



# The Faial–Pico Channel Stakeholder Workshop

Scientists, stakeholders, and policy-makers – working together to improve Marine Protected Area management

Proceedings from the first AQUACROSS Faial–Pico Channel Workshop  
3 October 2017, Hotel Horta, Horta, Azores



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# 1 Key Messages

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This report summarises the presentations and discussions that took place at the Faial–Pico Channel Stakeholder Workshop in Horta, Faial Island, Azores, on the 3rd of October 2017. The following key messages emerged from the discussions:

## Faial–Pico Channel MPA context

- The Faial–Pico Channel is an important **case study for MPA management** within the Azores and the EU.
- The Faial–Pico Channel is an important case study both for coastal and deep-sea ecology.
- It is not known whether the **current ecological state** of the Channel is improving or deteriorating.
- The Faial–Pico Channel supports many uses and users and is of high socioeconomic **value** and **importance** to local recreational and commercial fishers, tourism operators, environment groups, researchers, and wider society.

## Reflections on current management

- Managing Faial–Pico Channel MPA is challenging due to **complex** and overlapping **governance and institutions**.
- While **compliance** with current regulations is considered high, there was a general consensus that **monitoring and enforcement** are important to all stakeholders but are currently insufficient.
- Users and wider society need **clear information** on current rules.

## Future management changes

- Stakeholders emphasised the importance of **monitoring** to evaluate the effectiveness of the MPA.
- A majority of participants supported the creation of a **working group** to help manage and monitor the MPA, with **representation** from all stakeholders.
- A formal **MPA Management Plan** was suggested to codify the current rules and ongoing management.

## Cooperation and mutual benefit

- **Sustainable management** of the Channel is of primary importance and benefits all.
- **Cooperation** between and within stakeholder groups is important.
- Fishing and tourism and other sectors are **interrelated** and part of the same **shared community**; they benefit when the other benefits.
- There is an opportunity to all benefit from **synergistic marketing** that highlights Faial–Pico Channel as an **ecotourism** destination and site of sustainable fishing.

## 2 Introduction

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The Faial–Pico Channel Workshop was held in Horta, Faial Island, Azores, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2017. The workshop brought together [31 local stakeholders](#), including fishing, tourism, and civil society representatives, as well as scientists and policy-makers. In focus was the current and future management of the Faial–Pico Channel Marine Protected Area (MPA). Other key topics discussed included how scientific research and local stakeholder knowledge have informed decision-making and the management of the MPA in the past – and how they should contribute in the future.

The workshop opened with three presentations: an introduction to the AQUACROSS project and its insights for MPA management from Ben Boteler (Ecologic Institute); an overview of the current MPA regulation and future plans by Gilberto Carreira (DRAM); and a summary of recent socio-economic research related to Azorean MPAs by Adriana Ressurreição (MARE – Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre) (see [workshop agenda](#)). To open the plenary discussion, six participants from different stakeholder groups were invited to share their perspective and their hopes for participatory management of the MPA. This was followed by wide-ranging discussion, which covered conflicts and tradeoffs in the channel, practical management considerations including current biodiversity state and monitoring, as well as legislative and institutional management challenges. Future management options, including participatory stakeholder management of the MPA, were also considered. Following the meeting, most participants stayed for an informal lunch.

Overall, the workshop offered participants an opportunity to communicate with policy-makers and scientists, and share their perspectives and priorities for the improved management of the Channel. It was also an opportunity to reflect on the 2016 tightening of fishing regulations in the Channel – and to look to the future.

## 3 Presentations

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### [AQUACROSS and Ecosystem-based management – Ben Boteler \(Ecologic Institute\)](#)

As well as opening the workshop and establishing objectives for the day, Ben Boteler introduced the AQUACROSS project (Knowledge, Assessment, and Management for AQUATIC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services across EU Policies), a 3.5 year Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action funded by the European Commission. Ben Boteler explained that AQUACROSS recognises the value of ecosystem services provided by aquatic ecosystems – oceans, coasts, lake, and rivers – for human well-being, and falling biodiversity across Europe and the world. The project investigates how ecosystem-based management could help arrest this declining biodiversity and support the attainment of the European Union’s Biodiversity Strategy, safeguarding ecosystems and the benefits they provide into the future. Ben Boteler introduced the AQUACROSS approach and also the key principles of ecosystem-based management, which include developing and using multi-disciplinary and stakeholder knowledge, managing ecosystems at appropriate scale, policy coordination, and consideration of social-ecological interactions, among others. Ben Boteler pointed out that the AQUACROSS

project aims to investigate these issues and learn from local experience in eight case studies across Europe, including the Azores.

