



Music Performance Assessments

2025 GUIDE TO HOSTING A CHORAL MPA

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West Allegheny SD - Retired
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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental goals of this *Guide* have not changed since the first *Manual* was released in 1986:

- To provide directors with the information needed to successfully host an MPA
- To answer common questions about hosting an MPA
- To provide an ongoing reference for those who have hosted in the past
- To identify any changes and new aspects of hosting
- To provide practical suggestions for hosts, especially those new to hosting MPA's

In turn, feedback is welcome from all involved for this Guide to best serve as a relevant resource.

The name of this program changed from "PMEA Adjudication" to "PMEA Music Performance Assessment" in 2019. The events themselves continue to be called "MPAs" or "Music Performance Assessments." This change simplifies and clarifies 'what we are' and focus upon 'what we do' --- *music performance assessment*.

Hosts should also review the current *Guide to Participating in a Choral MPA* for an overview from that perspective.

All forms and items needed to participate in and to host an MPA are posted within the Music Performance Assessment area of the PMEA website at www.pmea.net.

The following forms are used when hosting a Choral MPA:

- [Choral Music Performance Assessment Form](#)
- [Choral MPA Rating Summary Form – Individual Ensemble](#)
- [Choral MPA Rating Summary Form – All Ensembles](#)
- [MPA Host Deposit Form](#)
- [Adjudicator Application](#)
- [Adjudicator Contract \(Large Ensemble MPAs\) & Adjudicator Stipend Confirmation Form](#)
- [W-9 Form for Adjudicators](#)

Online forms issued from PMEA include the following:

- [Host Information Form](#)
- [Host Expense Form](#)
- *Registration* Form (developed for each MPA, accessible within the MPA Calendar)
- *Declaring Prepared Pieces* Form (developed for each MPA, accessible within the MPA Calendar)

Potential hosts are recommended to participate in at least one PMEA MPA before hosting. However, experience participating in a festival or performance assessment event of any kind should enable directors to successfully host a PMEA MPA.

Contact Tom Snyder, MPA Coordinator, with questions at mpa@pmea.net or (724) 816-0420. For mailing to the PMEA Office, use: **PMEA, 56 S. Third St., Hamburg, PA 19526**

SECTION 1: PLANNING

A. SELECT A VIABLE DATE

- MPAs are commonly scheduled within a two-month window between early March and early May. While most MPAs are held during the school day, an MPA that starts immediately after school or held on a Saturday is permitted. MPAs held over two consecutive weekdays, or a Friday-Saturday are also permitted.
- Avoid conflicts with PMEA festivals, AP testing, and PSSA testing. Dates near Easter may limit participation given the varying lengths of spring breaks before and after Easter and resulting rehearsal gaps.
- Planning a back-up date is recommended in case the MPA needs to be postponed due to weather, a health or family situation involving the host, or an emergency district or facility situation. While participating directors can't guarantee availability given the variables involved, they would at least have a chance to keep a back-up date available.
- When requesting permission to host, provide principals with relevant information concerning facility needs, how any displaced classes would be accommodated, and where students from other schools will be entering and exiting the building. Once a date is confirmed, arrange for any assistance needed from colleagues, parents, students, the stage manager, and custodians.

B. SELECT A FORMAT

- Unique to PA is the flexibility to structure the MPA to reflect the host's interests and priorities, including the options listed below. Those involving choruses are **bolded**.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>TYPICAL FORMATS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All Bands (MS & HS) - Mix of Bands & String Orchestras (MS & HS) - Choruses (Mixed, Treble & Tenor/Bass) (MS & HS) - Solo & Small Ensemble (MS & HS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Winds with and without Percussion All Percussion All String All Instrumental (Mix of Band & Orch. instruments) All Vocal Mix of all Instruments & Voices - Internal MPAs for BOC ensembles or Solos & Small Ensembles all from within the host's school district | <p>OTHER AVAILABLE OPTIONS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE FOLLOWING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All Festival (Band and/or String Orchestra, or Chorus (MS and/or HS)) - All String Orchestra (MS & HS) - All Middle/Junior High School Bands, Bands & String Orchestras, String Orchestras, or Choruses - All Sixth Grade Bands, Bands & String Orchestras, or Choruses - Solo & Small Ensemble <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Middle School/Junior High with the host's preferred combination of winds, percussion, strings & voices (could include 3rd, 4th & 5th grades) |
|---|---|

