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Tundi's Take: Time well spent

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When I heard this issue of MEAM was posing a question to practitioners on what simple thing they should do for a few minutes each day, I had a one-word answer: "Pray!" Not because I'm a religious person, but because sometimes it seems only a miracle could stop the spiraling degradation of the seas. But I can't get away with a flippant reply like that....

It's easy for those of us who sit in our offices and write about what should be done to make suggestions to those who not only ponder but also - more importantly - do the hard work of marine management. I'll be curious to see the responses from practitioners in the field, busy fighting fires in their backyards. But to my mind the one really useful thing managers (or planners) could do each and every day is to stop and take stock of what they are doing, and whether it is working.

Here I don't mean undertaking rigorous evaluations, using established benchmarks and dreaded logframes - though there is an important place for objective monitoring and evaluation too. Instead, I'm thinking more of a meditation - a time to think about context, a grounding in reality. To remind oneself (or the authority, or agency practicing marine management): what is the specific purpose of the management activity or program, and are strides being made toward that purpose? Such a daily (or weekly, if we're allowed the flexibility to pool our few minutes each day to make it a half-hour a week) pause could not only lead to better management for the specific area or issue, it could allow good EBM to come to scale.

How? Reflecting on the goals and objectives of management, and continually taking stock, will allow course corrections if management is going off track. But many times the answer to this simple meditation will be positive - goals understood and articulated, progress being made. In those cases, managers and planners might commit to replicating their success or scaling up, such that the advantages of EBM are felt more widely, and effective management spreads like wildfire.

In fact, my remedy is not all that different from praying - and the result might be just the kind of miracle we've all been praying for.

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