

# Improving Fee Collection to Support Marine Managed Areas in Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines



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## Introduction

Marine managed areas and marine protected areas are synonymous, and can be designated as Marine Parks, Marine Conservation Areas, and Marine Reserves. They are areas of underwater ecosystems and sometimes the terrestrial systems they interact with, designated for special consideration of use due to their extreme value to ecology and economy. Properly funded MMAs are important for maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and economies reliant on marine tourism. If MMAs are not funded sufficiently, they will not be effectively protected and ecosystem quality will degrade. Monetary investments must be made in order to preserve the natural generation of societal benefits, the loss of which would likely be much more expensive than preserving these natural systems in their current state (Figure 1).

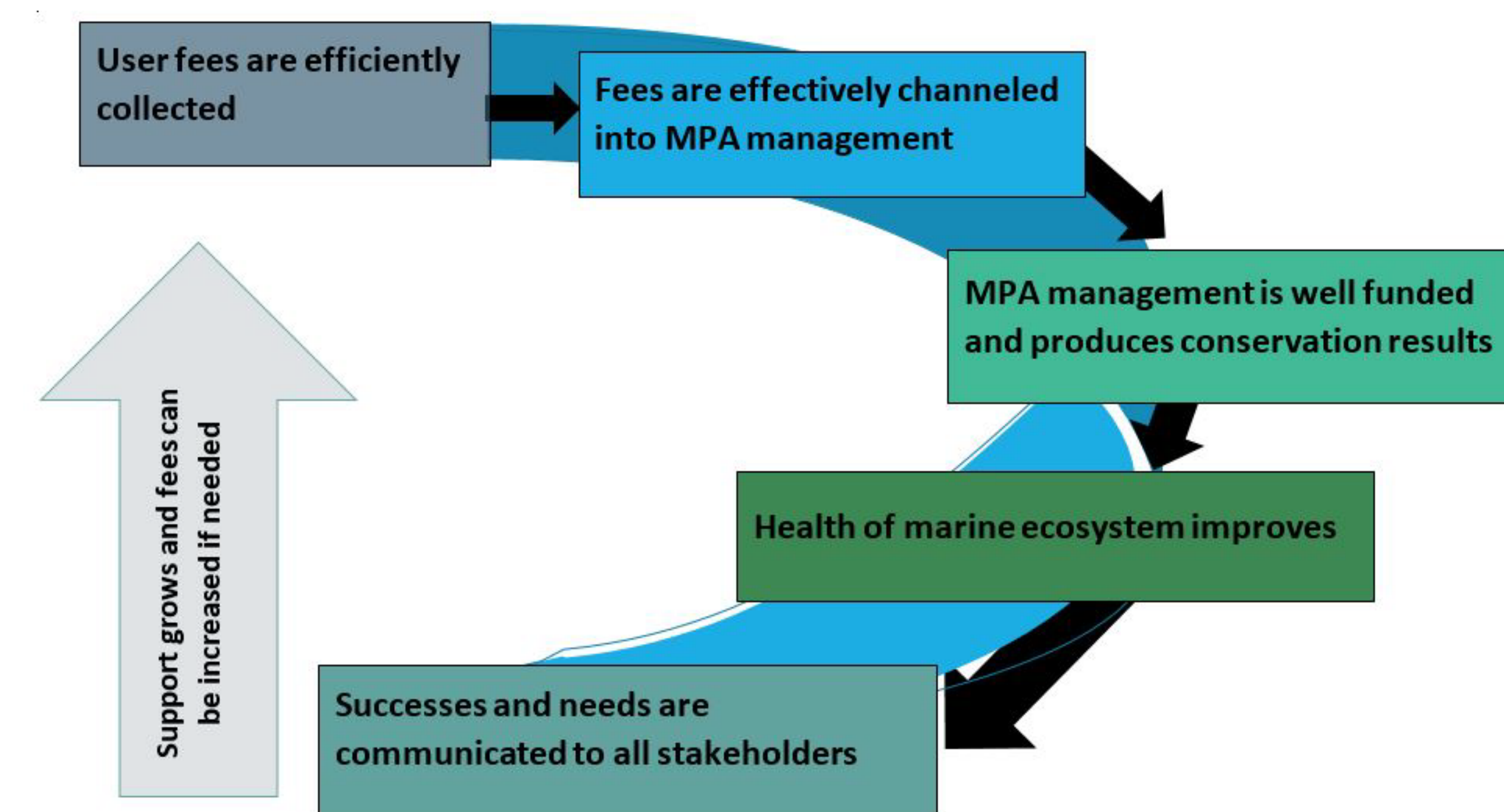


Figure 1. MMA Value Chain: A successful fee/MMA conservation cycle.

## Methods

St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada are Southern Caribbean nations whose economies are strongly reliant on marine resources and eco-tourism (Figure 2). Our team conducted a literature review, six personal interviews, and held community and three stakeholder presentations in Union Island, in which we determined the need, plausibility, and recommendations for an improved fee structure for MMAs in Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). Our research began in the Spring of 2017, and concluded in October 2017, with the stakeholder presentations.



Figure 2. Map of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada

## Results and Discussion

Currently in Grenada and SVG, MMAs are insufficiently funded, leading to degraded marine environments. If actions are not taken now to improve fee collection structures in these MMAs, it will ultimately cost governments and societies as a whole more than an initial investment. Our research shows that there is a willingness to pay more for MMA conservation, and that there are numerous ecosystem services that benefit the societies in Grenada and SVG. However, before fees are increased, enforcement must be maintained and there must be communication between all stakeholders regarding increased fees. See Figure 3 for a roadmap outlining the process of increasing fees.

