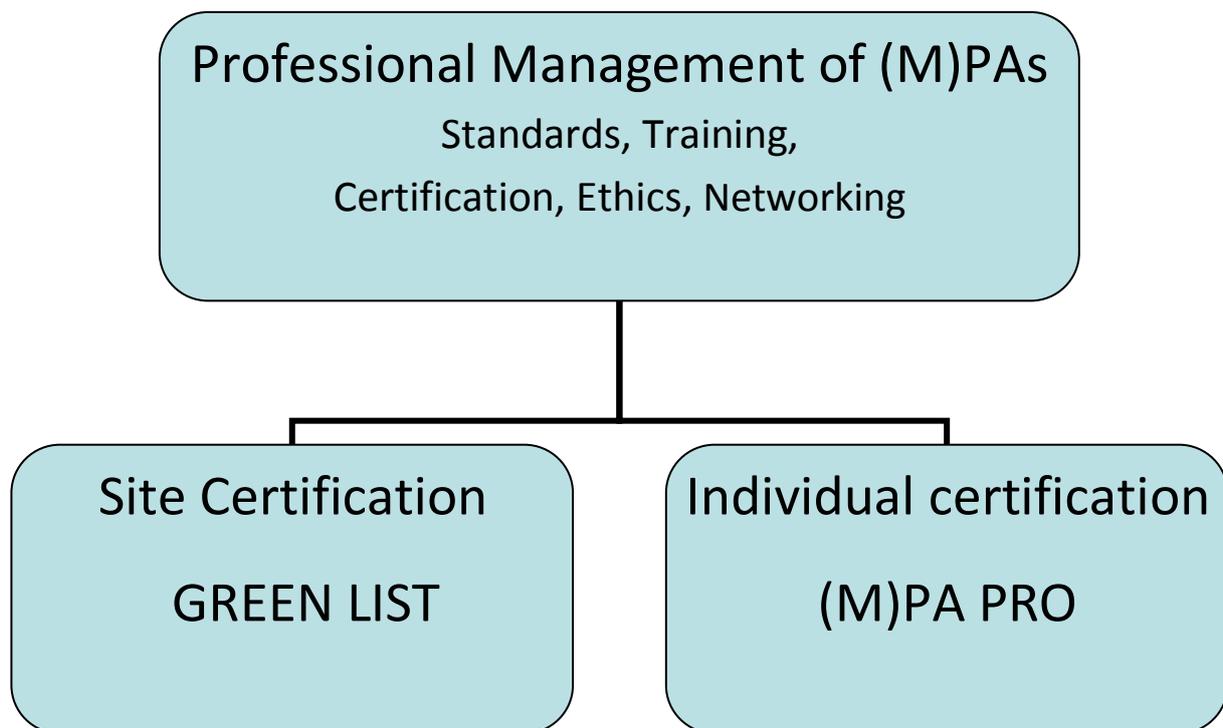
Background to the MPA certification workshop

Whist the development of the IUCN Green List is moving forwards such approaches have yet to be similarly developed and applied in a planned, coherent and consistent manner to MPAs worldwide. On 24th and 25th April 2012 leading specialists on marine issues met at the Foundation for Environmental Education in Denmark to explore the application of certification approaches for MPAs and opportunities to develop and strengthen working with terrestrial colleagues. The purposes of these discussions were to:

- Review progress, performance, challenges and opportunities provided by existing certification and standards initiatives, drawing from the best and most relevant existing initiatives on land and in the sea;
- Consider the needs and requirements of MPAs and MPA managers for certification, standards and skills recognition – mindful of existing national and regional programmes, the diversity of socio-economic settings, the different management types of MPAs, and the different recognition applied, for example, World Heritage, Ramsar etc;
- Develop a strategy for delivering global certification and standards for MPAs, consistent with and in collaboration with existing schemes such as the IUCN Green List and recognition programmes such as Blue flag; and
- Agree a rollout plan for such a MPA-focussed strategy, including the associated budget requirements, regional trials, required expert input and peer review needs, and expected milestone and deliverables.

The workshop involved a small group of key experts from a relevant diversity of backgrounds, geographical location, and experiences, drawing from both terrestrial and marine backgrounds, in order to deliver the above objectives during the two day meeting. This was a scoping workshop and often it was the first time that such a diverse group had considered such issues together. The group considered the best way to present the results was in terms of recommendations to enable existing work streams to build marine perspectives into ongoing processes. The main findings and recommendations from the workshop are accordingly provided below.

