

Incredible marine habitats and ecosystems

New Zealand has a particularly rich and complex seascape, making it a world hotspot for marine biodiversity.

Over 15,000 marine species have already been found living in our territorial seas and EEZ, and it is estimated that a further 50,000 may also be found here. This represents perhaps 10% of the world's total marine species.

In addition, our isolation in the south-west Pacific means that in some marine groups there are many species that are unique to New Zealand alone.

A structured and focused approach to marine protection

The Government has reasserted its commitment to a structured and focused approach to protecting marine habitats and ecosystems.

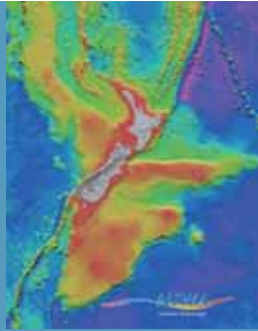
It wants to see an integrated network of Marine Protected Areas developed across our territorial seas and Exclusive Economic Zone. Like our land-based Protected Natural Areas network, this will 'bank' some of our biological wealth as an investment for future generations.

What about marine reserves?

Existing marine reserve applications before Ministers will continue through the statutory process already triggered. This includes applications for reserves at Akaroa, Great Barrier Island, Wellington South Coast, and the Sugar Loaf Islands.

However, proposals that have not yet reached the stage of a formal application will be folded into the new system. The Government intends that new proposals for marine reserves will be initiated through the new MPA planning process.

The government intends that at least one example of each habitat or ecosystem included in the MPA network will be protected by a marine reserve. Marine reserves will also be used to protect outstanding and rare sites.



New Zealand has a particularly rich and complex seascape, making it a world hotspot for marine biodiversity.



Photo: Slim Du Fresne, Otago University



Photo: Whangarei Harbour Care



Photo: NWA



Photo: Kim Westersky



Photo: T. and J. Endicott

Who manages what?

Many different groups have a stake in New Zealand's coastal and marine environment, and responsibilities for its management are shared between a range of central and local government agencies.

The Marine Protected Areas planning process integrates the roles and responsibilities of these agencies. Some significant agencies and their responsibilities include:

Department of Conservation

Responsible for managing protected areas and species, under the Marine Reserves, Wildlife, Conservation, and Marine Mammal Protection Acts. Together with regional councils, DOC also has a role in the management of the coastal marine area (excluding fishing and many significant fishing impacts) under the Resource Management Act.

Ministry of Fisheries

Responsible for managing fishing, its effects, and fisheries resources under the Fisheries Act, whose jurisdiction extends out to 200 nautical miles – the edge of our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Regional Councils

Responsible for managing some land use activities and water quality, and together with DOC also manage the coastal marine area, including aquaculture. All these responsibilities fall under the Resource Management Act, which covers our Territorial Sea area extending out to 12 nautical miles.

Biosecurity New Zealand (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)

Responsible for minimising the risks posed by vessels accidentally transporting exotic marine life into or around New Zealand waters. This is done under the Biosecurity Act.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Responsible for international agreements to maintain biodiversity in 'high seas' areas, outside of nations' EEZs.

Ministry for the Environment

Responsible for developing an Oceans Policy for New Zealand, to ensure integrated and consistent management of the oceans within New Zealand's jurisdiction. This is a cross-government exercise, covering all aspects of oceans management, out to the edge of the EEZ and the Continental Shelf beyond.



Marine Protected Areas A new approach to marine protection



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Visit the Biodiversity website (www.biodiversity.govt.nz) for more information on Marine Protected Areas. The full *Marine Protected Areas Policy and Implementation Plan* is downloadable from this site.



Foreword

New Zealand has a biologically rich and complex seascape. Our marine environment covers some 480 million hectares of ocean and our Exclusive Economic Zone is the fourth largest in the world. More than 15,000 marine species have been found in this sea. Because New Zealand is so isolated, a particularly high proportion of species are found only here.