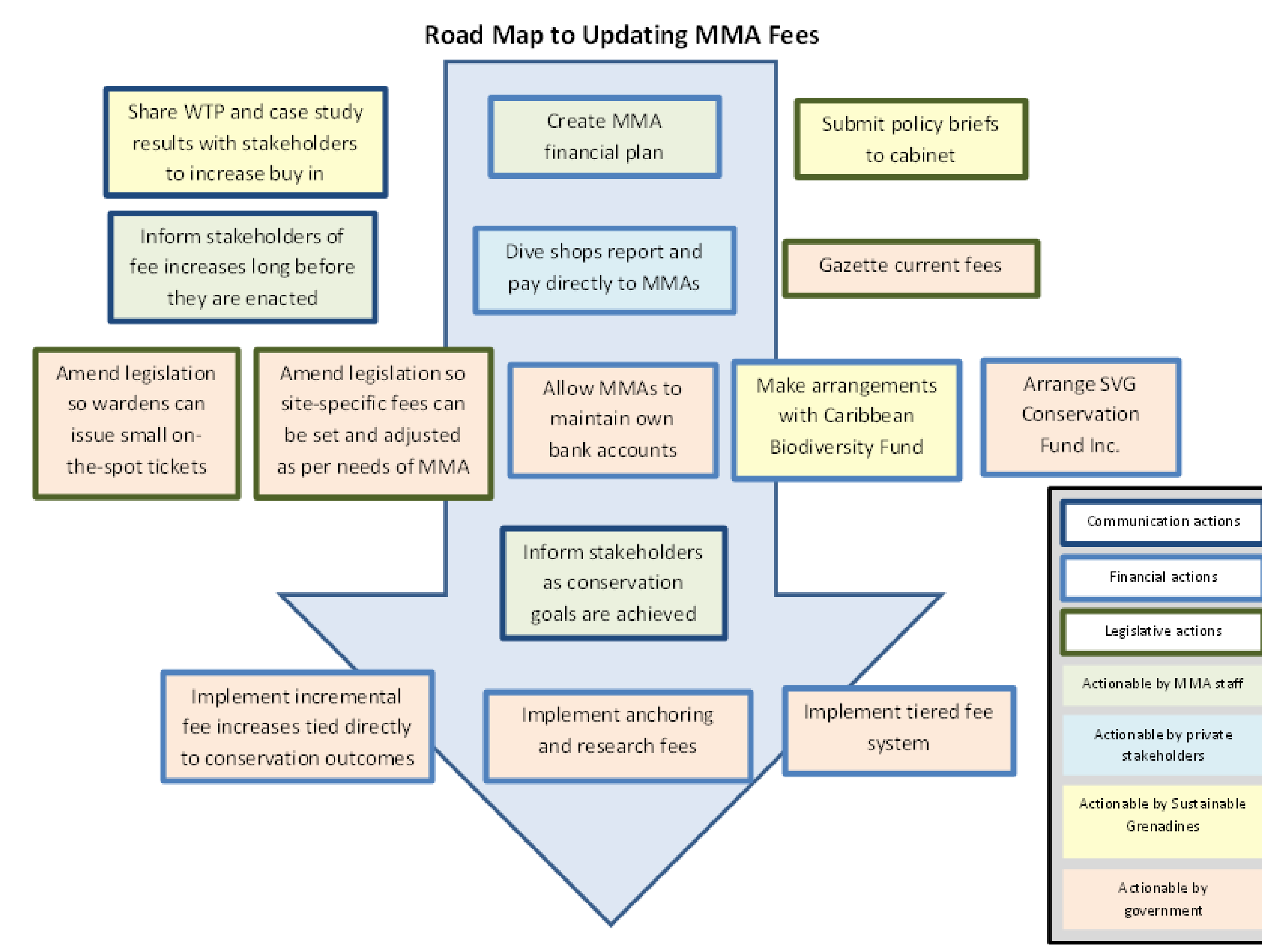


Figure 3. Road map of actions that should be taken to facilitate successful fee increases in Grenada.

## Willingness to Pay and Investment Justification

There are many case studies indicating that the protection of marine ecosystems is a worthwhile economic endeavor:

- A 2015 World Wildlife Fund study found that the benefit to cost ratio for investment in MMAs globally is between 3:1 and 20:1<sup>1</sup>
- Willingness to Pay (WTP) surveys conducted across the Windward Islands show a unanimous WTP higher fees in all areas including an 80% approval for raising fees by members of the tourism sector in SVG and Grenada<sup>2</sup>
- Today user fees constitute 94% of the funding for MPA management in Bonaire, and usership continues to climb<sup>3</sup>
- As all members of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) seek ways to fund the protection of at least 20% of near shore marine areas by 2020, all have resorted to the collection of fees of some kind
- Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) support the conservation of marine environments, but first want to ensure funds are funneled toward conservation already
- Private stakeholders, though reluctant to increase fees for fear of losing visitors, are willing to increase fees if there is evidence of properly managed resources

## Ecosystem Services

Effectively managed MMAs provide many goods and services to both humans and wildlife. These benefits include but are not limited to:

- Tourism opportunities
- Coastal storm protection, minimizing costs for reparations
- Healthy fish habitat, allowing for sport fishing, livelihood fishing, and food
- Improved livelihoods through employment related to MMA operations
- Revenue generation through taxes, permits, and fees related to marine environments

Managing MMAs is a cost-intensive endeavor. However, it is even more costly to allow for the degradation of these ecosystems over time. Valuation studies have attempted to quantify ecosystem goods and services monetarily in order to depict how much would be lost in their absence.

## Enforcement

An appropriate enforcement presence is required in order for visitor use fees to be effectively collected. See Figure 4 for a description of the cycle into which MMAs fall under an insufficient enforcement regime.

- Additional funding generated by user fees should be directed toward ensuring an enforcement presence
- Enforcement at the time the misconduct is incurred is important to ensure compliance
- 24-hour surveillance would decrease the need for on-the-ground monitoring, and serve as an additional way to decrease violations

Increasing fees in the light of increased enforcement can generate increased revenue for maintenance and conservation goals of MMAs.

## Recommendations

There are many actions to take before an outright increase of MMA fees.

