

# SNAPSHOT OF NOAA'S FISHERIES SERVICE MPAS

[www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov)

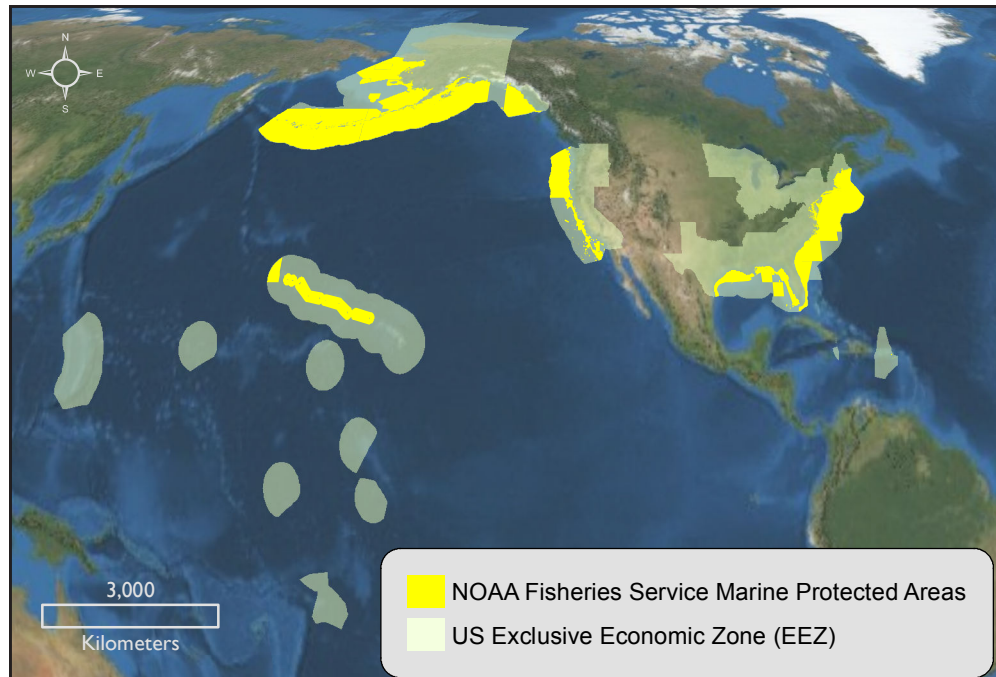
The information provided here is current as of August 2011, and is from the Marine Protected Areas Inventory (MPA Inventory) – a comprehensive geospatial database designed to catalog and classify marine protected areas within U.S. waters. The MPA Inventory was developed from information provided by state, territorial, tribal and federal MPA programs, and other publicly available data.

## WHAT IS A MARINE PROTECTED AREA?

Executive Order 13158 (see below) defines an MPA as “any area of the marine environment (including the Great Lakes) that has been reserved by federal, state, territorial, tribal, or local laws or regulations to provide lasting protection for part or all of the natural and cultural resources therein.” Key terms within the definition -- area, marine, reserved, lasting, and protection -- are defined in the Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America.

## BUILDING A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAS

Over the past century, MPAs have been created by a mix of federal, state, and local legislation and regulations, each established for its own specific purpose. As a result, the nation's collection of MPAs (reserves, refuges, preserves, sanctuaries and others) is fragmented and complex. In 2000, Presidential Executive Order 13158 directed the Department of Commerce to work with the Department of the Interior, other federal agencies, tribes, states, territories and stakeholders to establish a national system of MPAs to integrate and enhance the nation's MPAs, bringing these diverse sites and programs together to work on common conservation objectives. The national system is a subset of the nation's MPAs, and includes those that contribute to national conservation objectives and have nominated themselves to be part of this partnership. There are currently 297 MPAs in the national system. Of these, four are managed by the NOAA's Fisheries Service in cooperation with the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council.



## NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE MPAS AT A GLANCE:

- There are currently 177 NOAA Fisheries Service MPAs in the US
- NOAA Fisheries Service MPAs account for 87% of MPA area in US waters
- 35% of US waters are in NOAA Fisheries Service MPAs
- The majority of NOAA Fisheries Service MPAs are multiple use sites that permit a variety of uses
- “No take” MPAs occupy less than 1% of the NOAA Fisheries Service MPA area within the US
- NOAA Fisheries Service MPAs focus on sustainable production and natural heritage

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.



## SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION MPAS

The United States has a rich history of commercial and recreational fishing, with 528 individual stocks and stock complexes that are currently managed within 46 federal fishery management plans nationwide. The United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends from 3 to 200 nautical miles offshore, is the largest in the world, spanning over 13,000 miles of coastline and containing 3.4 million square nautical miles of ocean. NOAA's Fisheries Service has responsibility for managing fisheries in federal waters, in cooperation with regional fishery management councils. Councils develop fishery management plans and management measures for the fisheries within their region, and NOAA's Fisheries Service approves and implements these plans and measures. NOAA Fisheries Service MPAs focus on sustainable production, natural heritage, or a combination of both. By continuing to preserve, protect, and respect these resources, we can help preserve the nation's commercial and recreational fishing opportunities for current and future generations.

## NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE MPAS IN THE UNITED STATES



### REGIONAL EXAMPLES

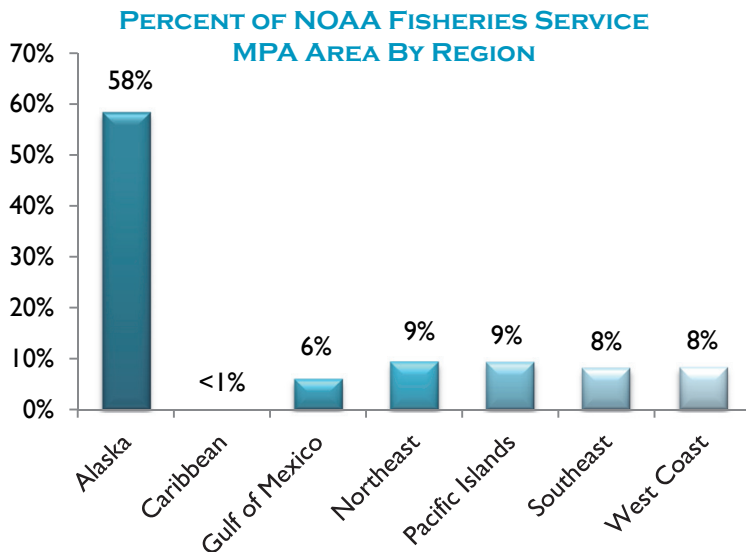
The following examples illustrate the diversity of MPAs managed by NOAA Fisheries Service and the Councils. Headers are organized by MPA Center region (where the Council region does not have the same name as the MPA Center region, it is noted in parentheses).

#### Cashes Ledge (Northeast/New England)

Three MPAs are located at Cashes Ledge, an undersea mountain range home to one of the world's deepest cold water seaweed communities. The kelp forest habitat is utilized by cod, pollock and humpback whales. These MPAs are examples of co-located sites that encompass conservation for both sustainable production and natural heritage, and prohibit bottom-tending mobile gear. One site is a habitat closure for sustainable production, another is a closure area for sustainable production specifically for the Multispecies (cod, haddock, yellowtail flounder, etc.) fishery management plan (FMP), and the third is a closure area for natural heritage.

#### Charleston Bump Closed Area (Southeast)

The Charleston Bump was closed in early 2001 to pelagic long line (PLL) gear (used to catch swordfish, billfish and other highly migratory species) in order to reduce bycatch to juveniles of these species. The Charleston Bump closed area is a seasonal closure from February through April every year. Since 2001, the swordfish stock has been nearly rebuilt and new bycatch reduction measures have been implemented throughout the PLL fishery (e.g., circle hook requirements, bait requirements, bycatch release gear, and careful handling and release workshops).



#### Oceanographer Canyon (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)

Oceanographer Canyon is one of four canyons in the Mid-Atlantic region managed by NOAA Fisheries Service in cooperation with the Mid-Atlantic Council. The four canyons are closed to bottom trawling under the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to protect 113,000 acres of deep-sea corals, sponges, and clay outcroppings. Tilefish are shelter-seeking, and create complex burrows in clay outcrops in underwater canyons. Their burrowing habitats can significantly alter the topography of the continental shelf off the East Coast of the U.S. These four canyons are the first federal fisheries sites to be members of the national system of MPAs.

#### West and East Flower Garden Banks Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) (Gulf of Mexico)

NOAA Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Council have designated 13 HAPC areas in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. These areas have been determined to be of particular importance to the long-term productivity of managed species, or to be particularly vulnerable to degradation. West and East Flower Garden Banks are coral HAPCs. In protecting these sensitive habitats we also protect the myriad species, such as snapper, grouper and reef fish, that use these areas during various stages of their life cycles.

**Sitka Pinnacles Marine Reserve (Alaska)**

The Sitka Pinnacles, located off Cape Edgecumbe in the Gulf of Alaska, has been closed to all bottom fishing and anchoring since 1999 to protect lingcod, rockfish, and corals. This action designated a 2.5 square nautical mile area of highly productive habitat. The pinnacles habitat is fragile, and the concentration of fishes in a compact area can lead to overfishing of certain species, particularly lingcod, at sensitive life stages. This site is cooperatively managed by NOAA Fisheries Service and the North Pacific Council, while the fisheries associated with the site are managed by NOAA Fisheries Service, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC).