### Current challenges of the Azorean Marine Protected Areas – The Faial–Pico Channel – Gilberto Carreira(DRAM)

Gilberto Carreira's presentation presented the history of MPA management in the Azores, current Faial–Pico Channel legislation, future plans, and ongoing challenges. According to Gilberto Carreira, MPA management is challenging in the Azores due to the diversity of local ecosystems, complex and overlapping governance, and the importance of marine areas to local stakeholders and the economy. Despite these challenges, marine conservation has progressed from the establishment of the first Azorean MPA in 1980 (Monte da Guia, in the Faial–Pico Channel), with multiple marine and coastal protected areas now managed by DRAM and the Island Natural Parks under a patchwork of local and international biodiversity laws (including Natura 2000, OSPAR, regional Azorean biodiversity law) and fishing regulations. DRAM is involved with numerous projects to improve its understanding and management of the Azorean sea and these marine parks.

Gilberto Carreira emphasised that the Faial–Pico Channel is an important case study for MPA management. It features many of the challenges faced in MPAs across the Azores, including increasing demands from marine tourism, increased fishing effort (recreational and artisanal), high ecological relevance, and challenging implementation, surveillance, and monitoring. Unlike some other Azorean MPAs, the Faial–Pico Channel is well–studied and has a relative abundance of scientific information. Faial–Pico Channel MPA management has evolved slowly over the past thirty years and saw significant revision in 2016 with fishing ordinance no. 53/2016. Following two stakeholder meetings in 2015 to discuss scientific research and potential management scenarios, in 2016 DRAM used fisheries regulations to restrict fishing in some high biodiversity areas in the channel around Monte da Guia, Ilheus da Madalena, and Baixa da Barca.

Gilberto Carreira's presentation concluded with a discussion of ongoing challenges of managing Azorean MPAs and the potential contribution of AQUACROSS, which included developing participatory stakeholder methods and conflict management, facilitating communication between scientists, stakeholders, and policy–makers, and supporting DRAM's ongoing work understanding and managing MPAs.

### The socio–economic dimension of Azorean MPAs – Adriana Ressurreição (MARE)

Adriana Ressurreição's presentation summarised recent scientific socio–economic research related to the Faial–Pico Channel. A key theme was that marine management is a political process. While it should be informed by the best possible scientific research, it is ultimately driven by human values and tradeoffs between competitive uses.

According to Adriana Ressurreição, socioeconomic research on the MPA can provide useful justification and guidance for management of the channel. Research shows that there is a high level of social demand for marine biodiversity conservation and of the perceived usefulness of MPAs. Research also suggests that there is a gap between

expert and resident knowledge on marine conservation issues, which argues for increased education efforts and improved communication of scientific results. Research gaps were also highlighted, with a lack of scientific knowledge about the socioeconomic and ecological impact, some key uses of the Channel (e.g. dredging) or definitive conclusions about the current state of the ecosystem.

Adriana Ressurreição's presentation also highlighted the many uses of the Faial–Pico Channel and how this could lead to conflict and tradeoffs under different management. Research shows that the Channel is a hot spot for extractive and non–extractive uses including recreational fishing (limpet collection, shore angling, and spear fishing), commercial fishing, and coastal diving, as well as to a lesser extent big game fishing and whale watching. Each of these uses has significant socioeconomic value.

## **4 Participatory management – stakeholder statements**

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To open the plenary discussion, selected stakeholders were invited to give a statement on their interest in the Faial–Pico Channel, how they have been involved in its management to date, and how they would like to contribute in the future. In a slight deviation from the agenda, two additional stakeholders were invited to contribute on the day.

