

Institute for Coastal and Marine Research

SEMINAR



In recognition of Marine Protected Areas Day

MPAs in Practice: Are We Getting the Benefits We Planned For?
By Dr Cloverley Lawrence



Marine protected areas (MPAs) are expected to conserve biodiversity, support ecosystem resilience, and deliver measurable benefits in increasingly pressured coastal environments. Yet in practice, balancing protection, human use, and evidence-based decision-making remains a persistent challenge. This seminar explores how long-term ecological monitoring can help bridge that gap, focusing on coastal systems with contrasting forms of protection. Using five years of rocky shore monitoring in the Addo Elephant National Park MPA, Dr Cloverley Lawrence examines how biodiversity patterns, resource species, and community composition vary across sanctuary, protected, and unprotected sites, and what these trends reveal about the effectiveness of protection in practice. Dr Lawrence also draws on estuarine examples from the Wilderness lake system to reflect on how important coastal ecosystems are managed under overlapping conservation instruments, including national park and Ramsar frameworks. Together, these case studies highlight that conservation outcomes depend not only on formal designation, but on sustained monitoring, clear ecological indicators, and adaptive management. Using evidence from real systems, we will consider what “success” should look like in practice, and how MPAs and related protected areas can better balance conservation goals, human use, and ecological change in a warming coastal zone.



DATE: 03 August 2026, Monday, 13:00 - 14:00

VENUE: Ocean Sciences Campus, B Block,
Conference Hall, Nelson Mandela University

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