C. CONFIRM YOUR MPA DATE WITH PMEA AND PUBLICIZE IT TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPATING DIRECTORS

- Inform the MPA Coordinator with your date as soon as confirmed. Then, complete the online [Host Information Form](#) posted within the MPA area of the PMEA website to make the MPA site and date 'official' with PMEA.
- PMEA will use the information included on that form to customize an online *Registration Form* for each MPA embedded in the MPA Calendar for directors to register. PMEA will post the initial MPA Calendar within the MPA area of the PMEA website and update it regularly.
- In addition to the publicity through PMEA, promote your MPA through your PMEA District's newsletters as well as through email invitations targeted to schools within a reasonable driving distance, including those in neighboring PMEA Districts. Schools in adjacent states may also be interested if your MPA is closer than some in their own states.

D. NUMBER OF ENSEMBLES NEEDED TO HOLD AN MPA

- A minimum of six ensembles is required to hold an MPA for the event to be financially viable. An MPA including five ensembles is permitted if necessary.
- An MPA including three or four ensembles is permitted if the host waives either the Host Honorarium or the reimbursement for Host Expenses
- An MPA with two ensembles committed to participate will need to be canceled. However, hosts facing this situation, especially with a first-time MPA, are urged to first discuss options with the MPA Coordinator that could still enable those students to benefit from a performance assessment experience.
- Hosts determine the maximum number of ensembles participating based on scheduling parameters and adjudicator availability.

E. CONTRACT ADJUDICATORS

- A benefit of hosting is the opportunity to choose the three adjudicators.
- Hosts are recommended to contract a blended panel of retired and active directors from the college/university and high school/middle school levels. If needed, contact the MPA Coordinator for a list of adjudicators. Adjudicators are recommended, but not required, to be PMEA members.
- Ask adjudicators new to PMEA MPAs to complete and submit an [Adjudicator Application](#) to the MPA Coordinator.
- Contract adjudicators well in advance, as their availability is often limited. Communicate the approximate starting and ending times, as availability often depends on their late afternoon and evening commitments. Contract adjudicators who can travel to and from the event on the same day.

- Communicate to prospective adjudicators in advance the amount of the projected honorarium and travel expenses.
 - Each adjudicator will be paid \$35 per ensemble adjudicated.
 - Adjudicators may be eligible for a travel reimbursement based on the number of miles traveled one-way to the MPA site as follows:
 - No Travel Reimbursement for adjudicators traveling less than 50 miles one way
 - \$25 - Traveling 50-99 miles one way
 - \$50 - Traveling 100-149 miles one way
 - \$75 - Traveling 150+ miles one-way
- Ask adjudicators to complete the [Adjudicator Contract](#) once their availability is confirmed.
- Hosts complete the [Adjudicator Stipend Confirmation Form](#) in advance and then ask the adjudicator to review and sign on site to confirm the final payment due. Payment is sent by the PMEA Office within two weeks of receiving the Host Expense Report.
- Provide the contracted adjudicators a [W-9 form](#) to complete and return for you to submit to the PMEA Office. An adjudicator who has already submitted one to PMEA from another MPA, guest conducting, or other contracted services does not need to submit another form unless the adjudicator's home address has changed.
- Include the total honorarium and the amount of travel reimbursement, if any, for each adjudicator within the *Host Expense Form* submitted after the MPA.

F. CONFIRM HOSPITALITY ARRANGEMENTS

- Hosts are reimbursed up to \$130 for hospitality, normally including beverages and pastries, etc., provided upon arrival along with lunch as often provided by a nearby restaurant or the school's food service department. Some hosts graciously fund or supplement the allotted reimbursement with from activity accounts or booster groups.

