

2009 Annual Report: Marine Policy Center

The mission of the Marine Policy Center (MPC) is to conduct research on policy issues relating to the ocean and the coast. As this research is often directly related to actual policy issues, Center staff members are sometimes asked to provide analysis and advice to policy-makers. This takes a variety of forms.

One way is through service to the National Research Council (NRC). As an arm of the National Academies, the NRC's job is to conduct studies to support policy-making. These studies are typically requested by Congress or Federal agencies to provide advice on timely—and often controversial—issues.

In some cases, these issues are quite narrow. For example, Research Specialist Hauke Kite-Powell recently served on a committee studying the effect of an oyster aquaculture project on the seal population within the Point Reyes National Seashore in California. In other cases, the issues are broad, as with MPC Director and Senior Scientist Andy Solow's service as the coordinator of a study on the future of US climate-change science.

A second avenue for participation in the policy process is service on standing advisory groups. Senior Research Specialist Porter Hoagland is a member of the advisory council to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. This group provides advice to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) about the management of this important right-whale sanctuary at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay. In a similar vein, Solow chairs a panel to advise the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on environmental effects relating to the Boston Harbor sewage outfall.

Sometimes, it is not necessary to be a formal member of an NRC committee or panel to affect action. For example, last year Solow was asked to provide analysis to the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) in the White House in support of vessel speed limits to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale. The argument was accepted and the regulation put in place. In another case, Hoagland and Solow helped Governor Deval Patrick's office develop a rationale for declaring a resource emergency in Massachusetts fisheries resulting from tighter Federal fishing regulations. Asking the Secretary of Commerce to agree that a Federal management measure intended to protect fish stocks has created a resource emergency turned out to be a bit of a stretch, and the argument was rejected.

It is a commonplace that the more objective analysis that enters the policy process, the better. However, Center staff has found that the road runs both ways: Exposure to the policy process helps Center staff members gain a better understanding of the relevant policy issues and enables them to develop more realistic models to analyze such issues.

—[Andrew Solow](#), Center Director



[Enlarge Image](#)

Women from Unguja Ukuu-Tindini on the island of Zanzibar off Tanzania examine a shellfish farm that they are learning to set up and tend. Hauke Kite-Powell, a Marine Policy Center research specialist, is working with scientists, fishers, and non-profit groups to promote aquaculture as an ecologically sound way to increase the yield of seafood protein for food, while also providing jobs and a saleable commodity for the villagers. (Photo by Hauke Kite-Powell, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

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Aquaculture project aims to produce food and reduce poverty

A little marine science goes a long way toward developing new environmentally sustainable ways to provide more protein and more economic opportunities, especially for women, on an impoverished island off East Africa.

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Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.

E-Contact: info@whoi.edu; press relations: media@whoi.edu, tel. (508) 457-2000

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