



MPA Collaborative Network Introduction to the Pathways Workshop Series

An introduction was given during the first event in the series, the Common Language webinar, before the recording started. A written version of the statement is provided below.

Hello and welcome to the Pathways series! We are excited to see this series finally come to fruition and for the opportunity to work with Just Communities. The MPA Collaborative Network is essentially a “network of networks” made up of 14 volunteer-based collaborative groups that cover each coastal county. The purpose of the collaboratives is to bring everyone with an interest in MPAs and ocean stewardship together to collectively work on locally driven projects that advance MPA management. Collaborative membership includes but is not limited to Tribal members and representatives, fishing representatives, non-profits, scientists, government agencies, educators, ocean businesses, museum and aquaria, district attorneys, elected officials, and community members.

Before we get started, we wanted to provide a little bit of a background on how this series developed. This series is a response to feedback gathered in the 15 Community Compliance Forums we held across the state in 2019 and 2020 where we heard over and over that there was a need to discuss past and current injustices, barriers to access, and continued persecution of indigenous and people of color along our coast and ocean. When we asked specifically what collaborative members and other partners wanted to discuss or learn about, answers ranged from a general history of racism and colonialism along the coast, to language inequality, to how to make the collaboratives and MPA stewardship more inclusive and welcoming to all. Of course, we couldn’t tackle all of that in one webinar, so we reached out for guidance from a professional facilitator and community-based organization and this series with Just Communities was born!

We do have to preface that this work is hard. You have to be willing to dig in, acknowledge past mistakes, acknowledge current mistakes and open yourself up to listening and learning. We are genuinely heartened by the excellent turn out we have today but that means you are all willing to do this hard work. This series is a just a first baby step in the process, but it is an important one and should start with the acknowledgement of our past and continued role in perpetuating injustices, specifically in regard to MPA and coastal resource management. We have not done things correctly in the past, from the MPA designation process to the convening of the collaboratives, to even the structuring of this panel! So, we will be the first to make that acknowledgement and issue an apology for past errors. We would specifically like to apologize to our indigenous participants and partners across the state for misrepresenting Tribes as communities. California Tribes are the original peoples of this land and are sovereign nations with their own governmental processes and are not communities. And while it was our intent to strengthen, not diminish Tribal voices by providing their own forum to share their perspective in this series, impact matters more than intent and we have been advised that since the entire series has not been co-planned or co-led by indigenous voices, they do not feel comfortable embedding themselves into the series as structured.

We thank our Tribal partners for this feedback and will continue to work with them on ways to better uplift their voices and continue the conversation on their terms and on their timeline. We will share more as information becomes available. But for today, we are excited to take that baby step forward and allow Gabrielle to guide us through the process of learning some key terms and concepts to help ground all our work in a common understanding. Thank you, Gabrielle, and Just Communities!