G. CONFIRM ENSEMBLE REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT

- Directors register through the *Registration* link provided for each individual MPA within the *PMEA MPA Calendar* posted within the MPA area of the PMEA website. PMEA will provide hosts with access to monitor the summary document that compiles the essential information for each registered ensemble for use in planning.
- Directors will mail their registration fee checks issued payable to PMEA to the host. Checks should be received no later than three weeks in advance of the MPA. Hosts shall mail all collected checks to PMEA within a week of the MPA. Registration fees must be received by the PMEA office for payment to be sent to the adjudicators.
 - Registration fee for an Ensemble participating in the *Traditional* performance context = \$235
 - Registration fee for an Ensemble participating in the *Festival* performance context = \$200
- Participating directors must complete the online *Registration* and *Declaring Prepared Pieces* forms for each of their participating ensembles and submit payment for the Registration Fee to confirm participation.

- Hosts must also complete the online *Registration* and *Declaring Prepared Pieces* forms for each of their participating ensembles.
- If the director is not a PMEA member, \$50 will be added to the Registration Fee.
- Ensembles from neighboring states may participate in a PMEA MPA at the PMEA member rate if the director is a NAFME member in that state. If the director is not a NAFME member in that state, an additional \$50 fee will be added to the Registration Fee.
- Registration fee checks may be refunded or returned if the ensemble withdraws two weeks or more before the MPA. The Registration fee will not be refunded for an ensemble that withdraws within two weeks of the MPA, a policy intended to discourage withdrawals for non-extenuating reasons, such as preparation concerns or ineffective planning. Extenuating circumstances will be considered. By being notified two weeks or more in advance, a host can best adjust the schedule to benefit all involved.

H. CONFIRM THAT EACH DIRECTOR SUBMITS A DECLARED SUMMARY GRADE LEVEL

- Directors declare their three selected Prepared Pieces through the online *Declaring Prepared Pieces* link provided for each MPA within the *PMEA MPA Calendar* posted within the MPA area of the PMEA website. Within this form, directors provide the Title, Composer/Arranger, Year Published and approved PMEA Grade Level for each piece, followed by the Declared Summary Grade Level.
- PMEA will provide hosts with access to monitor the summary document that compiles this data for each registered ensemble and to confirm that each director has submitted this essential information.
- The MPA Coordinator will confirm that the submitted Grade Levels are accurate.

I. DEVELOP A SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

- The time slots for warm-up and performance shall each be 30 minutes in length. Each 30-minute time slot includes entering the stage, accessing the risers, adjusting student placement on the risers, adjusting the placement of the conductor’s podium and piano if needed, placing any other accompanying instruments, performing the Prepared Pieces, the clinic from one of the adjudicators using the remaining time, and exiting the stage.
- Scheduling time between slots, such as five minutes inserted between ensembles, is not necessary but would be permitted if possible or preferred within the overall schedule structure.
- A sample schedule for an MPA with ten ensembles and a lunch slot for the adjudicators follows:

| SLOT | TIME | WARM-UP | PERFORMANCE |
|------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| # | 8:30-9 | Ensemble #1 | ----- |
| 1 | 9-9:30 | Ensemble #2 | Ensemble #1 |
| 2 | 9:30-10 | Ensemble #3 | Ensemble #2 |
| 3 | 10-10:30 | Ensemble #4 | Ensemble #3 |
| 4 | 10:30-11 | Ensemble #5 | Ensemble #4 |
| 5 | 11-11:30 | | Ensemble #5 |

| | | | |
|----|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| | 11:30-Noon | Ensemble #6 | <i>Adjudicator Lunch</i> |
| 6 | 12-12:30 PM | Ensemble #7 | Ensemble #6 |
| 7 | 12:30-1 | Ensemble #8 | Ensemble #7 |
| 8 | 1-1:30 | Ensemble #9 | Ensemble #8 |
| 9 | 1:30-2 | Ensemble #10 | Ensemble #9 |
| 10 | 2-2:30 | | Ensemble #10 |

- Hosts are permitted to schedule two or more ensembles conducted by the same director to perform consecutively when the additional ensembles contain students who are also performing in the other ensemble(s). Directors may prefer to warm-up all the students together then simply adjudicate one after another with the students not involved on stage seated in the auditorium.

J. SCHEDULE PERFORMANCE TIMES

- Schedule performance slots on a first-come basis with interested directors early in the process, as a viable performance time is often a condition of directors being able to participate, especially for schools bringing more than one ensemble with the same director. The opportunity to lock in performance times is an incentive for directors to commit early.

