

Governance of fisheries and other living marine resources in the Wider Caribbean

Bisessar Chakalall^a, Robin Mahon^{b,*}, Patrick McConney^b,
Leonard Nurse^b, Derrick Oderson^c

^a *FAO, United Nations House, St. Michael, Barbados*

^b *Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES),
University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados*

^c *Clapham Road, St. Michael, Barbados*

Abstract

Living marine resources are critical for human well-being in the Wider Caribbean region. These are mainly fisheries resources which provide food and employment for many thousands of coastal inhabitants. Other non-exploited resources such as reef corals are also important in sustaining tourism. Many of these resources are transboundary and require collaboration for effective governance. The fact that many of the fisheries are small-scale makes this even more difficult. In this paper we address the governance needs for marine systems in the Wider Caribbean region through the evaluation of Institutional arrangements for governance (IAG) of transboundary marine resources. We observe that IAG in the region are weak or lacking, and issues of scale are the most challenging ones for this region given the range in size, development and capacity of the countries in the area. Existing organisations will need to be adapted for governance having been designed for other primary purposes. For instance, fisheries organisations are most well established but lack decision-making functions. There are no large fishery stocks from which to derive revenues to support a regional fisheries management organisation. Improved institutions must be tailored to Caribbean reality. Alternative models must be considered and evaluated with concerns such as cost, equitability and best use of expertise in mind. This paper is not prescriptive but outlines options and approaches for adequate regional governance of fisheries, including some pros and cons. There will be the need for a considerable amount of developmental work before feasible mechanisms can be proposed.

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1. Introduction

In this paper we address the governance needs for marine systems in the Wider Caribbean. This area, as defined in the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, extends from Northeastern Brazil to Southeastern USA and includes all Caribbean islands as well as mainland countries with Caribbean coasts (Fig. 1). This region is geopolitically highly complex, with perhaps the greatest concentration of countries and associated states anywhere in the world (see Spalding and Kramer, 2004). These range in size from the smallest to the largest and from the poorest to the richest. Numerous Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are juxtaposed with large continental countries, each with very different goals, needs and capacities related to marine resource governance.

This attempt to explore the governance options for the Wider Caribbean is based on the fact that marine resources are critical for human well-being in this region. They deliver a variety of social and economic benefits that are presently underappreciated and undervalued. Hence the limited attention thus far to regional-scale governance. Even when these benefits are derived directly, as in the case of fisheries, their true value is seldom known, primarily because most are small-scale and/or often rural, even for transboundary resources. In the case of other living marine resources, where the benefits are often indirect, such as the role that healthy reefs play in tourism, as protectors of the shore, providers of beach sand and recreation sites, there is even less appreciation of their value. To a large extent also, transboundary linkages are not well known and consequently, the need for collaboration in governance is poorly understood. If and when the importance of these linkages is more fully recognised, it is expected that countries will be more likely to invest in the necessary requirements for governance.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +246 417 4570; fax: +246 424 4204.
E-mail address: rmahon@caribsurf.com (R. Mahon).

