

Lessons Learned: 'Compile Data'

Data collection and management can be a time-consuming and challenging process. The following are some tips and lessons learned from NatCap's marine planning use-cases around the world.

Do...

- Start simple. Lots of data are available at the global or regional scale. Use these freely-available sources to get a 'lay of the land' and identify data gaps/needs.
- Listen to and engage stakeholders during the data generation process.
- Take time to develop a relationship with data providers.
- Recognize that some data is sensitive and often represents years of time spent along with significant resources to collect and catalogue.

Don't...

- Demand data.
- Get discouraged trying to acquire data that just isn't available. Sometimes it's not realistic to acquire data within a project timeline and your time may be better spent developing an alternative plan for addressing this data gap.
- Spend too much time initially on this step. The 'Compile Data' step has the potential to be a rabbit hole because you can collect and amass new data forever. Only collect information you absolutely need to reach your planning and management objectives.

Tips

- Show preliminary data to stakeholders; use expert feedback to refine information
- Some data, especially detailed or high-resolution, are proprietary. Data providers will be more likely to share their data if you can show them initial results using other sources or take the time to describe *how* and *why* you are planning to use their data. Give them something to react to.
- If funding permits, consider adding a dedicated GIS/data analyst to your team