

# MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND RECREATIONAL FISHING

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## ABOUT MPAS

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have long been used as a conservation tool in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Familiar examples of U.S. MPAs include national marine sanctuaries, national parks and wildlife refuges, many state parks and conservation areas, and a variety of fishery management closures. MPAs in the U.S. encompass many purposes, and most allow recreational uses, including fishing, throughout their boundaries. Fully protected or “no take” MPAs that prohibit all extractive uses account for only a tiny percentage of U.S. waters.

## KEY MPA FACTS:

- The U.S. currently has more than 1,600 MPAs
- Nearly all (86%) U.S. MPAs are multiple use; this accounts for 97% of MPA area
- “No take” MPAs (marine reserves) are typically quite small, and occupy less than 3% of all the MPA area in the U.S.
- “No take” MPAs occupy only about 1% of all U.S. waters

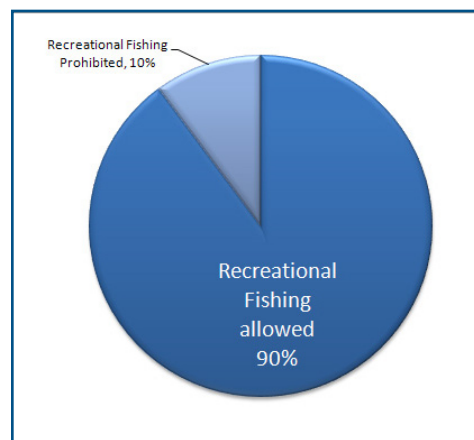
## HEALTHY OCEANS AND RECREATIONAL FISHING



MPAs are a valuable tool for sustaining our nation’s fisheries. They allow fisheries to thrive by protecting sensitive habitats, conserving spawning areas, and restricting harmful impacts. MPAs share conservation as a primary goal, but many were also established to encourage recreational uses. For example, under the National Marine Sanctuary Act, an area may be designated as a sanctuary if it is found to be of national significance, due in part to its recreational qualities and/or human-use values. Within the National Wildlife Refuge system, wildlife-dependent uses such as fishing and wildlife observation, are considered appropriate uses of the refuges, when compatible with their conservation goals. Many state MPAs are authorized by similar legislation that acknowledges the importance of recreational uses. Sanctuaries, refuges and other MPAs are

often cherished spots for recreational fishing and help support important related industries such as tourism and the manufacture of fishing equipment and boats.

## PERCENT OF MPA AREA ALLOWING RECREATIONAL FISHING



NOAA’s National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center’s mission is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation’s system of marine protected areas. The MPA Center works in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments and stakeholders to develop a science-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. These collaborative efforts will lead to a more efficient, effective use of MPAs now and in the future to conserve and sustain the nation’s vital marine resources.



**CASE STUDY: FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1990. The Sanctuary encompasses a rich marine environment and is an area of ecological, cultural and economic importance.

- Fishing is allowed in 98% of the Sanctuary, and is restricted only within specific zones.
- In a recent study, fishing was the top-rated outdoor recreation activity among residents of the Florida Keys/Monroe County.
- Over 400,000 visitors and residents of the Florida Keys engaged in over 2 million person-days of recreational sports fishing in the Florida Keys in 2007-08. They spent \$262 million in the Florida Keys/Monroe County. Roughly \$103 million of that spending was directly spent on fishing items, such as bait, fishing lines, charter fees etc.



Paige Gill - Florida Keys NMS

Visitors and residents of the Florida Keys enjoy fishing within the Sanctuary. Fishing activities contribute greatly to the local economy.

**“NO-TAKE” MPAs ALSO BENEFIT RECREATIONAL USERS**

Most MPAs are multiple use areas. Only a few are “no-take” areas and these are generally small and make up a tiny fraction of each region’s waters. Although “no-take” areas prohibit fishing, they may benefit fishermen near the closed area through “spillover” where adult and juvenile fish emigrate across the reserve borders.

**CASE STUDY: MERRITT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AT CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA**

Certain areas within the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge near Cape Canaveral, including the Banana Creek Reserve and the North Banana River Reserve, have been closed to fishing since 1963 to provide a security zone surrounding the NASA space center. This MPA illustrates some of the benefits that no take reserves can provide to fishermen, as the adjacent recreational fishery has flourished and is home to many world-record catches.

- A higher percentage of world record-size fish have been caught close to the reserves, including: 62% of record-breaking black drum, 54% of record-breaking red drum and 50% of record-breaking spotted sea trout.
- The trophy landings from this area are attributed to the strict no fishing protection afforded by the closed area.
- Fish tagging studies also show that these species move from the “no-take” areas into the surrounding waters.



Recreational fisheries adjacent to “no take” areas may benefit from higher productivity and habitat protection.

**A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

MPAs help sustain our nation’s fisheries, protect diverse habitats and ecosystems and conserve our marine cultural heritage. Most also provide access for recreational fishing, allowing for the use and enjoyment of these special places, and sustaining them for generations to come.

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