**Hancock Seamount (Pacific Islands)**

Management measures for the Hancock Seamount were put into place to address the overfished condition of armorhead, a groundfish found in the Hawaii Archipelago. The moratorium on fishing these seamounts was implemented in 1986 and continues to this day. This closure contributes to the armorhead's rebuilding plan. It also prevents fishing on other groundfish and bottomfish found on these seamounts, and serves as a control site against which to compare fished seamounts.

**Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Areas (Caribbean)**

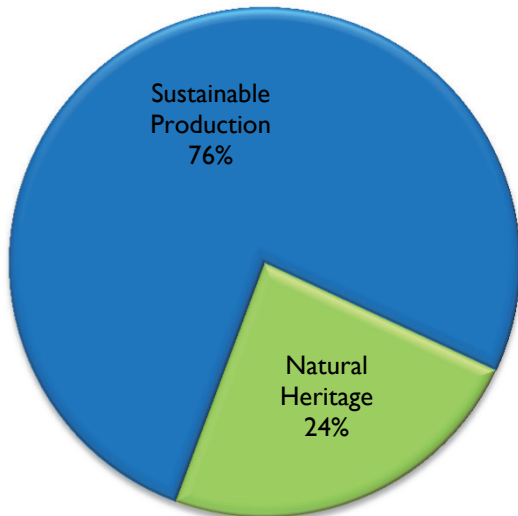
The Caribbean Council, in cooperation with NOAA Fisheries Service, has designated several spawning aggregation areas for the protection of red hind, a type of grouper common to coral reef habitats. Spawning aggregations are extremely vulnerable to overfishing as they are often targeted by fishermen. The sites prohibit fishing during the spawning season, and have been shown to increase average density, maximum spawning density, and biomass of spawning red hind. These protections may also be contributing to an overall increase in the size of red hind caught in the commercial fishery, which would increase the value of the grouper fishery.

**Salmon Troll Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA) (West Coast)**

West Coast groundfish fisheries and fisheries that may take groundfish incidentally, are managed with a variety of closed areas intended to either minimize the bycatch of overfished groundfish species, or to protect groundfish habitat. Many of the closed areas are gear-specific, meaning that they are closed to some particular gear types, but not others. The Salmon Troll YRCA, an area off the northern Washington coast, is closed to fishing with salmon troll gear to minimize bycatch of yelloweye rockfish.

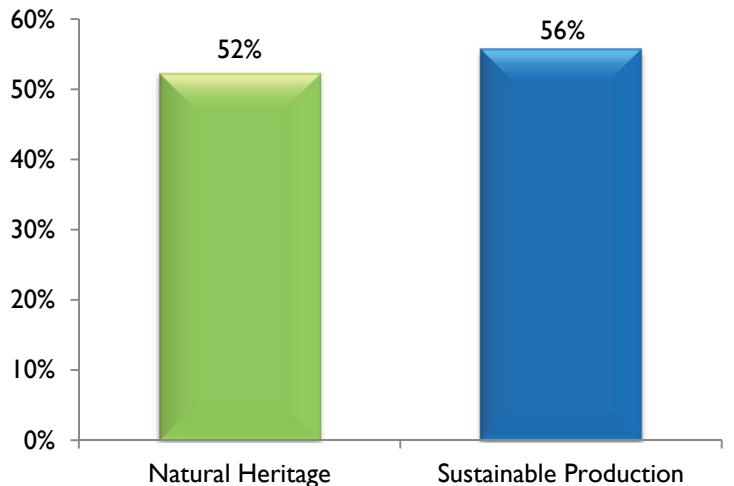
**NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE MPAs BY PRIMARY CONSERVATION FOCUS**

PERCENT OF MPAs BY PRIMARY CONSERVATION FOCUS



The majority (76%) of NOAA's Fishery Service MPAs have a primary conservation focus on conserving sustainable production. Approximately 24% of sites have a primary conservation focus on conserving natural heritage, and no sites are primarily focused on cultural heritage.

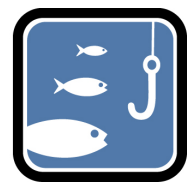
PERCENT OF AREA BY PRIMARY CONSERVATION FOCUS