Recommendations

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│     Professional Management of (M)PAs    │
│            Standards, Training,          │
│       Certification, Ethics, Networking  │
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         ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Site Certification│       │ Individual certification│
│                   │        │                        │
│   GREEN LIST      │        │      (M)PA PRO         │
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The meeting was a rare and first opportunity to look across both the needs and mechanisms for certification of MPA manager skills and the certification of the management of MPA sites. The group concluded that a single approach crossing the land/sea divide was needed so a single integrated customer-facing perspective is provided by WCPA and IUCN. The workshop also recognized though that due to the fluidity and viscosity of the marine ecosystems, it is of paramount importance to consider that MPA management is extremely sensitive to events happening outside of MPAs, and that whatever is made efficiently in managing MPA may be swept away by unforeseen external events. Thus at the highest strategic and visible levels IUCN WCPA must stress the need for well managed sites set in an environment of effective wider measures, aimed at sustaining and restoring the functioning of ecosystems, not only isolated patches of habitats or species within protected areas.

In terms of certification there is clearly no single way to meet the standards being considered and so what becomes essential is developing such approaches to be inclusive to provide a direction of travel that culminates in the same end destination. Clearly best practices are important as well as the need to stress that meeting standards is an ongoing process that needs to be worked at so there is no assumption that once awarded recognition that this rolls forward automatically irrespective of what is or is not achieved further down the line. Standards and certification are needed in MPAs and the Green List is providing a comprehensive framework to do that.

The workshop therefore recognised that further opportunities exist to both develop the general concepts of professionalization of manager skills and the effective management of sites, alongside ensuring what has been done with a terrestrial perspective now also embraces the needs of the marine environment and community. They considered that a single holistic customer-facing approach is required within which individual initiatives such as the Green list and be developed and promoted, otherwise inconsistencies in approach and working practices could inadvertently develop

on different facets of what is essentially the same issue. The workshop considered that this overarching approach should be the 'professional management of protected areas'.

Recommendation 1: Develop a single IUCN externally-visible approach within which to promote complementary and parallel supporting areas of work on certification of MPA manager skills and certification of management effectiveness. This should encourage a 'direction of travel' for all and set a common 'end destination' for all. The MPA workshop considered that a headline initiative around 'delivering professional management of protected areas' might be a good overall phrase to consider and embed at a high level in WCPA and IUCN strategy and products.

When considering this high level strategic approach the workshop also considered that strong linkages and synergies exist between this approach and the CBD targets, to work with IUCN members and patterns to establish practical schemes that celebrated achievements around 'effective and equitably managed' sites. 'Effective' could be taken as meeting the Green List and MPA PRO/WIO-COMPAS standards, and 'equitably' could in part be related to recognising and supporting the skills of managers, irrespective of legal or customary background, to play their full role in management. It is essential that this linkage is therefore fully understood and that initiatives such as the Green List and MPA PROs are not seen just as an 'awards process for the select few sites run by rich agencies', but as part of the fundamental mechanism to *move* the world *towards* better delivery on these targets. A scaling up of ambition will be significantly needed to achieve this and transferring the experiences of how, for example, the Blue Flag Award processes and evaluates +3600 individual application each year for beaches and marinas from multiple countries will be particularly important.

Recommendation 2. At a strategic level ensure that links between global (e.g. CBD) and regional conservation targets and IUCN WCPA initiatives such as the Green List are made clearer and more visible. A scaling up of ambition needs to be achieved to process large number of site evaluations – this could be helped by exploring how analogous schemes are able to process high evaluation decision throughputs annually. Understanding whether certification is voluntary or a requirement is also particularly important to clarify.

While looking across both professionalisation of MPA manager skills and certification of effective management the workshop participants were struck by the apparent unequal billing given to the two aspects that are essentially different and essential facets of the same issue. In essence we strive for sites that meet a recognised global standard on management but this cannot be achieved without the right staff in the right place at the right time with the right skills and training and facilities to do their job. The two strands are intricately linked. The workshop therefore considered that a phrase equal in weight to 'Green List' needs to be developed and suggested that on the marine side MPA Pro, which has already been associated with certification of MPA manager skills in the Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS) Program in Africa, would be a good starting point for discussions.

Recommendation 3: Within an overall approach of professional management of protected areas, elevate the professionalisation of manager skills to the same conceptual level as the Green List. The workshop suggested that for marine aspects 'MPA Pro' is a good phrase to use to capture a customer-facing essence of what this area of work is about – this could be 'PA Pro' on land.