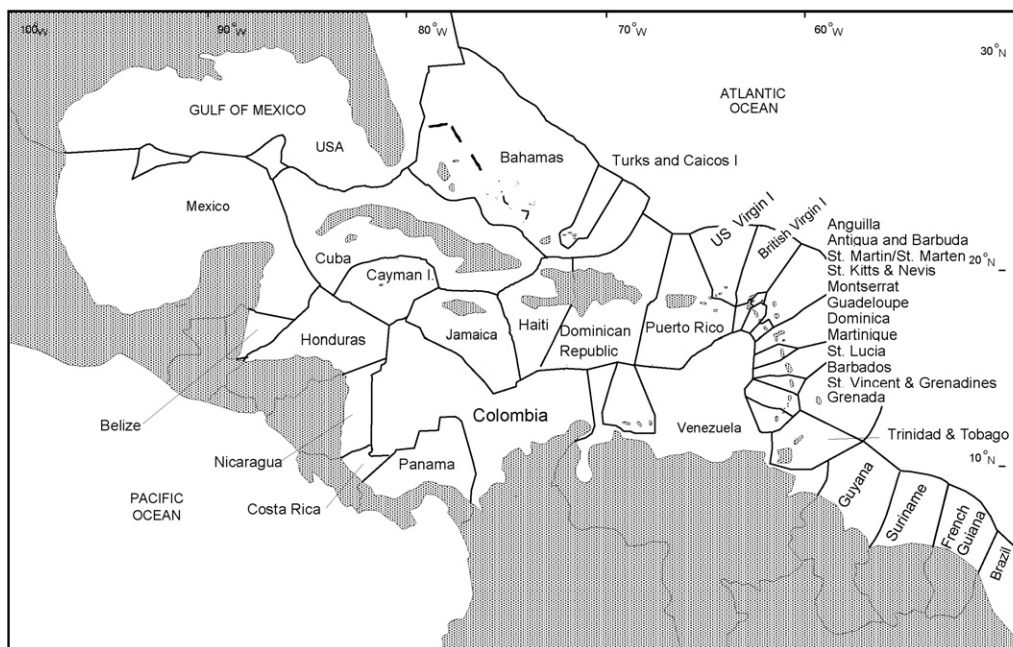


Fig. 1. The countries of the Wider Caribbean and the mosaic of their EEZs.

The most pressing rationale for a governance arrangement at the regional scale lies in the many transboundary oceanographic and ecological linkages within the Wider Caribbean (Spalding and Kramer, 2004). Many marine resources are shared. Therefore, initially it can be expected that there will be emphasis on transboundary or shared living marine resources which require cooperation for governance. This must include both exploited and non-exploited resources and their critical habitats. Another reason is that a regional approach will facilitate making the best possible use of the limited national level capacity for fisheries management within the region (Chakalall et al., 1998).

In our view, governance is much broader than management, and has many dimensions, including the interactions among all stakeholders that influence resource use outcomes as well as the principles that guide these interactions and the institutional arrangements within which they take place. This paper is not prescriptive, but rather points at options and approaches, highlighting some pros and cons. There will be the need for a considerable amount of further dialogue and developmental work before feasible mechanisms can be proposed for implementation.

2. Scope or vision

We must ask “What do we see in place in the long-term, when the value of the resources is fully appreciated by Wider Caribbean governments?” Then we must plan our way towards our vision in appropriate steps or stages. The first element of this vision is that governance will be an integrated arrangement that encompasses all of the living resources of the Wider Caribbean marine ecosystems. This would include fisheries, non-exploited living resources, habitats, as well as the key economic, social and cultural sectoral linkages, for example linkages between reefs,

beaches and tourism economies, or marine transportation and environmental health.

This perspective should be taken to the level of ecosystem governance, which would have fisheries governance as a sub-mechanism. This suggests that arrangements would exist to allow regular review of ecosystem status, as a whole, and also key aspects such as fisheries, reefs, marine mammals, etc., leading to advice on what to do and to decisions that would be binding at the national level. This is a long-term goal.

Governance arrangements need to be broad in scope, having the potential to encompass all relevant aspects and impacts, including for example, hazardous waste transport and climate change, although all may not be taken up at the outset. Governance arrangements need to be consistent with, and in the context of, the major multilateral agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (United Nations, 1983), the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (United Nations, 1995), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (United Nations, 1993), and the Cartagena Convention (UNEP, 1983). They must be according to principles, many of which are embodied in the above conventions, and which have been agreed upon by stakeholders, for example responsibility, transparency, scale-matching, precaution, adaptive management, full cost allocation, participation (Costanza et al., 1998; Grafton, 2005).

Among the principles of key relevance for the Caribbean, sustainability is over-riding. Resource use must not further devalue, and where possible should increase, the natural capital wealth so that it can continue to provide benefits for future generations. Resource scale and diversity issues must be accounted for. Therefore, living marine resource governance needs occur at different scales and also at multiple scales. The governance arrangements must be scale-conscious and scale-appropriate in

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