Connectivity of Mesoamerican Reefs
17th to 21st September 2006
Rosenstiel School for Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
University of Miami

Annual Meeting of the Connectivity Working Group
and
A Workshop for Management Agency and NGO Personnel
with members of the Connectivity program

Final Report
Overview

This event combined the annual meeting of the Connectivity Working Group with the first workshop of the Working Group with senior environmental managers and NGO personnel from the Mesoamerican region. The Working Group meeting, on days 1 and 2 included 35 participants: 10 members, 8 associate members, 13 graduate students, and 4 other participants. They were joined, on days 2 and 3 by 15 management and NGO personnel from the region. Three additional participants had to cancel late for personal reasons.

The Working Group meeting commenced with summary presentations on the progress being made on each of the research projects. These were followed, late on the afternoon of Day 1, by a consideration of how best to proceed during Years 3-5. Included here was a presentation on a possible new project, the development of a higher-resolution hydrodynamic model for the Mesoamerican region.

The morning of Day 2 included discussions of several other topics that must be considered in finalizing the program for Year 3 and onwards. New science topics such as global warming effects and resilience were briefly mentioned. Capacity building, the need to relate effectively to the management community in order to transfer technology and new knowledge effectively, and the need to bridge across to the Pacific were other important topics. The afternoon of Day 2 was spent considering a plan for Years 3 to 5, before an early break, before the start of the workshop with managers. That plan is summarized below.

Following a late afternoon welcome reception, the workshop with managers commenced on the evening of Day 2, and continued through Day 3. The first session included an overview of the Connectivity program and its relationship to the wider Coral Reef targeted Research program, and a presentation on the way in which connectivity issues might interface with critical management issues in Mesoamerica. Day 3 commenced with several presentations outlining the science of connectivity and describing the kinds of work being done within the Connectivity program. Following discussion of these, the afternoon of Day 3 was devoted to consideration of how to bring scientists and managers together more effectively than generally has been the case in the past. A number of good suggestions resulted from the discussion, and these will be followed up over future months.

Outcome of the meeting

Revised work plan for Years 3-5

In order to bring the goals into line with existing funding, the Working Group agreed to make several changes to the program. The most important of these are:

1) to put Project 1, dealing with the dispersal of grouper larvae from a spawning aggregation, into suspension mode until Phase Two of the CRTR project in 2009,
unless outside funding is secured to complete it sooner. Some pilot components will continue with existing parallel funding through WHOI. The rationale for this is that this project will be expensive to complete, and with no source of funding to support it clearly in sight, putting additional GEF funds into it simply removes them from other projects that need them for completion.

2) To delay any move into Pacific sites until Phase 2. We had previously planned to begin replicate studies of fish and coral connectivity at Philippine and/or Palau sites as early as Year 3.

3) To consolidate other existing projects, trimming back on objectives and amalgamating where that makes sense. Thus the science program will consist of project a) dealing with connectivity in the bicolor damselfish as a convenient model reef fish, project b) dealing with post-settlement demography of corals, project c) using several approaches to tackle connectivity in corals (primarily Montastrea faveolata), and project d) to model larval dispersal in Caribbean Spiny Lobster.

4) To consolidate, and emphasize, the capacity-building and outreach components of the program into a new project e). This will maintain the annual training workshops on recruitment monitoring, but scale back the collection of recruitment data to those locations where individuals have proved capable and interested, and will include other mechanisms for better communication with the management community including the production of written material other than papers in technical journals, and further workshops.

As part of this revised program, the Working Group also agreed that the development of a quadruply-nested hydrodynamic model for Mesoamerica would be our highest priority for securing new funding, and that securing funding for the suspended Project 1 was also a very high priority.

