

Marine Protected Areas

Marine protected areas, or MPAs, are a key strategy for sustaining and restoring ocean ecosystems. Like a national park in the sea, MPAs ban or strictly limit fishing and other damaging activities

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines MPAs as “clearly defined geographical spaces, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”

Only about 8% of the world's ocean is protected

363 million km² approximate size of the world's ocean

There are more than 16,000 MPAs around the world

29 million km² total size of the world's marine protected areas

Having MPAs leads to...

- ✓ more fish
- ✓ bigger fish
- ✓ greater diversity of species
- ✓ increased carbon storage
- ✓ respect for cultural traditions and practices
- ✓ opportunities to study and learn
- ✓ healthier fisheries for jobs and food security
- ✓ tourism that supports economies
- ✓ recreation
- ✓ preserving the beauty of the ecosystem

Marine Protected Areas mean:

1) Marine life recovers — Fish abundance increases on average 600 per cent in marine reserves after full protection (which means no fishing allowed) within a decade.

2) Better fishing — Fish spill over the reserve boundaries and help to replenish adjacent fishing grounds. For example, in California, local fishers are catching 225 per cent more lobsters after protecting 35 per cent of their fishing grounds — after only six years.

3) Diving tourism — When the fish come back, divers come in. In the case of the Medes Islands, diving tourism employs hundreds of people and brings in 10 million euros per year — 20 times more than fishing.

4) Mitigate global warming — The ocean absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. By creating MPAs, we are creating healthy, sustainable environments in the ocean that can continue to absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere.

5) Global benefits — Where there are direct benefits to protection, there are also global benefits like oxygen production, since all of life is connected to our ocean.