K. PROCESS THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RESULTS IN THE TABULATION AREA

- Once the runners bring the assessment forms to the Tabulation Area, check each adjudicator’s math on the Assessment Forms for accuracy. If an error is spotted, send the form back to that adjudicator to correct and initial.
- For ensembles participating in the *Traditional* performance context or for ensembles participating in the *Festival* performance context with the director choosing *Ratings & Comments* as the evaluation option, derive the *Final MPA Rating* earned from the performance of the three Prepared Pieces by combining the Final Ratings from the each of the three adjudicators according to the following table:

| DETERMINE THE FINAL MPA RATING OF THE PREPARED PIECES BY COMBINING THE FINAL RATINGS FROM EACH OF THE THREE ADJUDICATORS | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| RATINGS FROM THE THREE ADJUDICATORS | I, I, I | I, II, II | I, III, III | I, IV, IV | I, V, V |
| | I, I, II | I, II, III | I, III, IV | I, IV, V | II, V, V |
| | I, I, III | I, II, IV | I, III, V | II, IV, IV | III, V, V |
| | I, I, IV | I, II, V | II, III, III | II, IV, V | IV, V, V |
| | I, I, V | II, II, II | II, III, IV | III, IV, IV | V, V, V |
| | | II, II, III | II, III, V | III, IV, V | |
| | | II, II, IV | III, III, III | IV, IV, IV | |
| | | II, II, V | III, III, IV | IV, IV, V | |
| | | | III, III, V | | |
| FINAL MPA RATING | I | II | III | IV | V |

| FINAL RATING | PMEA DESCRIPTOR | LETTER GRADE | APPROX. PSSA EQUIVALENT |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| I | Superior | A+ | Outstanding |
| II | Excellent | A | Advanced |
| III | Good | B | Proficient |
| IV | Fair | C | Basic |
| V | Unprepared | U | Below Basic |

- The tabulator types or writes in the final score and rating indicated on each adjudicator’s assessment form onto the [Choral MPA Rating Summary Form](#).
- The tabulator then types or writes in the final score and rating for each ensemble on the [Choral MPA Rating Summary – All Ensembles Form](#) as part of the *MPA Host Assessment Report Form* to submit to the MPA Coordinator.
- Make a copy of each Assessment Form (front and back) to submit to the MPA Coordinator as part of the *MPA Host Assessment Report Form* to submit to the MPA Coordinator. If the back of the form is blank with no written, that page does not need to be submitted.
- Final MPA ratings are not posted or published.

L. RETURN THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND MJSIC TO EACH DIRECTOR

- Return the following items to each director before the ensemble departs:
 - [Choral MPA Rating Summary Form](#)
 - Three *Choral Music Performance Assessment Forms*, one from each adjudicator
 - Nine pieces of choral music, three for each of the three Prepared Pieces

M. CONFIRM FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Communicate at least two weeks in advance with the participating directors to confirm final arrangements that include the following.
 - Confirming that the Registration Fee check has been received
 - The final schedule of warm-up and performance times
 - A list of the adjudicators
 - Bus parking instructions, where to enter the building, and other facility information
 - Any known traffic issues or road construction advisories that could impact travel time
 - A reminder to submit three manila envelopes, one for each adjudicator, labeled with the school’s name, ensemble name and ‘Adjudicator #1, 2 or 3’. Each envelope must contain an original of each of the three Prepared Pieces with the measures numbered if not already numbered by the publisher. The music must be originals unless the piece is out of print. Copies may then be made, but only with written permission of the publisher provided. If copies are made, pages should be taped, rather than stapled. Music does not need to be provided for any warm-up piece or other music used.
 - Confirming arrangements for any percussion instruments or electronics provided by the host
 - How and when adjudicator recordings can be accessed
 - A reminder that ensembles are welcome to attend other performances and, if so, that students are to simply enter and exit only between performances, not between pieces, and that applause is permitted after each piece.