### **Enrico Villa – CW Azores**

Enrico Villa's tourism company, CW Azores, extensively uses the Faial–Pico Channel as a diving site: 60% of its 2500 annual dives are inside the Channel. He stated that the MPA is very important to his business both directly as a diving site and indirectly as a marketing tool. He believes that MPAs are not only important to protect biodiversity, but also for promoting the Azores and Pico/Faial as an ecotourism destination. Enrico Villa cited Baixa da Barca as an example: following the 2016 fisheries regulations that established it as a protected area, Baixa da Barca is now compared to the renowned Princess Alice dive destination, which is good for tourism and related businesses throughout the local area. Accordingly, Enrico Villa is interested in contributing in some way to future MPA management discussions and decisions.

### **Carla Dâmaso – Azores Ocean Observatory (OMA)**

Carla Dâmaso works at OMA, which is based in Porto Pim on the coast of the Faial–Pico Channel MPA. OMA is an NGO concerned with science, the ocean, and sustainability, with a special focus on the Azores. Carla Dâmaso highlighted that MPAs are useful for communicating the importance of marine ecosystems to humans. She also emphasised that the Faial–Pico Channel could be an important case study for MPA management within the Azores Archipelago, in particular because it hosts many uses and beneficiaries.

### **Jorge Gonçalves – Associação de Produtores de Espécies Demersais dos Açores (APEDA)**

Jorge Gonçalves's association represents commercial demersal fishers in the Azores. He underlined how important the Faial–Pico Channel is to local fishers, as it is home to many commercially valuable species and is accessible by fishers whose small boats are

not permitted to fish at more distant sites. He reported that his association had been previously involved in decisions regarding management of the Channel and supported the creation of MPAs and the regulation of fishing effort in the Channel; effective monitoring and enforcement are important in this context. At the same time, Jorge Gonçalves emphasised that fishers also need to benefit from these MPAs, and needed evidence on their effectiveness (i.e. increases in fish stocks). Jorge Gonçalves stated that the fishing community also supports these MPAs because of the benefits they bring others in the local community. He emphasised the importance of all stakeholders cooperating to ensure benefits for all.

**Hugo Diogo – Department of Oceanography and Fisheries (DOP), University of the Azores**

Hugo Diogo's research at the DOP focuses on recreational fishing. Accordingly, he represents two stakeholder groups: recreational fishers and scientists. He noted that the Channel's relatively large coastal shelf (by Azorean standards) supports many extractive and non-extractive uses. This makes it an interesting case study for marine spatial planning to support competing uses, as well as recreational fishing impact and value. Hugo Diogo is interested in recreational fishing representatives being involved in future MPA management decisions. He would prioritise conservation of the most valuable species and ecosystems whilst still safe-guarding recreational and commercial fishing access and working to minimise conflict and tradeoffs.

**Pedro Afonso – IMAR/DOP, University of the Azores**

Pedro Afonso is a research scientist in the marine research and fisheries institutes at the University of Azores. He emphasised the importance of the Faial-Pico Channel for research, referring to it as a natural lab both for coastal and deep sea ecology. In terms of future management of the MPA, Pedro Afonso suggested creating a working group made up of stakeholders to manage and monitor the MPA. This should include representation from all sectors, including those as yet lacking formal representation (such as recreational fishing). An important role of this working group would be monitoring and ensuring evaluation and enforcement of the MPA, to maintain its integrity. The public needs more information regarding the MPA restrictions and continuous monitoring programmes and surveillance are also needed. Pedro Afonso concluded that this should all feed into an overall management plan for the MPA that formalises all of these elements and ensures long-term protection for the MPA.

**José António Fernandes – Associação de Armadores de Pesca Artesanal do Pico (AAPAP)**

José António Fernandes represents Pico artisanal fishers. The Faial-Pico Channel is very important to this group. While he recognises the tourism benefits arising from the MPAs that accrue to his broader community (Pico island), he also emphasised the cost to commercial fishermen of the resulting lost fishing grounds. José António Fernandes suggested that the restrictions should also apply to recreational fishermen.

He also suggested that divers should use areas that have already been closed to fishing (such as Condor Seamount), rather than diving in areas where fishing is allowed. He also suggested that some areas should be closed to divers and be used exclusively for fishing, for example Baixa do Sul. José António Fernandes concluded that, in his view,

there is an excess of overlapping policies and restrictions and that, therefore, it is difficult for fishermen to understand what they are and are not allowed to do. A management plan should compile all this information in an accessible and clear format.