**Clarification of the recruitment monitoring project**

The recruitment monitoring project, which involves data collection at a number of the managed areas overseen by participants at the workshop, has proceeded haltingly, perhaps because the attempt was made to take a ‘bottom-up’ approach, working almost entirely with the junior personnel who would be collecting the data. The data being collected are compatible with the Synoptic Monitoring Program of the MBRS project, which is using many of the same locations, and, except in the case of the lobster recruitment data, the methods used are in the MBRS Monitoring Manual. An agreement in principle exists for these data to be lodged permanently in the MBRS database (following the same rules regarding access as accorded to any of the SMP data). Nevertheless, it is clear that some additional discussion must take place with managers concerning the continuation of this program, ensuring that all participants understand the goals and scope of the project. With the retrenchments to the science program now agreed to, some components of the data being collected are no longer of use for the research being done, however they remain useful as measures of the dynamics of the local communities, and an effort to demonstrate the use of such data,
locally as well as regionally, should be a high priority for the 2007 training workshop on recruitment monitoring.

**Documents for managers**

Discussion during the workshop identified two documents that would be of immediate value in the region, and it was agreed that production of these will be a first priority for Year 3 within the capacity-building and outreach component. The first of these, of very general value to managers and NGO personnel both in the Mesoamerican region and elsewhere, is an appropriately written version of the technical article published in Trends in Ecology and Evolution in 2005, detailing the critical gaps in the science that underpins the use of no-take reserves as a fishery management and conservation tool. The second, perhaps targeted more specifically to the Mesoamerican region will be a short document outlining the important connectivity implications of improperly planned coastal development. Both documents will be prepared as both English and Spanish versions.

**Results of questionnaire following workshop**

A questionnaire was circulated to all participants following the workshop, seeking comment that would enable improvements to be made in future meetings.

Sixteen individuals have replied to date, and their comments provide some clear guidance for future meetings. All respondents thought the workshop was useful, but all but one stated that the agenda was over-crowded. As a result there was insufficient time for full discussion. In particular, there was no time provided to obtain from the managers and NGO personnel a considered statement of their major management concerns, and particularly concerns that might be ameliorated by better information on connectivity.

Another common thread in the responses concerned the lack of provision for Spanish – spoken or written. While respondents stated that they personally were able to work entirely in English, one admitted that participation in the discussions was difficult, and several suggested that others in the group had some difficulties. This is a serious deficiency that will be remedied in future meetings with the management community. The provision, in advance, of more extensive written material in both languages, and a better organized effort to provide for translation during discussions are both useful here.

Among the many useful suggestions for future workshops, and comments on important topics that had not been covered, several items were repeated by several respondents. Most respondents were sensitive to the fact that we had not succeeded in learning from the managers what the critical topics were for them, but there was some divergence of views concerning the role of the Connectivity working group. Obviously, there are many issues of concern to managers in the region, and a
discussion with scientists about these issues could be very informative to the scientists and might result in useful science solutions being brought forward. On the other hand, the connectivity program deals with one particular set of science questions, and it will be unlikely to be able to address a broad range of important management issues.

Many respondents suggested a greater effort should have been made to apply the science to specific problems in specific places. One suggested progressing towards a committee of scientists and managers who would work together over a sustained period to identify problems, seek funding and implement solutions in specific locations. This is an excellent framework for adaptive management, and one with which several of the scientists present would be very sympathetic, although perhaps beyond the scope of the program at the present time.

Other suggestions concerned discussion of the ways in which the science findings from the connectivity program could be used to achieve solutions to specific problems: specific tools that could be applied, development of an on-going dialog between science and management, setting of specific goals in building a collaboration of scientists and managers in the region. All of these should be explored.

Within the science, there was a call by several respondents for more attention to those components of connectivity due to movement by juveniles among mangrove, seagrass and reef habitats. Finally, there were a number of suggestions for other ways to make future meetings more effective, and the clear overall message was that meetings between scientists and managers in which management issues are discussed are a real need in this region, and a vital first step towards greater integration of science into management.

