



MPA FACT SHEET

What is a Marine Protected Area (MPA)?

- MPAs--national parks at sea--are “areas of the ocean set aside to achieve the long-term conservation of nature.” Source: [IUCN](#)
- MPAs are a key strategy for sustaining and restoring ocean ecosystems.
- MPAs directly address three of the major problems affecting humanity:
 - 1) the biodiversity crisis,
 - 2) food security for a growing population, and
 - 3) global warming.
- MPAs range from fully to minimally protected. The higher the level of protection, the stronger the conservation outcomes and benefits to people.

What can well-designed MPAs do?

- Preserve and restore ocean ecosystems and endangered species.
- Safeguard essential habitats, including nurseries and feeding and breeding grounds.
- Support coastal communities and economies, creating opportunities in recreation and tourism, research, and education.
- Help capture carbon and provide climate resilience to warming events and other natural disasters.
- Help local fishing by replenishing adjacent fishing grounds through spillover of larvae and adult fish.
- Boost the yield of fisheries nearby, increasing food security for those who depend on seafood for sustenance.
- Safeguard areas of cultural and historic significance, such as those of importance to Indigenous peoples, archeological sites, and shipwrecks.

How many MPAs are there now?

- There are currently more than 16,000 MPAs around the world
- Only about 8% of the ocean is protected in some way--a total of 29 million square kilometers, or the size of Canada and Russia combined
- But only 3% is highly or fully protected - an area smaller than the United States.
- More than 190 countries worldwide pledged to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 (30x30).

What are the economic benefits of MPAs?

- A recent study examined more than 50 protected areas in more than 30 countries in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania representing diverse ecosystems to find that, in all cases, MPAs boosted either fishing or tourism, with some profits in the billions.
- Another study found that fully protecting popular diving sites from fishing would generate \$2 billion in direct diving revenue in communities where the dive sites are located and another potential \$2 billion in user fees paid by divers to the entities managing the reserves.

How many MPAs do we need?

- To achieve the 30x30 goal, the world needs to establish approximately 190,000 small MPAs in coastal regions alone, and an additional 300 large MPAs in remote, offshore areas globally by the end of 2030.

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