

A National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA)

Australia's governments are working together to set up a National System of Marine Protected Areas throughout our entire marine jurisdiction. Marine protected areas can be declared under Commonwealth, State or Northern Territory legislation in seas within each government's jurisdiction.

Unless otherwise determined by legislation the State and Northern Territory governments have primary responsibility for marine environments up to three nautical miles out from the territorial sea baseline. Along most of our coastline, the territorial sea baseline is the low water mark, but in some areas is up to 60 nautical miles offshore.

In general, the Commonwealth Government manages our oceans from the State or Territory limit to the edge of our marine jurisdiction some 200 nautical miles out to sea with the exception of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park which extends seaward from the low water mark.

Objectives of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas

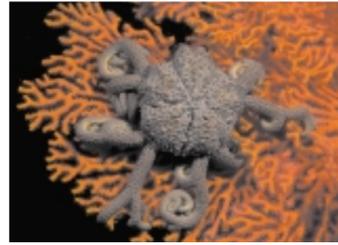
The main goal of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas is to build a system of marine protected areas that will be:

- > **Comprehensive** – include marine protected areas that sample the full range of Australia's ecosystems,
- > **Adequate** – include marine protected areas of appropriate size and configuration to ensure the conservation of marine biodiversity and integrity of ecological processes, and
- > **Representative** – include marine protected areas that reflect the marine life and habitats of the area they are chosen to represent.

The aim of this system is to contribute to the long term ecological viability of marine and estuarine systems, to maintain ecological processes and systems, and to protect Australia's biological diversity at all levels. The NRSMPA exists within a broader range of national and State and Territory mechanisms to achieve biodiversity conservation and the complementary sustainable management of Australia's marine jurisdiction.

Some of the secondary goals include:

- > development of marine protected areas within a framework of integrated ecosystem management
- > provide a management framework for the broad range of human activities in marine protected areas
- > provide scientific reference sites
- > provide for needs of threatened species or ecological communities and migratory and vulnerable species
- > protect areas of high conservation value
- > provide for the recreational, aesthetic and cultural needs of indigenous and non-indigenous people.



Gorgonian Coral (*Mopsella zimmen*), Victoria, William Boyle

How far have we come in establishing the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas?

In 1992 the Taskforce on Marine Protected Areas was established to provide a mechanism for States, the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth and relevant scientific organizations to collaborate on development of a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas.

The development of planning tools, nationally agreed policies and an acceleration of the declaration of marine protected areas have made a significant contribution to the establishment of a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas.

Challenges

Considerable progress has been made but there is still much to be done. There are a number of challenges that are being actively pursued. These include:

- > increasing community and stakeholder engagement, awareness, support and partnerships in the development of the NRSMPA.
- > better coordination between marine protected area development, fisheries management and other natural resource management initiatives in the marine environment.
- > progressing a better understanding what adequacy means in the marine environment.
- > developing a national marine protected area framework to assess and report on the effectiveness of the NRSMPA.

Australia's Marine Jurisdiction



Policy Framework

- > Guidelines for establishing the NRSMPA*
- > Strategic Plan of Action for the NRSMPA*

Mapping of the marine environment

- > Integrated marine and coastal regionalisation of Australia*
- > Research, mapping and classification of Australia's marine environments

National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas

Acceleration of Marine Protected Area declarations

- > more than 78 new marine protected areas declared in the last 10 years*

Increasing community awareness and engagement

* Available at <http://www.ea.gov.au/coasts/mpa/nrsmpa/index.html#document>



For further information on Marine Protected Areas:

Environment Australia

Tel 1800 803 772 <http://www.ea.gov.au>

Australian Antarctic Division

Tel 03 6232 3101 <http://www.aad.gov.au/>

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Tel 1800 990 177 <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/>

NSW Marine Parks Authority

Tel 02 9228 4918 <http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au>

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Tel 02 9585 6444 <http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/>

NSW Fisheries

Tel 1300 550 474 <http://www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au/>

