



Certifying Marine Protected Area Professionals

Certification ♦ Professional Development ♦ Leadership ♦ Networking ♦ Ethics

What is MPA PRO?

A first of its kind program that:

- establishes management of marine protected areas (MPA) as a **profession** by providing professional recognition and services
- **certifies** that individuals working in MPAs meet standards of excellence in seven core competence areas and have the necessary education and on-the-ground experience for effective MPA management
- Includes elements of professional **development** and builds leaders in MPA management who take an **ethical** approach
- **networks** certified professionals from the program for life-long learning and sharing
- offers certification at **three levels** and in multiple **languages**

Endorsed by the
International Union for the Conservation of Nature's
World Commission on Protected Areas – Marine



Where Can I Find MPA PRO?

The original and ground-breaking program for recognizing and certifying MPA professionals was developed in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region by the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) in collaboration with the Coastal Resources Center at the University of Rhode Island (CRC). MPA PRO is expanding to Latin America and generating interest in Asia. The beauty of the MPA PRO program model lies in its design—vetted by a group of international MPA professionals from each region—for easy adaptation by any coastal country or region in the world to maintain relevance to the local context.

Read on to learn about how MPA PRO started and how to bring the model to your region.





Where it all began.....

MPA PRO got its exciting start in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region—known there as WIO-COMPAS

<http://www.WIO-COMPAS.org>.

WIOMSA and CRC provided the leadership and network to launch a successful program. Today, it is certifying individuals and supporting MPA leaders and their networking.

Once certified, these professionals have earned the title **MPA PRO!**

Certifications through the WIO-COMPAS program are offered several times a year in multiple languages and at multiple levels. WIO-COMPAS started certifications at the MPA PRO 2 ≈ Site Management level to recognize the existing leaders and their competence. MPA PRO 1 ≈ Field Operations guides younger staff in a career track as an MPA professional. MPA PRO 3 ≈ Policy & Planning focuses on those leading changes to laws that affect MPAs or establishing new MPAs. The strength of the program is that local MPA experts with intimate knowledge of the region and their MPA's design the program and are trained to conduct the assessments.



WIO-COMPAS
Western Indian Ocean • Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals

Expanding to Latin America!

With the success of WIO-COMPAS, other regions are now asking to establish their own regional MPA PRO program. This includes in Latin America where plans are underway for PRO AMP Latin America—the region's own adapted version of the global MPA PRO model.

All new programs within MPA PRO's network, including PRO AMP, start with building institutional commitments. The next steps are to establish certifying bodies, refine the competences and integrate with existing capacity building efforts.

Regional programs—exciting as they are—benefit from being part of a global network that:

- Links the regional MPA PRO programs
- Can assist a regional program to set up systems and protocols
- Ensures consistency of quality and rigor of standards and program content
- Makes core materials (marketing and program) available in several languages
- Can train assessors or provide references to already-trained assessors

Partners are excited by the opportunity to link their activities to a larger unifying structure that brings clarity and direction without overlapping or replacing existing efforts.



The MPA PRO Model

MPA PRO focuses on identifying and certifying leading MPA professionals with a broad set of skills in seven core areas of management competence. It uses trained local assessors to judge an individual's knowledge, skills and experience in these competences.

Competences

MPA PRO assesses proven work performance in:

- Policy, legislation & compliance
- MPA concepts & establishment
- Communications & stakeholder engagement
- Financial management & fundraising
- Management operations
- Biophysical & social environments
- Leadership & ethics

Specific competences and standards within these areas vary by level of certification.



Levels

Certification levels are tailored to the experience and expertise needed to effectively carry out different MPA job functions. Entry to any level is based on the individual's years of work experience in MPAs, academic achievement and performance on-the-job.

Levels

1 ≈ MPA PRO Field Operations

2 ≈ MPA PRO Site Management

3 ≈ MPA PRO Policy & Planning

Professionals

Rangers and field operators working at a local MPA level - engaging with communities and enforcing laws

Professionals with clear management responsibilities, operating at an MPA or MPA cluster level—including MPA managers, wardens and section leaders with supervisory roles

Agency directors and managers acting at a national or regional level—focused on regional policy and networking of MPAs



Certification Process

Candidates for certification demonstrate competence through detailed applications, work portfolios, case studies or activity documents on their MPA performance, field exercises and assessor interviews. Candidates must attend a 5-8 day Assessment Event for detailed assessment and networking with peers. Those who complete the program, meet MPA PRO standards, and sign the ethics statement join a growing international group of certified MPA PROs! Certification renewal is required after a few years to ensure continued growth, leadership, performance and ethical conduct.



Services

Certification is just one of the valuable services of the MPA PRO Program. It also supports capacity building activities like training, mentoring and exchanges. MPA PRO also assists applicants who are not ready for certification by identifying their specific needs and matching them to existing training providers. Perhaps most importantly, certified MPA PROs are networked with other MPA PROs across the world to share ideas, tools, and cases about what works best, what does not and why in the best of MPA management!

Quality

The MPA PRO Program puts a premium on rigor, consistency, transparency and quality. The certifying bodies and assessors are selected by the regions based on their reputations for the above characteristics. The quality of assessors is vital to the program—as leaders, mentors, networkers and designers of the competences and program elements.

Join Us In Bringing MPA PRO To Your Region & Support Our Growth By

- **Providing** financial and technical resources for development of Level 3 ≈ MPA PRO Policy & Planning Certification
- **Sponsoring** future certification events in the WIO and Latin America regions
- **Introducing** the Certification Program to your region
- **Endorsing** MPA PRO and the associated regional nodes like WIO-COMPAS
- **Linking** your training courses and competences to the MPA PRO Competences

For more information contact:

Glenn Ricci
MPA PRO Program Leader
Coastal Resources Center
University of Rhode Island
gricci@crc.uri.edu



Julius Francis
Executive Director
Western Indian Ocean
Marine Science Association
julius@wiomsa.org