**Future workshops**

No date was set for a follow-up workshop between members of the Connectivity Working Group and managers and NGO personnel in the Mesoamerican region. Nevertheless, it is clear that one or more follow-up meetings must occur over the next three years. The Working Group will ensure that this happens.

Peter F. Sale  
Chair, Connectivity Working Group  
October 24, 2006
Agenda
Meeting of the Connectivity Working Group

Sunday 17th September
6:30pm: Welcome Reception.
Double Tree Hotel at Coconut Grove
2649 S. Bayshore Drive, Miami Florida

Monday 18th September
8:00am: Shuttle bus departs hotel for RSMAS
(Assemble in hotel lobby before 8:00am)
8:30am: Registration, continental breakfast, at RSMAS
9:00am: Introduction -- Welcoming remarks, logistics, goals.
Peter Sale, UNU-INWEH

Part One -- What we have been doing:

9:30am Project One -- Grouper connectivity
Simon Thorrold, WHOI
9:50am Project Two -- Bicolor connectivity
Derek Hogan, Univ. of Windsor
10:10am Project Three -- Recruitment dynamics of corals
Bob Steneck, Univ. of Maine
10:30am Discussion
10:45am Coffee Break
11:10am Project Four -- Dispersal of coral larvae
Alina Szmant, UNC Wilmington
11:30am Project Five -- Genetic connectivity in corals
Tonya Shearer, Georgia Tech
11:50am Discussion
12:05pm Lunch

1:30pm Project Six – A recruitment monitoring program
Mark Butler, Old Dominion University
1:50pm Project Seven – Modeling dispersal of larvae
Claire Paris, RSMAS, U. Miami
2:10pm Discussion
2:25pm Coffee Break
Part Two -- Where we might go next:

3:00pm  Introduction – Topics, goals, budgets
         Peter Sale, UNU-INWEH

3:20pm  Hydrodynamics – Microbead tracers of larvae
         Chris Taggart, Dalhousie University

3:40pm  Hydrodynamics – Building a model for the region
         Jinyu Sheng, Dalhousie University

4:00pm  Discussion

Part Three -- Critical Evaluation of Our Progress

4:10-5:10pm  Split into three groups to look critically at how we are doing, identifying any course corrections that are needed or useful (group composition not fixed, movement between is possible)

   Group A -- Dispersal – modeling and measuring it
   Possible participants: Cowen, Butler, Sheng, Taggart, Thorrold, Paris, others

   Group B -- Coral connectivity – approaches to use
   Possible participants: Arias, Coffroth, Shearer, Steneck, Szmant, Alvarado, Arnold, Porto, Zubillaga, others

   Group C -- Tagging studies using fish
   Possible participants: Heath, Fryer, Jones, Lindeman, Molina, Hogan, Salas, Thiessen, Villegas, Williamson, others

5.10pm  Shuttle returns to the hotel.
         Free for the evening.

Tuesday, 19th September:

8.30am  Shuttle departs hotel for RSMAS

Part Three, continued: Discussion groups report back to meeting:

9:00am  Dispersal studies

9:10am  Discussion

9:20am  Coral connectivity

9:30am  Discussion

9:40am  Tagging studies

9:50am  Discussion

Additional topics to consider for the program

10:00am  Hydrodynamics – Can we ignore the need?
          Discussion (15 min)
10:15am  Global warming and coral connectivity  
        Alina Szmant, UNC Wilmington (10 min)  
10:25am  Resilience and connectivity  
        Bob Steneck, Univ. of Maine (10 min)  
10:35am  General discussion  
10:45am  Coffee Break  
11:10am  Capacity building  
        Comments by Sale, Lindeman, Discussion (10 min)  
11:20am  Engaging the Pacific  
        Comments by Jones, Hooten, Discussion (15 min)  
11:35am  Connectivity and MPA management  
        Comments by Lindeman, Kritzer, Discussion (15 min)  
11:50am  General discussion  
        Our priorities for the next three years (20 min)  
12:10pm  Lunch  
        (“Executive” of Thorrold, Heath, Steneck, Szmant,  
        Coffroth, Butler, Cowen, Sale to meet over lunch)  

