



**Stakeholder Consultation Meeting with National Boating  
Association of Maldives and Divers Association of Maldives to  
discuss the Proposed Regulations and Zonation for South Ari  
Marine Protected Area**

April 2019



**Date:** 27 April 2019

**Time:** 10:00 – 12:00

**Venue:** Meeting room, IUCN Maldives

### **Attendees**

#### **International Union for Conservation of Nature**

Ms. Najfa Shaheem Razee – Chief Technical Officer, IUCN  
Ms. Fathimath Shihany Habeeb – Social Science Officer (Socio Economic), IUCN  
Ms. Ifham Hassan Zareer – Communications Associate, IUCN  
Ms. Josephine Langley – Consultant, IUCN

#### **Environment Protection Agency (EPA)**

Ms. Farhath Ali – Assistant Director, EPA  
Ms. Mariyam Rifga – Assistant Director, EPA

#### **National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM)**

Mr. Ibrahim Shahid-President, NBAM  
Mr. Hussain Sharif-Treasurer, NBAM  
Mr. Mufeed Abdulla – NBAM  
Mr. Aslam Aboobakuru – Director, Blue Shark

#### **Divers Association of Maldives**

Mr. Hussain Sobah – DAM  
Mr. Mohamed Seeneen – DAM  
Mr. Aslam Aboobakuru – DAM

#### **Areas discussed:**

1. Presentation of the proposed regulations and zonation of South Ari Marine Protected Area
2. Concerns regarding the proposed management measures
3. Additional questions by IUCN and EPA to help formulate a comprehensive management plan

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| 1. Presentation of the draft management plan of South Ari Marine Protected Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EPA commenced the meeting with a few words stressing on the ecological and socio-economic value of the area, key issues in SAMPA and the need for a management plan.</li><li>• IUCN presented the key points of the proposed regulations and zonation for SAMPA and opened the floor up for discussion.</li></ul>   |
| 2. Concerns over the size of vessels allowed in SAMPA                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Boating Association of Maldives proposed increasing the size of the vessels allowed in SAMPA to 80 feet even though the regulation that was published in the Gazette stated that the vessel size be no more than 20 meters.</li></ul>  |
| 3. Concerns over the establishment of rangers in SAMPA                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There were concerns over the rangers giving an unfair advantage to some operators over the others in Hanifaru Bay.</li><li>• National Boating Association enquired about the level of authority the rangers would have.</li><li>• They also proposed that the Marine Police be stationed at SAMPA instead of rangers, given the experience in Hanifaru Bay.</li></ul> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was also proposed, if the ranger system is established, rangers could be rotated according to a roster to solve issues of corruption.</li> <li>• IUCN responded by stating that there have been discussions with MNDF and Coast Guard and they are keen to assist the rangers with their work.</li> </ul>   |
| 4. Concerns over the fee charged for entry into SAMPA                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Boating Association stressed that if a fee is taken, the benefits should be seen in the area.</li> <li>• A fee was seen as a huge additional cost, especially as liveaboard packages are pre-booked. Concerns were expressed that an additional fee would hike up the price and thus might be too steep for guests.</li> <li>• EPA highlighted that there will be a grace period before a fee system is established</li> </ul>  |
| 5. Concerns over the number of passengers allowed per vessel            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Boating Association and Divers Association disagreed with the number of people per vessel (10 people excluding crew).</li> <li>• Instead 20-35 people were suggested. The justification for this was that liveaboards have more room, and their dive/excursion boats can also occupy more people.</li> <li>• When asked what their average number of passengers per boat is, they said that it was 20, and that 10 was the minimum number.</li> <li>• Divers Association stated that on a dive boat, there will be an average of 20 – 30 divers, and therefore to cut it down to 10 would be impossible for them.</li> <li>• EPA and IUCN stressed that the number was according to the existing Maldives Whale Shark Interaction Guideline, best practices in other protected areas, the Green Fins code of conduct and the manta ray guidelines.</li> </ul> |
| 6. Concerns over the number of hours a vessel is permitted to use SAMPA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both the National Boating Association and the Divers Association disagreed with the 3 hours proposed in the draft.</li> <li>• They also stated that 1 dive vessel per site will not do, and especially as the sites will have to be pre-booked, they were concerned that they will not have access to the best sites, given the number of operators in the area</li> <li>• As alternative days were proposed for operators to use SAMPA, National Boating Association stressed that as per their schedule, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were the busiest for them.</li> </ul>   |
| 7. Speed control and keeping distance                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both Divers Association and National Boating Association did not have an issue with the speed control.</li> <li>• They stressed on the amount of injured whale sharks seen in SAMPA and stressed on the need to be more mindful when using SAMPA</li> <li>• Neither of the associations had any issue with vessels maintaining 500 m distance from each other when in SAMPA,</li> </ul>  |

