



# Marine Protected Areas

## What is a Marine Protected Area?

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) support conservation. They are defined geographical areas of water that have some level of protection for the species and ecosystems within them. There is a wide spectrum of variability around the differing levels of protection, from total closure to a range of permitted uses.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) system of classification is well-recognised internationally, and defines management categories that classify MPAs according to their objectives. The categories are recognised by international bodies such as the United Nations and by many national governments as the global standard for defining and recording protected areas and as such are increasingly being incorporated into government legislation.

The IUCN system has six defined categories with varying types of management. For example, a category 1 MPA would rule out any fishing activities and be a fully no-take zone, whilst a category 6 MPA would be an area protected to conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with natural resource management systems, and therefore may permit carefully and sustainably-managed fishing.

## Why do we need MPAs?

Covering over three-quarters of the Earth's surface, oceans play a crucial role in regulating the global climate and are home to some of the most biologically-diverse habitats and species.

However, we live on a rapidly changing planet. Human activities are having a major impact on the oceans, which could affect millions of people across the world.

With such pressing concerns, it is more crucial than ever that we protect and sustainably manage the marine environment. MPAs are one of the tools that can help us to protect the marine environment, whilst also enabling its sustainable use, ensuring it remains healthy and contributes to our society for generations to come.

## How are MPAs created and how do they work?

Individual governments can designate MPAs within their national waters. Outside national waters, i.e. in international waters, there is no single agreed global framework, but organisations such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) can agree to designate MPAs under internationally-agreed legal frameworks. CCAMLR operates on a consensus basis, and uses the best available scientific evidence to identify areas requiring additional protection.

In protecting any marine area, it is vital to consider the ecological, environmental and human context. In addition to any consideration of mere size, the timing and placement of protection is vital. Large protected areas may not necessarily confer greater protection than smaller, well-designed areas, particularly if they push human activities to other less-well protected areas.

## How many MPAs are there?

There are more than 15,000 MPAs globally, which vary hugely in size, location and management, from the Lundy Marine Reserve in the UK (3.3 km<sup>2</sup>) to the Ross Sea in Antarctica (1.55 million km<sup>2</sup>).

Currently around 8% of the world's oceans are protected by an MPA, although a smaller proportion is classified as fully protected, 'no-take' areas.

## What about MPAs in Antarctica?

CCAMLR has agreed a general framework for the designation of MPAs, and its members are working towards implementing a system of protected areas for the Southern Ocean. Smaller, coastal marine areas can also be designated as Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

- The UK proposed and led the introduction of the first MPA ever set up in the high seas on the South Orkney Southern Shelf, established by CCAMLR in 2009
- In 2016, all CCAMLR members agreed to a joint USA/New Zealand proposal to establish the Ross Sea region MPA; a 1.55 million km<sup>2</sup> area of the Ross Sea with special protection from human activities. This MPA limits, and in some places entirely prohibits, certain activities in order to meet specific conservation, habitat protection, ecosystem monitoring and fisheries management objectives.

Seventy-two percent of the MPA is a 'no-take' zone, which prohibits all fishing, while other sections permit some harvesting of fish and krill for scientific research.

There is a proposal for an East Antarctic MPA being led by France, Australia and the EU, strongly backed by the UK, which will be discussed at the November 2018 meeting of CCAMLR in Hobart

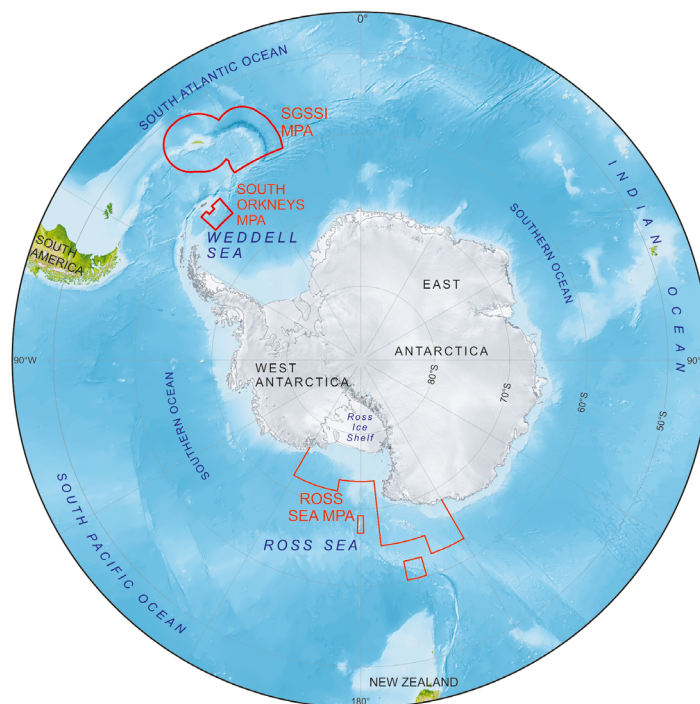
- A proposal for an MPA in the Weddell Sea led by Germany and the EU, again strongly supported by the UK Government, will also be put on the table at CCAMLR
- Additional work to develop an MPA proposal for the western Antarctic Peninsula region is also underway, led by Argentina and Chile, with support from the UK, US and others
- MPAs have also been established under national jurisdiction around several sub-Antarctic Islands including South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI). The SGSSI sustainable use MPA (established by the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands in 2012) provides very high levels of protection within the 1.24 million km<sup>2</sup> of the MPA, achieved through a variety of measures including careful placement of full no-take zones and temporal/spatial fisheries management measures

## Does BAS play a role in the creation and maintenance of MPAs?

Understanding Antarctic marine ecosystems by exploring biodiversity and resilience to environmental change is critical for making policy decisions that will lead to effective stewardship and sustainable management of marine resources.

For more than 30 years the British Antarctic Survey's pioneering conservation biology research has provided critical expertise and evidence to support the UK Government's leadership role in influencing national and international policies and agreements to protect and conserve marine and terrestrial ecosystems in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic, as well as to sustainably manage Southern Ocean fisheries.

BAS also applies its expertise in other locations. This includes providing scientific evidence to underpin the designation and management of MPAs by communities at Ascension Island, St Helena and Tristan da Cunha.



*A map of the current Marine Protected Areas around Antarctica*