Part Four -- A Plan for the Next Three Years  
2:00pm  Presentation of how the seven existing projects may  
        grow, metamorphose, or stay the same  
        Peter Sale, UNU-INWEH (30 min or less)  
2:30pm  General discussion of the plan  
        (A finalized plan will inform the proposal for funding for  
        2007 due 1 October 2006) (45 min)  
3:15pm  Other business  
        Close of meeting
Connectivity of Mesoamerican Reefs
A Workshop for Management Agency and NGO Personnel
with Members of the Connectivity Program

Tuesday 19th September
4:30pm Welcome Reception for all participants
RSMAS Cafeteria

6:00pm Welcome and Introduction -- Goals for the meeting
Peter Sale, UNU-INWEH

Part One: Connectivity and Management in the Mesoamerican Context

6:10pm Setting the scene – A description of the connectivity program
Peter Sale, UNU-INWEH

6:30pm MPAs in Mesoamerica – History and management
Ken Lindeman, Environmental Defense

6:50pm Discussion
What are the constraints on management? How do we build an effective science of management? How do we build lasting bridges between scientists and managers?

7:30pm Shuttle returns to the Double-Tree Hotel, participants are free for the evening.

Wednesday, 20th September:
8.00am Shuttle departs hotel for RSMAS
Please assemble in the hotel lobby prior to 8:00am
A continental breakfast will be provided at RSMAS

Part Two: The Science of Connectivity

9:00am Connectivity – What it is and why it is important for management
Peter F. Sale, UNU-INWEH, Canada

9:10am Modeling dispersal
Robert K. Cowen, RSMAS, U. Miami, USA

9:30am Tagging fish larvae: potential for direct estimates of retention and connectivity
G.P. Jones, James Cook University, Australia

10:00am Coffee Break

10:30am Genetic approaches to connectivity
Daniel Heath, University of Windsor, Canada
10:50am Why we need connectivity information for lobster
Mark J. Butler IV, Old Dominion University, USA

11:10am Difficulties with studying connectivity of corals
Mary Alice Coffroth, SUNY Buffalo, USA

11:30am Recruitment monitoring as one glimpse of connectivity
Robert S. Steneck, University of Maine, USA

11:50am General discussion

12:10pm Lunch

Part Three: Building Effective Partnerships

2:00pm Building science and scientists into large-scale management of marine resources
Jake Kritzer, Environmental Defense

2:15pm Adaptive management as a way of doing useful science.
Andy Hooten, AJH Environmental Services

2:30pm Discussion

2:45pm Coffee Break

3:15pm Break into four groups to discuss:
How do managers and scientists build the partnerships necessary for adaptive management to take place? What is the role for the NGO community in this process? How can we ensure the Connectivity program is useful for management in Mesoamerica? What opportunities are there for managers to participate in building the science of connectivity? How can we build strong and sustainable scientist/manager partnerships in this region?

(You will be assigned to groups so that each holds a mix of managers, scientists, NGO personnel, students – each group will consider the same set of questions, and return with some specific proposals.)

4:00pm Reports from the discussion groups (10 min each)

4:40pm General discussion
Recommendations from the meeting – how to make the Connectivity program better

5:10pm Close of meeting

5:15pm Shuttle buses return to hotel

7:00pm Farewell Dinner
Double Tree Hotel at Coconut Grove
Connectivity of Mesoamerican Reefs
17-20 September, RSMAS, University of Miami, Miami, Florida
List of participants

List is alphabetical, showing first the scientists associated with the program as Members or Associate Members of the Connectivity Working Group, then the students at the meeting who are working on the project, and finally the Managers and NGO personnel who attended the meeting. Also included are names of four individuals who had to cancel at the last minute and were unable to attend.

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**Students working on the project**

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**Managers & NGO personnel from the region**

**Belize**

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