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|  | <p>keeping distance from the reef, or keeping distance with whale sharks during a whale shark encounter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They did however stress that it will be difficult to keep a speed limit of 2 knots during a whale shark sighting.</li> </ul>  |
| 8. Concerns over installation of a tracking device   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns were expressed by both National Boating Association and Divers Association over the cost of a tracking device. It was insinuated that a tracking device be provided to them instead of burdening them with the cost.</li> </ul>  |
| 9. Concerns over entry of research organisations into SAMPA                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Boating Association and Divers Association expressed concerns over research organisations such as MWSRP using SAMPA, and questioned whether they would have to follow the same guidelines.</li> <li>• They also expressed concerns over whale shark tagging</li> <li>• EPA and IUCN iterated that a specific protocol will be established for research in SAMPA and even research organisations cannot get in the water when a vessel is at a whale shark encounter</li> </ul>   |
| 10. Business concerns  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns over the mothership not being allowed entry into SAMPA was expressed. The diesel cost of having to transport passengers back and forth in dive vessels to and from the liveaboards was a concern, especially when in choppy waters.</li> </ul>   |
| 11. Additional questions by IUCN and EPA to help formulate a comprehensive management plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The maximum time needed at a whale shark encounter was asked by IUCN and EPA, and Divers Association and National Boating Association stated that about 10-20 minutes is enough for most guests, but that 3 hours is not enough time to find whale sharks in SAMPA.</li> <li>• When asked about the patterns of whale shark sighting at night, both associations responded that there was not much sighting.</li> <li>• They also stated that as a rule, they refrain from anchoring in SAMPA, but if a safety concern arises, they might be obliged to do so.</li> </ul> |
| 12. Additional issues discussed  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Boating Association disagreed with allowing recreational fishing in the multi-use zones, but was considerate about local livelihoods.</li> </ul>   |
| 13. Attachments  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on the proposed new regulations and zonation for SAMPA</li> </ul>  |



| South Ari Marine Protected Area management plan meeting                   |                     |                     |                        |         |                                | Venue: Meeting Room |
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| 27 April 2019   |                     |                     |                        |         |                                | IUCN office         |
| National Boating Association of Maldives & Divers Association of Maldives |                     |                     |                        |         |                                |                     |
| #   | Name                | Organization        | Designation            | Contact | Email                          | Signature           |
| 1   | JOSEPHINE LANGLEY   | IUCN-               | CONSULTANT             |         | josephine.langley@gmail.com    |                     |
| 2   | IFHAM HASSAN ZAREER | IUCN                | COMMS ASSOCIATE        | 7446188 | ihuzareer@gmail.com            |                     |
| 3   | Faishath Farukh Ali | <del>IUCN</del> EPA | A- Director            | 9998250 | farukh.ali@epa.gov.mv          |                     |
| 4   | Hussain Sobah       | Freelance           | Diver                  | 777282  | 20sobah@gmail.com              |                     |
| 5   | Muhammed Seenu      | DAM                 | Dive Center Co DAM     | 7788964 | mohamedseenu@diveoceanic.com   |                     |
| 6   | Aslam Aboobakur     | Dive Ind            | -                      | 7907371 | -                              |                     |
| 7   | Aboobakur Mohamed   | Blue Shark          | Director               | 7784826 | aboobakur@velipa.com           |                     |
| 8   | Imelina Shaid       | NBAM                | president              | 7771322 | president@nbam.mv              |                     |
| 9   | Muhammad Abdul      | NBAM                |                        | 7772403 | info@maldivianboatsclub.com.mv |                     |
| 10  | HUSAIN SHARIF       | DAM                 | treasurer              | 7784515 | chaatihabeeb@gmail.com         |                     |
| 11  | Shihany Habeeb      | IUCN                | Socio-economic officer | 7704565 | shihany.habeeb@iucn-019        |                     |
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