The workshop members transitioned from a focus on certification only to a larger vision of professionalizing protected area management. What does it mean to be a profession? A profession refers to an occupation that requires specialized education, knowledge, training, proven skills and

ethics. Professionals are expected to meet and maintain common standards. Professional associations maintain quality, certify competent professionals and network members to accelerate innovation and promote leadership. Focusing on the larger suite of services creates an atmosphere of engagement, inclusion, assisting all to achieve good practices and retaining staff through a clear career development track. Using this larger vision of services the surrounding recommendations describe a road map to implementation using a global network with regional implementation to reflect local contexts.

Recommendation 4: Embrace and express the full suite of services that a profession of protected area managers entails including standards, specialized training, certification for on the job performance, a code of ethics and networking of members to promote leadership and innovation.

While discussing these two facets of professional management of protected areas, the workshop participants noted the strong similarity in approach and terminology between certification of MPA manager skills and certification of management effectiveness. Whilst clearly the two approaches apply to staff on the one hand and to sites on the other, there is more in common with terminology and language than is different. Together they act as a continuum recognising values of sites, managers and organisations. Given that IUCN Member organisations and partners will likely encounter both schemes it is important to harmonise where possible phrases and approaches so it all 'fits together'.

Recommendation 5. In developing approaches to professional management of protected areas ensure that where possible language and approaches are harmonised so that in the eyes and experience of IUCN Members and partners the work 'fits together' and is as practical, easy to understand, and implementable as possible.

The participants stressed that approaches to certification need to be set within the context of other important initiatives that together address the environment as a whole – such as the red list of ecosystems, and for the ocean, key biodiversity areas, EBSAs (Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas under the CBD Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI), and 'hope spots' – special places that may be protected in due course. This was felt to be very important to ensure that we look towards new opportunities to safeguard nature as well as ensuring through professionalization and effective site management that we safeguard what we already have and support the staff in making this happen. It is also important because of essential synergies between various product streams. The ongoing work on standards connected to the management categories is highly relevant given the linkages between management objectives, correct categorisation and effective management. Similarly the linkages between delivering effective management and high profile packaging of success around Natural Solutions is also self evident, but perhaps more to an internal technical audience rather than IUCN Membership and partner organisations?

Recommendation 6. WCPA should develop a brief strategic overview document for wide public consumption setting out how the various major global initiatives unite to provide forward-looking multiple techniques, approaches and engagement points to safeguard nature throughout the environment.

It was apparent from the workshop that much new information is being created and several new approaches are being developed which is highly commendable but takes some discussion and analysis to fully understand and appreciate. If this scoping workshop had such problems then others will too, especially outside the core staff involved in IUCN and WCPA. It is evident that this progress

comes the need to 'train the trainers' – to ensure all core IUCN and WCPA staff are informed and geared up to moving new initiatives forward in a consistent way.

Recommendation 7. Provide 'training for trainers' to ensure that a united and consistent approach is provided through all relevant avenues when rolling out initiatives such as the Green List and MPA Pro.

When exploring the professionalization of MPA manager skills the workshop concluded that different types of recognition are needed at the global scale. Recognising, rewarding and thereby motivating managers more, irrespective of background or position in organisations is seen as essential and must embrace legislative as well as other settings, such as customary and community MPA managers. Organisation such as the International Ranger Federation could provide natural partners for IUCN WCPA and IUCN Members in taking professionalization forwards.

Recommendation 8. Ensure that professionalization provides reward and recognition at all levels and for all backgrounds of MPA managers and seek opportunities with and through strong partner organisations and IUCN Members to roll out appropriate programmes.

Professionalisation of manager skills should embrace a range of approaches, from standard based programme, certification of management capacities and competencies, through to online training and the development of self-help and support social networking. When thinking globally it is important that such a range of opportunities are provided as different approaches will work better with some regions that others.

Therefore there is a need to ensure that partnerships and collaborative approaches are developed at regional level. This would ensure that duplication is avoided and that the best use is made of established organisations to get regional input and to develop their perspectives on global programmes. There are organisations, for example Eurosite, ready to collaborate with and support IUCN/WCPA in finding efficient and workable ways to apply the key recommendations in Europe, especially those which look to build and improve professional and organisational capacities. Such collaboration, linking to an established European network of site management practitioners, would ensure that:

- Opportunities to build on existing initiatives and approaches, in particular in respect of strengthening the implementation of Natura 2000, can be maximised;
- Professional training and certification options for practical nature conservation skills can be developed, based on the needs of individual practitioners and their employing organisations;
- Through networking, it will be possible to enable a wide spectrum of nature conservation organisations (GOs & NGOs) to improve their performance, their people to enact their business, share, compare and exchange experience and discuss issues.