## 5 Plenary discussion

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An open discussion followed, with the following key themes and points arising:

### A – Conflicts and cooperation

A number of participants noted that as the Channel is a valuable area for many different users – recreational and commercial fishermen, tourism operators, divers, dredging, among others – there is a potential for conflict. Participants emphasised that although the Azores has a large Exclusive Economic Zone, only a very small portion of this is fishable due to its depth. Conflict can also occur within uses, for example, it was suggested that as there are many fishing boats fishing in the Faial–Pico Channel, there is the potential for conflicts between them as the number of MPAs increases.

At the same time, some of the participants emphasised that all of the different users are all part of the same community. The fishing participants recognise the benefits of tourism to the area and also benefit from this both directly and indirectly. One participant suggested the opportunity for synergistic marketing between sectors and activities, giving the example that a diver that comes to dive in the Channel then goes out to lunch and enjoys fish caught by the local artisanal fisheries. Highlighting the shared interests of all participants could be a path to cooperation and mutual benefit. Some tourists had raised concerns to diving operators about the presence of fishing in the Channel, but a number of participants believed that the tourists too needed to recognise that the Channel was a resource that should be shared and that diving and fishing were interrelated.

This interrelation and existence of shared goals was emphasised by some participants. They noted that the main aim of MPAs is the sustainable management of marine resources. Without the sustainable management of the resources, all users will suffer losses. Some participants argued that the management of resources should be the cornerstone of the management of the Faial–Pico Channel.

### B – Current ecological status of the MPA and monitoring

There was considerable discussion about the current state of the MPA. Some reported anecdotal improvements in fish stocks of some species (e.g. juveniles of black seabream) and in the biodiversity in the MPA. Others were not convinced of these improvements and requested suitable monitoring to prove the impact of the MPA. It was suggested that this would be challenging due to a lack of historical data. Furthermore, one of the participants suggested that the current MPA protections would be insufficient to protect biodiversity and that, as such, no significant improvement

should be expected. There was a general agreement that current inspection and monitoring of the MPA are insufficient. It was also agreed that suitable inspection and monitoring of the MPA would be fundamental to assess the success of the MPA and to contribute to its acceptability and support within the community, and to inform any future change in management. There was general agreement that compliance with the 2016 regulation was high.

### **C – Institutional and legislative challenges and the need for clear information**

Some participants mentioned the legislative and institutional complexity of managing the MPA as a challenge. One of the difficulties is the requirement that changes to the Island National Parks or Azores Marine Park need to be approved by the Azores Regional Assembly. Participants also highlighted the overlap between the Island National Parks and DRAM. It was noted that the Island National Parks are more focussed on terrestrial biodiversity, and do not have the resources, people, and expertise to manage and monitor the coastal/marine protected areas properly. Some participants also mentioned the need to compile all fishing and marine protected area restrictions into one place, in a format accessible to different users: professional and recreational fishermen, tourists, and society as a whole. Fishermen could also be provided with a summary of legislation when they get their permits. The Faial Island Natural Park is producing signs to inform people about restrictions in Monte de Guia. The importance of marine education was also highlighted.

### **D – Future management of the Faial–Pico Channel**

The future management of the Faial–Pico Channel was also a central theme. A majority of participants supported the creation of a stakeholder working group, with representatives of all sectors and users, to support the management of the Channel. The need for better monitoring, assessment, and inspection was also emphasised by many participants, and that this should apply to all uses of the channel, including dredging. Participants also suggested more funding and support from the local government to undertake these activities. Some participants suggested formalising arrangements in a Management Plan for the MPA. Additionally other management options were also mentioned, including:

- The creation of a shark sanctuary, an MPA centered on blue shark conservation (that would allow diving).
- Reserves exclusively for fishermen (i.e. closed to divers). However, this was challenged by other participants who did not agree with the rationale behind the creation of reserves and/or believed that there was no evidence that divers negatively affect fishing or the marine ecosystem.
- Seasonal or temporal closures of some reserves – e.g. closing Baixa do Sul at certain times in the day for certain users. This was challenged since tidal conditions can affect diving activities making it impossible to define a fixed schedule for these activities.



- Increase representation of recreational fishers, which is a key stakeholder group that has not been properly represented in discussions about the management of the channel.