NH = Natural Heritage



CH = Cultural Heritage



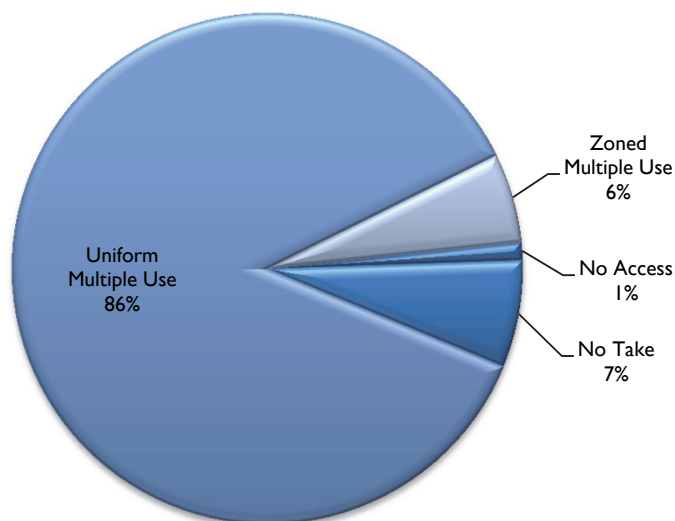
SP = Sustainable Production

**Why don't the "percent of area" bar graphs add up to 100%?**

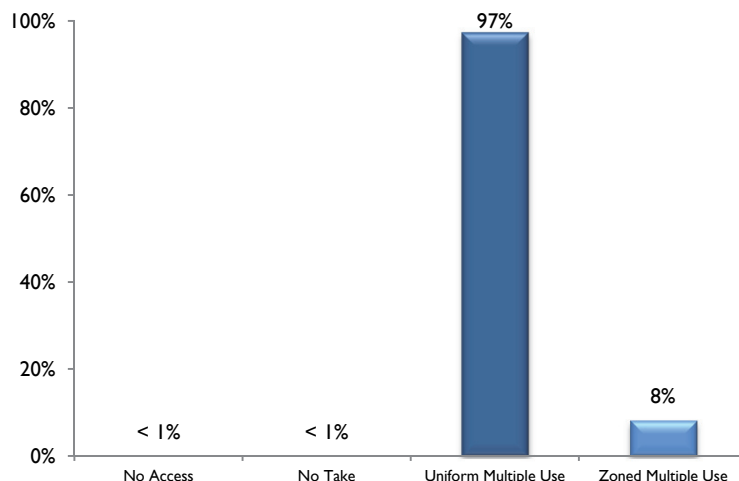
In some ocean areas where marine jurisdiction is shared across multiple governmental entities, some MPAs share common marine area and overlap each other. As a result, the total area of MPAs in US waters may be different from the area of MPAs based on their classifications.

## NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE MPAs BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

PERCENT OF MPAs BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

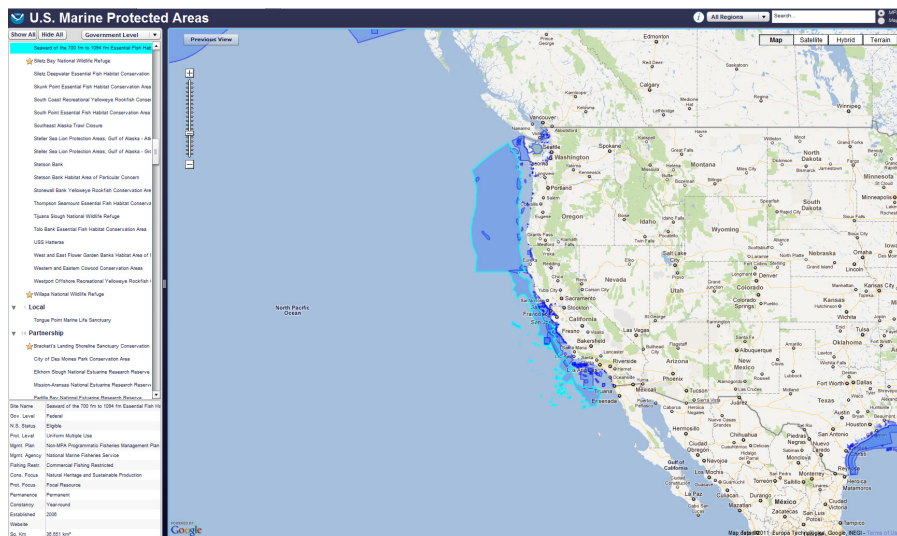


PERCENT OF AREA BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION



The majority (97%) of the total area of NOAA’s Fishery Service MPAs is multiple use that allow a variety of human activities, including fishing and other extractive uses. In contrast, less than 1% of the area is considered no-take, which prohibits the extraction or significant destruction of natural and cultural resources. Approximately 3% of U.S. waters overall are no-take.

## WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?



The National Marine Protected Areas Center launched a new interactive online mapping tool that, for the first time, allows users to view boundaries and access data for more than 1,600 marine protected areas (MPAs) in the United States.

The tool provides simple way for the public to explore MPA information that was previously limited to expert geographic information system users. The site has easy-to-use functions to visualize MPA boundaries, review MPA classification information (e.g., level of protection, managing agency, fishing restrictions), and explore all MPAs in a given location.

The MPA Center’s interactive MPA mapping tool, available at [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov), allows users to view boundaries and access data for more than 1,600 MPAs in the US, including all NOAA Fishery Service MPAs.

[www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov)

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