Marine Spatial Planning in Seychelles

Authors: Joanna Smith\textsuperscript{1,2}, Helena Sims\textsuperscript{2}, Alain de Comarmond\textsuperscript{3}, and Rick Tingey\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Nature United, \textsuperscript{2}The Nature Conservancy, \textsuperscript{3}Seychelles Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, \textsuperscript{4}Spatial Support Systems

joanna_smith@tnc.org, d.dogley@gov.sc, mbrown@tnc.org

Presenter and Corresponding Author: joanna_smith@tnc.org

The Seychelles is an archipelagic nation in the Western Indian Ocean encompassing 1.37 million square kilometers and 115 islands. Marine biodiversity is one of Seychelles’ most important natural assets, supporting a luxury tourism industry and over eight different fisheries. Concerns about sustainability, impacts on biodiversity, and climate change impacts resulted in a government commitment to designate 30\% of its waters in new or expanded marine protections by 2020 and to develop a marine plan to support the Blue Economy Roadmap for the entire Exclusive Economic Zone. The Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan (SMSP) process began in 2014 as a condition of a debt conversion. The government passed a new Act to create the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) in 2016 which provides long-term financing for ocean conservation and sustainable economic development activities. The SMSP is government-led and facilitated by The Nature Conservancy, and the public, participatory process involves more than 11 sectors including fishing, tourism, conservation, petroleum, recreation, maritime safety, ports, and renewable energy. Robust stakeholder engagement and consultation, a decision-making framework, a 3-category zoning framework, an adaptive GIS spatial database, and numerous decision-support tools all assist with the development of the plan. The first milestone of the SMSP was completed in 2017 and 210,000 square kilometers in new marine protections were gazetted in Feb 2018. This was half the 30\% overall goal for marine protections and includes both zones for high biodiversity protection and medium biodiversity and sustainable uses. The second milestone will be completed in early 2019, and final milestone at the end of 2020. In this presentation we will share the methodologies used to develop frameworks and zoning proposals, as well as discuss lessons learned to date. This MSP process has contributed to the advancement or evolution of MSP for tropical and Small Island Developing States and is a new model for MSP involving climate change adaptation and innovative financing that supports long-term conservation, sustainable economies, and management of the oceans.
MSP; Blue Economy; biodiversity; zoning; Marxan; marine protection; financing