

Cultural Assignment I: Salt Creek Management Recommendation

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I propose that Parque Nacional Marino Isla Bastimentos be designated as a no-take Marine Protected Area (MPA), except for the area surrounding the Salt Creek community, which should be classified as a multiple-use MPA. A no-take MPA for most of the park ensures the protection of marine habitats and the variety of life that they support. As the park is located in a region declared “particularly sensitive” by the International Maritime Organization (Stanley 1995:13). Its marine seascape supports the interaction of three distinct ecosystems: coral reefs, mangrove stands, and seagrass beds (Guerron, 2005). Particularly, the Zapatilla Cays is home to the maximum diversity of corals in this region (Guzmán & Guevara, 1998) and is essential to protect. The development of this region would bring immediate consequences, including overpopulation of the coastal zone, leading to the destruction of mangroves and adjacent forests, greater demand for marine resources and more competition for space and natural resources (Guzmán & Guevara, 1998).

To balance conservation with sustainable resource use, I propose a multiple-use MPA for Salt Creek, allowing for some regulated fishing to ensure conservation efforts align with local priorities while fostering equitable governance. In 1988, when the Marine Park was established the indigenous Ngöbe communities felt that their needs were not taken into account when developing the park’s limits (Guerron, 2005). The limits infringed upon the Ngöbe’s subsistence territories, relying heavily on fishing as a subsistence strategy (Guerron, 2005). This outlines the sad reality that too often local and Indigenous knowledge are not incorporated into governance practices thus hindering relationships between people and place and our collective ability to protect essential ecosystems (Spalding et al., [2023](#)). The limits were not conceived with the needs of the locals in mind but rather with strictly conservationist goals (Mou Sue 1993:163). To prevent this knowledge extraction (Co-producing, 33, 2024), it is crucial to develop a community-based product portfolio that ensures direct benefits for Indigenous communities. This approach supports the co-development of information, allowing communities to participate as equal partners in decision-making. Prioritizing Indigenous-led research ensures that environmental research incorporates Indigenous methodologies, fostering more equitable and sustainable conservation efforts. This approach balances conservation with the needs of Indigenous and local communities, ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources.

Citations:

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