Recommendation 9. Ensure that any professionalization programme encompasses a range of learning experiences to appeal and apply across all regions of the world

Complementary to recognising the skills sets of MPA managers and motivating them through recognition of standards, is the equivalent process at the IUCN Member/organisation level. The workshop considered this is a glaring omission in the approach taken to date and yet in other sectors is widely used to improve delivery – the 'Investors in People' award provided to organisations in recognition of the high standards in service and delivery that have been met. This could be a valuable tool both as part of encouraging the professionalisation of manager skills and the effective

management of protected areas. It could be something that would also create sustained media coverage at regional scales and be of value to the successful organisations.

Recommendation 10. IUCN WCPA should also consider an 'Investors in Nature and People' award to organisations that display excellence in delivering effective site management and/or investment in protected area staff.

The workshop was briefed on the approach being considered so far and welcomed the work already undertaken. In thinking about the 'award' the workshop was concerned that in applying the Green list a 'them and us' situation was neither created or exacerbated in some regions. In effect unless the award is developed in recognition of the many different starting points of sites and agencies/organisations/governments who provide the resources, there is perceived to be a great danger that those who know they will pass or have already have evaluation will participate, whilst those yet to engage may not through fear of not making the grade and losing face. This is already a situation that we have tackled successfully both in other aspects of protected areas and also with certification of manager skills in east Africa. In all these situation engaging prospective participants and getting them 'in the system' is just as or perhaps even more important than those that make the grade. This engagement in a 'direction of travel' provides sustained throughput and a move away from measuring a lack of action (which ones are paper parks) to measuring success criteria and outcomes. The workshop felt it is essential that this occurs with the Green List and proposes that a grey (un-assessed sites) and white (tentative) list underlying the Green List itself. The logic is that any sites already assessed or new sites/networks through pre-assessment for the Green List would enter the tentative list if they don't quite make the grade. This would recognise the direction of travel and ensure that donor money can be well targeted to activities that will move tranches of sites from the tentative 'white' list through to the Green List.

Recommendation 11. The Green list be further developed to become the only visible part of a broader outcome driven process to move many more sites towards effective management by including the notion of a grey (un-assessed) and tentative (white) list, giving all sites the opportunity to engage in this initiative.

The workshop also considered that an approach involving un-assessed sites would bring in the opportunity to target simple products we already have developed to maximum effect – e.g. simple self assessment checklists and score cards – with the plan to take even small steps towards effective and equitable management for all.

Recommendation 12. In developing the Green List consideration should be given to what products and approaches that are very simple but effective can be directed at un-assessed sites with limited resources to start them on the pathway to effective and equitable management.

As mentioned in the introduction it is important that in developing certification approaches to management that expectations are clearly and directly managed from the outset concerning the longevity of recognition and reward. This is critical to ensure that sites are not seen to get the Green List recognition and that the management thereafter declines alongside the quality and condition of habitats, features and associated species (i.e. similar in a way to the World Heritage in danger list). In light of this risk it should be clearly spelt out that any recognition can both be challenges and that the award is for a time limited period but with an assumption that it would roll forward if effectives is continued to be delivered. The workshop suggested that the 5 year review period that Ramsar use may be appropriate. Any sites falling from the Green List would then go back on a tentative white list suggested in another recommendation from the workshop.

Recommendation 13. From the outset of developing the Green List it should be explicit in how sites may remove themselves or be removed from the list in order to encourage sustained vigilance and effort on effective management.

When considering how the Green List might work in practice the workshop considered other similar approaches such as the Blue Flag award and also elements of how the current certification of MPA manager skills works in WIO-COMPAS. It is evident that both work well because of the 'value set' they impart to actual and potential participants and the charging basis that they both operate. In relation to the Blue Flag the reasons for interest relate to:

- The 'snow ball effect' – next door has it and I want it
- They really believe in it
- It is a means to reach a higher level and quality
- It is a great tourism tool and gets more people visiting - a flag of recognition

So, for the Green list, we want to deliver a feeling of 'I am on the list, I did it, I want to stay on it, invest in us it is worth it!'.

Both the Blue Flag and the African WIO-COMPAS certification schemes charge clients and both are voluntary schemes – it you don't charge do you feel it is as worthwhile as something you paid for, even a small amount? Clearly reliability of service and the quality of the 'product' are also key determinants in creating the 'value'.

Recommendation 14. IUCN WCPA need to think deeply about the professional roll-out of the Green List and what actions are needed to create the right 'value set' in our target audience to ensure good, sustained and effective voluntary take up of this approach. A 'flag' or badge is important in some locations, but is not wanted in other situations and alone is insufficient a value for people to always 'want' to participate.