Department of Sustainability and Environment

Tel 136 186 <http://www.nre.vic.gov.au>

Department of Infrastructure Planning & Environment

Tel 08 8999 4555 www.ipe.nt.gov.au

Department of Industry & Resource Development – Fisheries Group

Tel 08 8999 2144
<http://www.nt.gov.au/dbird/dpif/fisheries/index.shtml>

Department for Environment and Heritage

Tel 08 81244900 www.environment.sa.gov.au

Primary Industries and Resources SA

Tel 08 8226 2922 www.pir.sa.gov.au

Department of Conservation and Land Management

Tel 08 9336 0100 <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au>

Department of Fisheries

Tel 08 9482 7333 <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au>

Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Tel 1300 368 550 <http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au>

Department of Primary Industries Queensland Fisheries Service

Call Centre 07 3404 6999 <http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au>

Environmental Protection Agency

Tel 07 3227 8185 <http://www.epa.qld.gov.au>



Australia's Marine Protected Areas

Protecting our coasts and oceans



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia
A Commonwealth Government Initiative



Australia's vast coastal waters and oceans contain some of the greatest arrays of marine biodiversity on Earth.

From the spectacular coral reefs and mangroves of the tropical north to the kelp forests of the temperate south, Australia's marine environments contain more than 4,000 fish species and tens of thousands of species of invertebrates, plants and micro-organisms. It is likely 80 per cent of our southern marine species occur nowhere else in the world.

Australia is committed to the protection of marine biodiversity and has a global responsibility to protect, conserve and manage our extensive marine assets.

Cuttle fish, Solitary Islands, NSW, Ian Shaw



Penguins, Heard Island, Stu Fitch

Australia's Marine Jurisdiction

Australia is the world's largest island, with our coastline stretching for over 32,000 kilometres. Our marine jurisdiction is larger than the mainland and covers some 11 million square kilometres of ocean.

When compared with much of the world, Australia is fortunate to have extensive and beautiful coasts and oceans. However, our marine environments are under increasing pressure. More people are using the sea for food, income and recreation. Waste and run-off from the land, oil pollution, fishing pressures and beach and ocean litter are growing challenges, in some places contributing to the degradation and loss of marine habitats. Exotic marine pests and diseases are threatening ecosystems and valuable commercial and recreational activities.

Our challenge is to ensure Australia's unique coastal and ocean ecosystems are protected and managed while sustainable marine-based industries have the opportunity to thrive.



Anemone (*Anthothoe albocincta*), South Australia, V. Neverauskas



Storm clouds, Northern Territory, Alan Withers

What is a marine protected area?

A marine protected area is defined as an area of sea (which may include land, the seabed and subsoil under the sea) established by law for the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and cultural resources.

Across the country different names are used to describe marine protected areas, they include marine parks, marine reserves, marine conservation reserves and marine nature reserves among others.

Marine protected areas can include a huge variety of important environmental and cultural features such as reefs, seagrass beds, shipwrecks, archaeological sites, tidal lagoons, mudflats, salt marshes, mangroves, rock platforms, coastal waters, seamounts, trenches and deep water seabed.



Mangroves, Queensland EPA, Paul Candlin

Some of the benefits of marine protected areas

- > **Protecting marine life and habitats**
Setting aside significant areas that contain different types of plants, animals and estuarine and marine habitats means that we are contributing to the protection of the immense variety of life, or biodiversity, that helps make Australia's marine environment special.
- > **Supporting education and research**
By providing natural areas that are protected from most human impacts, many marine protected areas play an important role in scientific research when used as scientific reference sites. Educating students and the general public about marine ecology and marine conservation and management is a very important role played by marine protected areas.
- > **Managing compatible resource use**
While the primary goal of marine protected areas is the conservation of marine biodiversity, many other values and uses can be accommodated in marine protected areas where these are compatible with the objectives of the protected area.
- > **Promoting enjoyment**
The natural features found in marine protected areas make these popular areas for recreational and tourism activities such as snorkelling, scuba diving and recreational fishing. These activities can also benefit local and regional economies.



Red handfish, Tasmania, Jon Bryan

Cooperation and Partnerships

The management of our marine environments requires considerable cooperation between all levels of government, industry and the community, including indigenous communities.

Members of the public are encouraged to express their views and get involved during the planning of marine protected areas and in their ongoing management. Opportunities for involvement vary across the country. See the contact list on the back of this brochure to check out any marine protected area initiatives that are in your local area.



Diver amongst Pillar and Acropora corals © GBRMPA