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The Grenadines Network of Marine Protected Areas

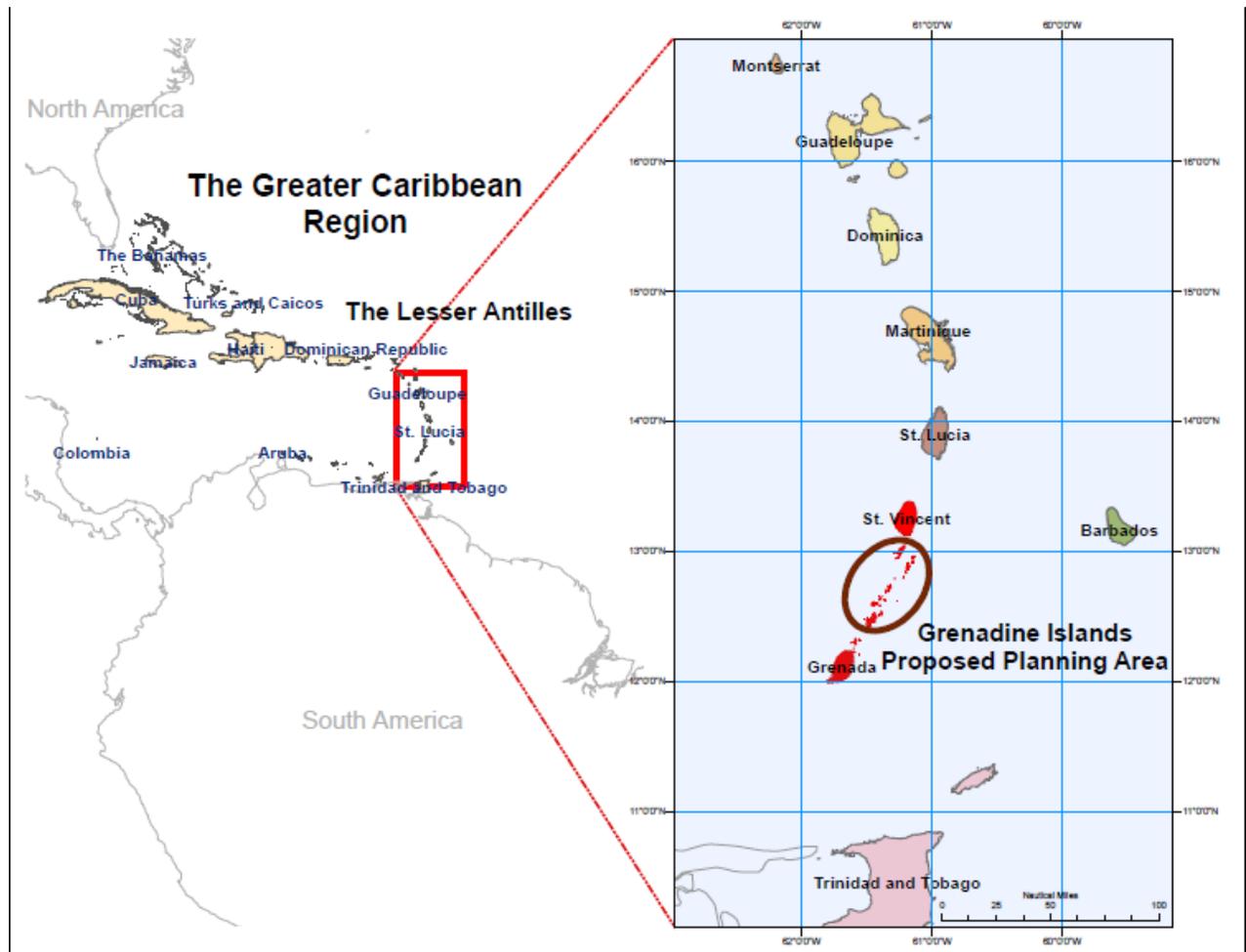
Martin Barriteau

martinbarriteau@gmail.com

(784) 485 8779

Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Size: 1500 sq/km



Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Government Agencies, Grenada:
 - Fisheries Department
 - Environmental Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture
 - Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs
- Government Agencies, St. Vincent and the Grenadines:
 - Fisheries Division
 - Ministry of the Environment
 - National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority
 - Communications Unit, Ministry of Agriculture

Protected area administration:

- Tobago Cays Marine Park
- South Coast Marine Protected Area
- Mustique Marine Conservation Area
- Sandy Island/Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area
- Woburn Clarks Court Bay MPA
- Moliniere-Beausejour MPA

International NGOs:

- The Nature Conservancy
- The Phillip Stephenson Foundation
- Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)

National NGOs:

- Sustainable Grenadines Inc. (SusGren)

Intergovernmental organizations:

- United Nations Environmental Programme – Caribbean

Academic institutions:

- University of the West Indies (UWI), Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), Barbados
- St. George's University (SGU), Grenada

National Corporations:

- Grenada Broadcasting Network

Local Small Businesses:

- The Compass Magazine,
- Wind and Sea Ltd. (Union Island)

Community-based Organizations:

- Union Island Water Taxi Association
- Union Island fisher Associations

Objectives: This agreement provides the basis for future collaboration between the MPAs and their partner institutions and is a foundation for sharing of experience and best practices by the MPAs in relation to all aspects of MPA management and the conservation of coastal and marine resources.

- To create more effective management tools for MPAs of the Grenada Bank
- To increase opportunities for communication and networking between MPA managers and users of the Grenada Bank
- To provide an opportunity for MPA management staff to learn from best practices of other MPAs in the Grenada Bank

Values and importance: The transboundary Grenadines is an area of ecological significance supporting the most extensive coral reefs and related habitats in the south-eastern Caribbean, yet it is threatened by development, overfishing, climate change and limited capacity for management of protected areas.