- Improve enforcement and collection of current fees
- Offer pre-purchase options for MMA visitors
- Create other separate fees to increase revenue
  - Higher Anchoring fees and tiered Mooring fees
  - Annual and daily MMA access fees and bracelets
  - Permits for ceremonies and filming
- Channel fees directly into MMA management and conservation goals
- Communicate proposal to increase fees with government officials, local community members, private sector stakeholders, and other users
- Be transparent with users: keep them informed about where fees are going and how they will be used

## Conclusion

The long-term benefits derived from a soundly implemented increase in MMA fees will be favorable for all stakeholders. Healthy marine ecosystems are attractive to tourists and will support an increase in visitation. Successfully maintaining and generating revenue from MMAs will provide sustainable economic benefits to Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines for generations to come.

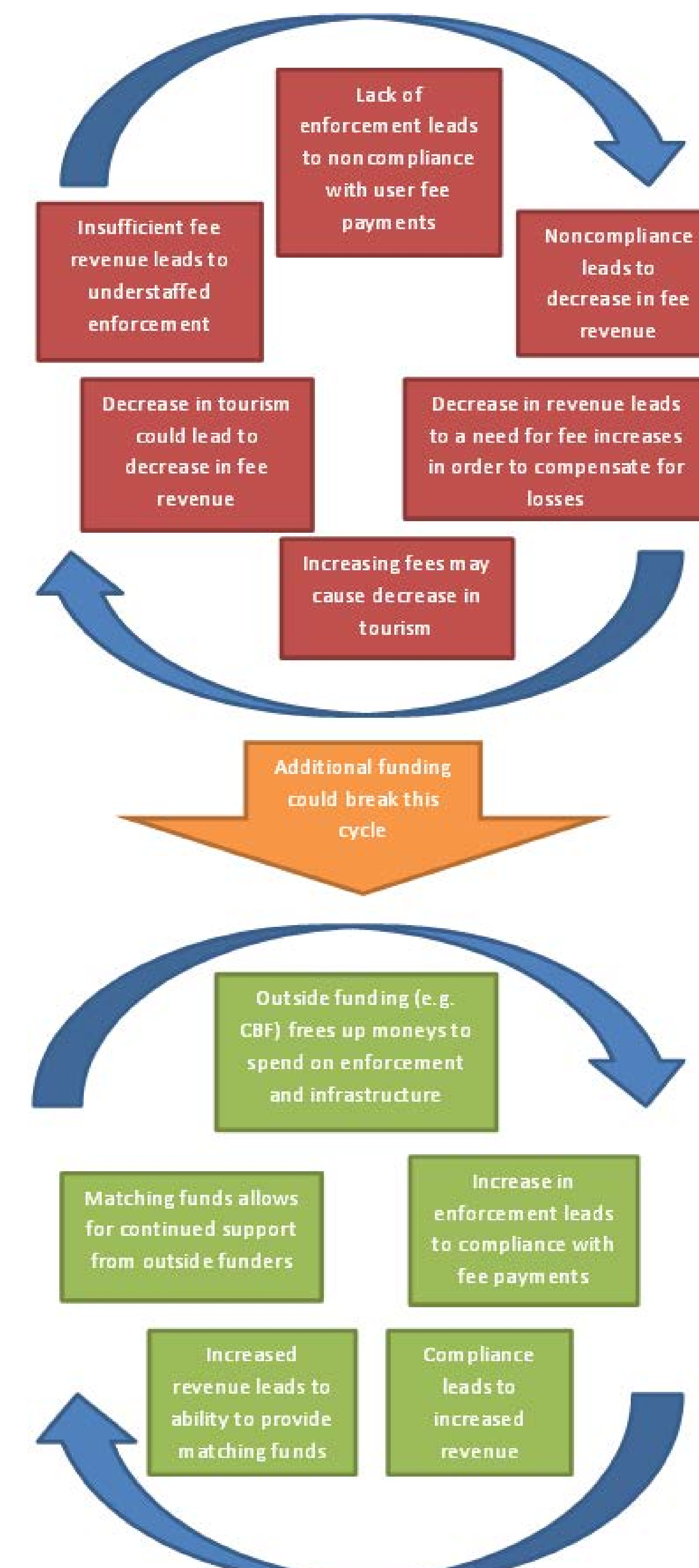


Figure 4. Breaking the cycle of insufficient funding in MMAs.

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