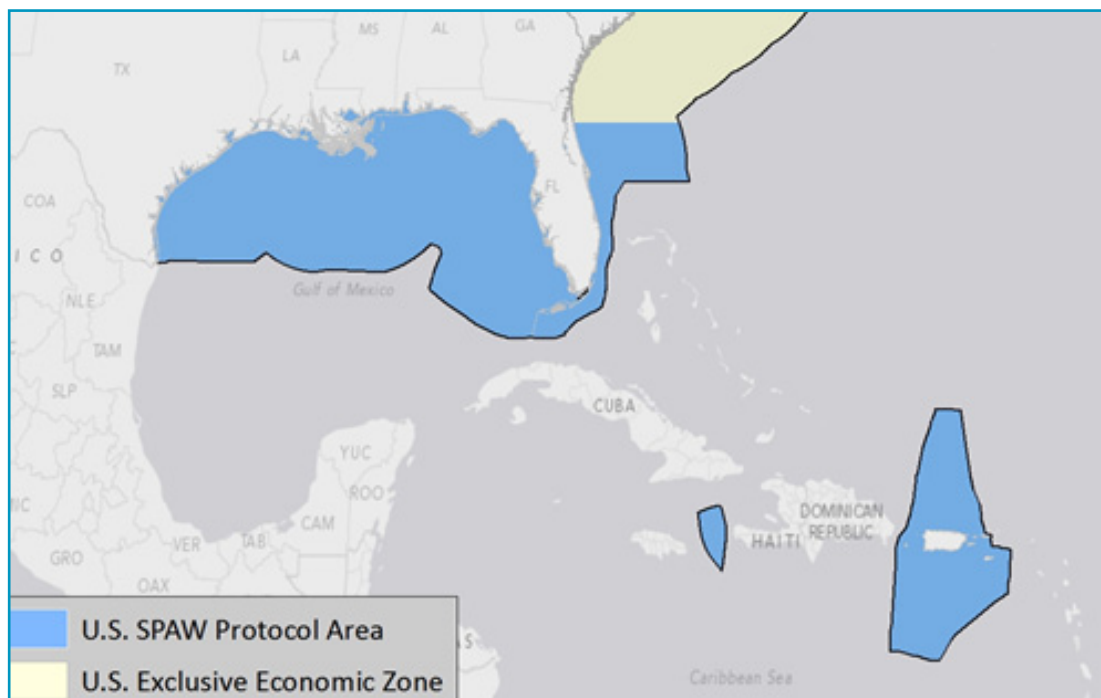


SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS AND WILDLIFE (SPA W) PROTOCOL: LISTING U.S. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN

WHAT IS THE SPA W PROTOCOL?

The Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA W Protocol, in-force 2000) is part of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention, in-force 1986). In signing the SPA W Protocol, the U.S. committed to take the necessary measures to protect, preserve and sustainably manage areas that require conservation to safeguard their special value, and threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna. Such areas include representative habitats, critical habitats, economically and/or socially valuable areas, and areas of special significance within the Wider Caribbean region. At their first meeting in 2001, the Contracting Parties (COP) to the SPA W Protocol agreed to develop guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of protected areas to be listed under the SPA W Protocol, which were adopted in 2008. The Parties also decided at that time to initiate the listing process through a pilot project to help assess the guidelines and criteria, as well as the format for listing.

WHAT GEOGRAPHIC REGION IS COVERED BY THE SPA W PROTOCOL?



U.S. territory covered by the Cartagena Convention includes the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico (waters off Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida), areas of the Atlantic Ocean south of 30°N latitude and within 200 nautical miles of the U.S. Atlantic coast, and the marine environments of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Navassa Island. The SPA W Protocol also covers waters landward from the baseline of the territorial sea and extending, in the case of watercourses, up to the fresh water limit; and such related terrestrial areas (including watersheds) as may be designated by a party.

The U.S. is also required to report its efforts, including the status of existing and newly established protected areas, buffer zones and protected species, and any changes in the delimitation or legal status of protected areas and species. NOAA's International Programs Office (IPO) in collaboration with the U.S. State Department oversees the reporting requirements for the Protocol.

NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center's mission is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas. The MPA Center works in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments and stakeholders to develop a science-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. These collaborative efforts will lead to a more efficient, effective use of MPAs now and in the future to conserve and sustain the nation's vital marine resources.



LISTING U.S. MPAs UNDER THE SPA W PROTOCOL



In 2010, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) was one of nine protected areas across the region that participated in a pilot project to test the listing guidelines. As a result of the pilot, the FKNMS was formerly listed under SPA W, after being vetted through a federal interagency review process and consultation with the State of Florida.

The National Marine Protected Areas Center (MPA Center) and IPO, in consultation with the Federal Interagency MPA Working Group, is now leading an effort to prepare the US submission for listing under the Protocol in 2012. Next steps include developing a procedure for compiling US sites to nominate for listing, including use of the MPA Inventory, maintained by the MPA Center, as a resource for completing the listing process. This will be an on-going process, with a new list proposed to each COP meeting.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE SPA W LISTING

Some of the anticipated contributions and benefits of listing U.S. MPAs under the SPA W Protocol include:

- Providing additional avenues for dialogue and information sharing among listed MPAs to enhance management effectiveness against current and anticipated threats and promote the development of representative MPA networks to protect biodiversity and the integrity of coastal and marine ecosystems throughout the wider Caribbean.
- Strengthening the U.S. leadership role in marine conservation in the wider Caribbean, thereby strengthening U.S. ability to advocate for more sustainable marine practices (e.g. eliminating fish traps, controlling invasive species).
- Providing opportunities to enhance management of shared resources, particularly migratory species.
- Fulfilling of the U.S. commitment to list specially protected areas as a signatory to the Cartagena Convention.

PROPOSED TIME LINE

- February 2012:** Meet with National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the Estuarine Reserves Division to outline process for completing the nomination and consultation with states
- March-May 2012:** Prepare nominations
- June-July 2012:** Consultation with affected states
- August 2012:** Submit US nomination package through the web-based tool
- October 2012:** Presentation of Listing for consideration at the Conference of Parties Meeting

Annie Hillary
National Ocean Service International Programs Office
301-713-3078 ext. 221
Annie.Hillary@noaa.gov

Lauren Wenzel
National MPA Center
(301) 563-1136
Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov

