

Identify Objectives



Clearly identify the objectives to be met, e.g., conserve a regions biodiversity, sustain fisheries, reduce coastal hazards. Photo © NOAA

The objectives of an assessment are a statement of the overarching aims and intended products from the effort. Broad objectives may be *to conserve a full range of a region's biodiversity for conservation* or *to reduce coastal hazards to humans*. A more specific objective could be to identify a set of sites that represents all of a region's diversity at the lowest possible cost in terms of conflicting human uses.

Clarity and Consistency

Objectives must be clearly stated or their will be confusion at all levels from management to stakeholders. The lack of clarity and multiple aims confound many planning efforts.

For example, it is often assumed that maps identifying priority sites represent Marine Protected Areas, or MPAs. If your aim is to identify MPAs, then your objective is clear. If your aim is not wholly devoted to identifying MPAs, then you must state clearly and consistently that the objective is not (just) to identify MPAs. The identification of priority areas for conservation and management does not have to presume *a priori* what the right strategy will be at any given site or zone. For ecosystem-based management to succeed, multiple strategies are needed. The selection of those appropriate strategies depends on biological, socioeconomic, and political circumstances working at multiple scales.

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