- Communicate at least two weeks in advance with the contracted adjudicators to confirm final arrangements that include the following.
 - The final schedule of warm-up and performance times
 - Any traffic issues or road construction advisories that could impact travel time
 - Parking information along with where to enter the building, where to check in and obtain an official visitor’s pass if needed, and whether to proceed to the auditorium or another area
 - What digital audio recording technology will be used
- Confirm that an ample number of students have committed to assist throughout the MPA. Utilize music department colleagues and parents as additional volunteers. Areas where assistance is needed include the following:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Set-up | To assist in preparing each involved area, including setting the stage, warm-up area, posting signs, and equipping the adjudicators’ workstations |
| Check-in Table | To assist the participating ensembles upon arrival |
| Holding Area | To watch over any coats, purses, instruments, and other belongings |
| Host Escorts | To stay with a given ensemble from check-in to the holding area through the warm-up and performance, then back to the holding area and departure. To serve as a liaison between the director and the host. |
| Stage Crew | To assist ensembles entering the stage with moving and setting the conductors’ podium, piano and any accompanying instruments |
| Runners | To take the envelopes of choral music to the adjudicators. To take the completed assessment forms and conductor scores from the adjudicators to the Tabulation Area. To swap out recorders, if used, between ensembles. To take the assessment forms and scores from the Tabulation Area back to the directors before departure. To assist the host as needed throughout the MPA. |
| Adjudicator Hospitality | To provide beverages throughout the event along with lunch. Colleagues and parent volunteers often assist. |

SECTION 2: FACILITY NEEDS

Prospective first-time hosts often have facility-related concerns. Contact the MPA Coordinator with questions rather than permit concerns to deter hosting. An overview of facility needs follows.

A. CHECK-IN

- Place a check-in table at the designated ensemble entrance staffed by another music teacher, students, or parent volunteers
- Confirm with the director where buses are to park

- Collect the three envelopes containing music for the three Prepared Pieces and take them to the host to distribute to the adjudicators
- Inform the director where the students are to go first, usually the *Holding Area*

B. HOLDING AREA

- Provide a secure space for coats and personal belongings
- Do not permit students to sing or play any accompanying instruments in this space
- Ensembles are permitted to watch other performances if time permits instead of waiting in the Holding Area until their warm-up time

C. WARM-UP AREA

- Provide a warm-up area with a recently tuned piano and ample chairs, usually the chorus room.

D. AUDITORIUM STAGE

- Set choral risers with enough units to accommodate the largest participating ensemble. Hosts are permitted to use platform risers, if necessary, but must inform participating directors in advance that platform risers will be used.
- Provide a piano that has been recently tuned.
- Provide a conductor's podium for directors who choose to use one
- Ensembles are responsible to provide their own additional instruments used for accompaniment, such as percussion, electronics, or other instruments, and are responsible for moving them throughout the MPA. Directors may contact the host about possibly providing these items.
- Provide a 'stage crew' of students or parent volunteers to assist throughout the MPA
- Provide a microphone for the announcer
- Provide a table and chair for the school personnel or vendor who will be recording the performances
- Post the schedule and signs on all auditorium doors, including 'Enter Only Between Performances'
- Make arrangements that PA announcements and change of class bells don't interrupt performances if possible

E. ANNOUNCER

- Secure another music teacher, a parent volunteer, or student(s) to announce each ensemble. Hosts can serve in this role if needed.
- Prepare a script for the announcer to introduce each ensemble that includes the name of the school, ensemble, director, adjudicators and where each adjudicator teaches/taught, and the titles and composers (and arrangers) of the three Prepared Pieces. Include phonetic spellings as appropriate.

F. ADJUDICATOR NEEDS

- Provide each of the three adjudicators in the hall with the following items:
 - A desk or table with ample workspace along with a comfortable chair
 - A lamp to supplement the hall lighting if needed
 - The final schedule
 - An Assessment Form for each ensemble. Hosts are urged to type in the headings for one set, then to print and copy sets for the other two hall adjudicators.
 - Extra sharpened pencils
 - A copy of the Ensemble Profile document provided in advance by the PMEA MPA Coordinator

G. TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS FOR ADJUDICATOR RECORDINGS

- Hosts have utilized a variety of technology in recent years for their adjudicators to provide audio commentary for each ensemble, including the following options:
 - Ask the adjudicators to use a recording app on their own phone or tablet, then to email the audio files to the host to compile and distribute. Hosts choosing this option must confirm these plans with each adjudicator in advance to ensure that each has and is comfortable using an appropriate app and brings a phone charger.
 - Use a set of six digital recorders or three iPads/tablets with an appropriate app that are owned by the host's school. Provide instructions so that each adjudicator is comfortable using that recorder or device.
- Hosts often compile and post the audio recordings themselves after the MPA

H. TABULATION AREA

- Choose a space convenient to the auditorium for the host or a designee, often another music teacher or a parent volunteer, to compile the assessment results and gather materials to return to the directors. Students are not permitted to serve in this role given the professional confidentiality required.
- Ensure that the tabulator(s) know how to compile the audio recordings as received from the adjudicators if the host is not performing this task.
- Provide student runners to collect the completed Assessment Forms and choral music from the adjudicators to take to the *Tabulation Area*.
- If digital recorders are being used with adjudicators alternating between recorders while the files are being downloaded from the other recorder, ensure that the runners know to pick up and deliver the 'A' and 'B' recorders to adjudicators in a timely manner so that no adjudicator is left without a device when an ensemble is starting its performance
- Hosts can also choose to wait until the lunch break or the end of the MPA to collect devices to download, label, sort and post the audio files.

SECTION 3: AFTER THE MPA

A. SUBMIT TWO SEPARATE HOST REPORTS WITHIN ONE WEEK OF THE MPA

Keep a copy of all forms and documents submitted for one year as a back-up in case any are needed again by PMEA.

1. MPA HOST EXPENSE REPORT

- Mail the [PMEA MPA Deposit Form](#) listing all Registration Fee checks along with the checks themselves to PMEA at **56 South Third Street, Hamburg, PA 19526-1828**.

- Complete and submit the online [MPA Host Expense Report Form](#) for processing by the PMEA Office. Upload scanned receipts, invoices and W-9 forms submitted by adjudicators and vendors. PMEA will process and mail all payments and reimbursements involved within two weeks of receiving the Host Expense Report.

2. MPA HOST ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM

- Complete and submit the online [Host Assessment Report Form](#) for processing by the MPA Coordinator. Include uploading the following documents:
 - [Choral MPA Rating Summary Form – All Ensembles](#)
List each ensemble in alphabetical order by school, either typed into the form or handwritten on a paper copy before scanning.
 - A copy of the *Chorus Music Performance Assessment Form* from each adjudicator for each ensemble. Include both the front and back of each form. If the back of the form is blank with no written, that page does not need to be submitted.

B. HOST HONORARIUM

- Each host of a large ensemble/BOC or Solo & Small Ensemble MPA will receive an honorarium check for **\$175** from PMEA issued payable to the host's choice of the school's activity account, parent booster group, or college/university music department. In lieu of receiving an honorarium check, hosts may choose to apply the \$175 to registration fees, paying any difference owed or receiving a check for any balance remaining. Honorarium checks will be issued by the PMEA Office within two weeks of receiving the Host Expense Report.

C. HOSTS AS MEMBERS OF THE PMEA MPA COMMITTEE

- The annual meeting of the *PMEA Music Performance Assessment Committee* is held at the PMEA In-Service Conference. Hosts are automatically members and are encouraged to attend and contribute informed perspectives throughout the meeting's agenda.
- While the meeting is informal, this forum includes reflecting on the current season along with discussing possible 'next steps'. This meeting has been an invaluable opportunity to consider options and exchange ideas within dialogue not possible within individual communications.

D. FOLLOW-UP

- Email directors and adjudicators to express appreciation for their participation and to seek feedback concerning what worked well and what might need attention before hosting in the future.
- Thank the colleagues, parent volunteers, and students who assisted for their efforts and seek their feedback as well.

To prospective Hosts---I hope that this *Guide* provides the information needed to successfully host a *Choral MPA* sponsored by the PMEA Music Performance Assessment program.

To experienced Hosts---I hope that this *Guide* serves as a helpful reference to refresh memories and answer questions about any aspect of hosting a *PMEA MPA*.

Contact the MPA Coordinator with any questions.