Aspects of transboundary cooperation: Ecosystem based management: The Grenadines network is addressing both direct and indirect threats to coral reefs and associated coastal ecosystems.

Stage in the process: Operational stage with collaborative activities ongoing based on an informal (gentleman's) agreement, which has been in place since 2011, and has grown and been re-signed, as new members have joined.

Date Established: January 26, 2011

Official Protected Area Designation: All participating MPAs are legally declared by National Legislation.

The Catalyst: The recent context of the Grenadines MPAs translates to huge scope for building effective MPA management. Further, MPA management in the Grenadines is characterized by a reality of limited resources. The distance of the Grenadines from their respective capital cities presents an additional hurdle to effective management. There is also a general need to reorient stakeholder expectations towards more sustainable use of marine resources. GNMPA was established on the back of a strong willingness for collaboration that was expressed by the three founding MPAs (SIOBMPA, TCMP and Moliniere-Beausejour MPA) and the related government agencies in both countries.

History: In 2011, SusGren, a coastal and marine environment and sustainable livelihoods NGO, jump-started the Grenadines Network of MPAs (GNMPA) aimed at strengthening management capacity of MPAs in the Grenada Bank through improved networking of existing MPAs. And in part to assist the governments of both countries to achieve the goals of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), Program of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA), and the Caribbean Challenge Initiatives (CCI) of protecting 20% of near shore resources by 2020.

The long term conservation goal is to build a resilient network of MPAs that are co-managed effectively by community and government, that function effectively for community well-being, biodiversity protection (especially coral reefs) and as a critical climate change response mechanism.

Barriers, challenges, obstacles, or constraints: A major challenge will continue to be scaling up from efforts at the level of a single MPA to more broadly effective management across the network. Thus far donor support for training enforcement, harmonization of monitoring and evaluation activities, and enhanced outreach and knowledge management have been good but will need to continue. Government support and recognition for the network remains the biggest challenge for fund raising, network roles within country MPAs and institutionalization of the network.

The Governance and Management Structures

- **Cooperative relationship:** It is a formal but non-binding agreement between the MPAs “to collaborate together, to ensure effective MPA management and to promote the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources”.
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** N/A
- **Governance structure:** SusGren facilitated the original signing of the network agreement, continues to champion the network and strives to match needs with opportunities for expertise and funding. While SusGren takes a facilitating role, the MPA partners share accountability for implementation. Currently seven MPAs are members of the transboundary network, and organizations involved with two proposed MPAs have observer status.
- **Cooperative management arrangement:** With no formal cooperative management guidelines, nor institutional structure, GNMPA was established on the back of a strong willingness for collaboration that was expressed by the founding MPAs and the related government agencies in both countries. Each year, the networking meeting has included a facilitated process to assist the MPAs with defining their priority needs and identifying those of GNMPA. The network conducts joint monitoring expeditions and training programmes and assists members with taking adaptive management decisions based on findings.

Results: Additional MPAs have joined the network over the years, from three participating members at the start to seven areas currently. Improved networking among participating members has permitted learning by exchanging information and working together to solve some of the important common issues and challenges faced. The network has been able to address fundamental MPA management challenges including governance, management planning, standard operating procedures for law enforcement, standardized coral reef monitoring, attachment and exchanges (field visits and training), and increased outreach and knowledge management.

Lessons Learned: GNPMA is now firmly established with seven MPA members and its sixth annual networking meeting held in 2016, lessons learned include:

- Government support was instrumental in the initial establishment of the network and encourages its continuation and growth.
- Public support is growing and broader stakeholder engagement is achieved with each community-focused activity. The inclusion of local fishers and chefs in training on lionfish handling raises the local profile of the MPAs and their staff. Schools and communities warmly receive the inclusion of local children in hands-on training for MPA staff in education and outreach.
- Formalizing an agreement to collaborate between the partners serves GNMPA well in ensuring willingness on the part of member MPAs and in demonstrating commitment to donors and experts.
- Joint participation of the MPAs in enforcement training is helping to encourage more consistent enforcement of rules and regulations across the Grenadines.
- The strategy of inviting media representatives to the networking meetings is increasing communications and raising the profile of the participating MPAs through ongoing publications of MPA activities.
- Training for MPA staff and stakeholders, together with direct funding to the MPAs via small grants, have helped to increase biological and socio-economic monitoring by member MPAs.
- A programme of annual meetings, field visits, joint training and inter-MPA exchange visits is serving to both increase communications amongst the MPAs and to share best practices for effective management across international boundaries.

For More Information

Name	Title	Organization	Email	Phone
Ms. Emma Doyle	Project Manager, MPA Support	Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)	emma.doyle@gcfi.org	Tel +1-832-5982838/Cel +1-832-5660484
Ms. Orisha Joseph	Program Manager	Sustainable Grenadines	orisha.joseph@gmail.com	Work :1 784 485 8779 Cell: 1 473 537 3479
Mr. Kenneth Williams	Operations Manager	Tobago Cays Marine Park (TCMP)	tcmp191@hotmail.com	
Mr. Andrew A. Lockhart	Superintendent - Marine and Terrestrial Parks	National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority	andylockhart65@yahoo.com	Tel: <u>784 453 1623</u> Mobile: <u>784 533 0028</u>
Mr. Davon Baker	MPA Support Manager	Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs	dkmbaker@gmail.com	Tel: (473) 443 6026