It will be important to clarify how criteria are applied in the process leading to the award of Green List status. During the workshop many issues or detail emerged on the criteria as a whole (e.g. are all criteria mandatory? How do you use the criteria list?); as well as some that would be specific (perhaps) to marine (e.g. how can ecosystem services and the ecosystem approach be built in, the importance of risk management re oil and other pollution risks). Clearly how criteria are applied in different settings may vary so it is important to start to think about this now. There was also the broader issue of how criteria might and probably should evolve over time – the Blue Flag has raised thresholds for criteria over time and introduced new criteria as knowledge has changes and in order to keep the challenge and 'value' of the award. For marine sites the equivalent may be building in a recognition of delivery of resilience theory over time as the underlying science matures. Similar thinking should be encouraged for the Green list

Recommendation 15. Work should continue on developing the underlying Green Listing criteria to build in marine requirements as soon as possible and also to develop a longer-term strategic approach to criteria development.

A major issue that arises when discussing the Green List is the scale at which it should be applied to assess sites in series and networks, building on the experience of site scale and national trials underway. The workshop concluded that scale mattered and should be defined for marine. This is crucially important as it has a direct bearing on the limited scale and nature of capacity with

expertise to advise and support implementing the Green List approach for the ocean. Clear possibilities included the WCPA – Marine framework and regional seas approaches, as well as the role of the IUCN Ocean Core Group in the process.

Recommendation 16. Further consideration is given jointly with marine and terrestrial colleagues in IUCN WCPA on the nature of the framework envisaged within which the Green List would be implemented around the world.

Empowering and engaging greater protected area capacity will be essential for the successful engagement with and roll out of the Green List initiative. It is important to clarify this now to allow for a successful transitioning from the trial phase through to scaled implementation. During workshop discussions it was clear that an important part of the current process is envisaged to be delivered by reference groups of experts. Whilst on the face of it this is sensible enough much discussion in the workshop revolved around whether this approach would be empowering enough to engage new capacity and investment in the protected area certification and whether with scaling issues this approach would simply overwhelm the central skill base in IUCN WCPA. Learning from other certification processes such as the Blue Flag Award the workshop concluded that there was merit in considering the introduction of Green Listing Authorities empowered to run, evaluate and recommend Green Listings to WCPA. Not only does this impart a common language (aka Red list Authorities), make the invested power a fund-raising opportunity, but it also frees up the centre skills base to monitor, maintain global standards and also approve the overall list of sites given Green List status. It also provides a capacity to 'mentor' on moving through a tentative list to full Green List status. Such Authorities would also hold national tentative for ongoing development of site management regimes. The workshop did also conclude that various starting points would be better in different parts of the world and that if IUCN WCPA saw merit in Green List Authorities they may be implemented directly or via reference groups depending on circumstance.

Recommendation 17. IUCN WCPA is encouraged to consider at implementation on vesting greater responsibility and authority in Green List Authorities to increase the 'value set' associated with Green Listing and to thereby create greater capacity to successfully deliver this initiative.

In exploring the detailed process associated with Green Listing the workshop discussed many issues. These included the importance of facilitating pre-assessment, encouraging self assessment and the 'googlelization' (thank you Glenn for a great new word!) of the green list process so that it can all be done online and on hand-held devices. The workshop felt that improvement through best practice advice should be available online

Recommendation 18. Further thought is needed to encouraging self empowerment through the Green List process through per- and self- assessment processed and by making the whole process available online through multiple access points including hand-held devices.

The workshop provided a rare opportunity to look across various certification schemes and the opportunities that these provided not just to inform IUCN's processes but also to complement and work synergistically with them. It is evident that there are opportunities to develop the Green List brand by perhaps creating reasons for listing such as the role an individual sites plays in education or outreach. This could be used to in a sense 'personalise' the ward from the participant perspective. Equally it became clearer on day two of the workshop that significant synergistic opportunities could exist to work with other award schemes – clean well run beaches and marinas (Blue Flag Award), well run environmentally friendly hotels (Green Key Award) etc. This raises interesting and powerful

issues around motivations for Green Listing and potential new partners for IUCN globally and regionally to support and assist in certification processes.

Recommendation 19. Further consideration is given to branding and synergistic opportunities with other certification processes to grow a greater 'value' for the Green List and MPA PRO process and a wider array of potential partners to support and work with IUCN at global and regional scales.

Finally the workshop notes some important dates that would be useful for the roll-out and development of the Green List and MPA Pro:

- WCC - IMPAC3 (Summit of MPAs Agencies) - WPC
- Eurosite (24th October)
- Stralsund June
- MBI Yeosu June
- PEMSEA Congress July