The Government, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, is committed to maintaining and preserving the natural heritage of both our lands and waters, and is doing so through the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. An aim of the Strategy is that marine habitats and ecosystems will be maintained in a healthy functioning state, and degraded areas will be allowed to recover.

A full range of New Zealand's marine habitats and ecosystems will be protected. The Marine Protected Areas Policy and Implementation Plan (MPA Policy) will be a key means of achieving this, and is a project led by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Conservation.

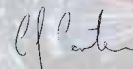
In the past, the approach to marine protection has been fragmented. The MPA Policy does much better. It provides an integrated process, including regional consultation, for establishing a network of marine protected areas around New Zealand.

This new process is designed to be inclusive and transparent. We want regional councils, marine users, tangata whenua, and those with an interest in marine biodiversity to all be involved. Implementation will be underpinned by a commitment to minimise the impact of new protected areas on existing users of the marine environment and Treaty settlement obligations.

Planning for marine protection will be science-based, using a consistent approach to habitat and ecosystem classification, and an inventory of marine protected areas to determine gaps in the network. This will drive priorities for protection. Consideration of threats would influence further priorities.

The resulting network will be comprehensive, by protecting both representative areas and areas that are outstanding and rare. A range of management tools will be used, including marine reserves, Fisheries Act tools, and tools under the Resource Management Act.

The aim is to have 10% of New Zealand's marine environment with some form of protection by 2010. These protected areas will provide an invaluable store of genetic diversity that will contribute to maintaining the health of the wider marine environment. They will also provide opportunities for recreation, marine tourism, scientific research and education, and will enhance New Zealand's environmental performance.



Hon Chris Carter
MINISTER OF CONSERVATION



Hon Jim Anderson
MINISTER OF FISHERIES



Hon. Jim Anderson
Minister of Fisheries



Hon. Chris Carter
Minister of Conservation

Front cover photos (from top):
Blue cod, close up of head,
South Westland, February
1996 (photo: Paddy Ryan);
Feather star on Black coral;
Sponge; Finger sponges and
seaweeds, near Arapuahi
Point, Kapiti Island Marine
Reserve, December 2000
(photo: Malcolm Francis).



Photo: Malcolm Francis

How will the MPA network be developed?

Planning and developing New Zealand's Marine Protected Areas network will involve a range of central and local government agencies and marine users, tangata whenua, and those with an interest in the marine environment. The resulting network will be comprehensive, by protecting both representative areas and areas that are outstanding or rare. A range of management tools will be used, including marine reserves, Fisheries Act tools, and tools under the Resource Management Act.

There are four key parts to this process:

1. Identifying areas based on science

The first involves classifying New Zealand's nearshore and offshore habitats and ecosystems. From this, we can identify the range of habitats and ecosystems that should be represented, as well as special places that are considered outstanding or rare.

Initially, New Zealand waters will be divided into broad 'Biogeographic Regions', each of which share a common range of habitats and environmental factors.

Within these, representative habitat types and ecosystems will be identified, as well as ones that are outstanding or rare.

An 'expert panel' of marine scientists has been convened to suggest how we do this.

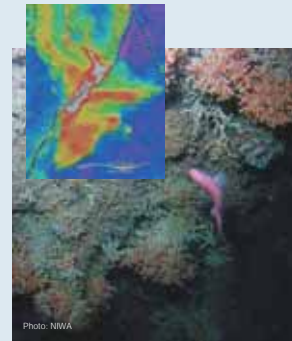
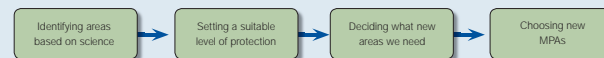


Photo: NIWA



Four main stages in developing an MPA network



Photo: Malcolm Francis

2. Setting a suitable level of protection

To qualify as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), sites must be under a level of protection that allows their habitats and ecosystems to remain at (or recover to) a healthy state.

Expert advice will be sought on how to define such a 'Protection Standard', which all sites in the network must meet. The standard must be approved by the Ministers of Conservation and Fisheries.

For some offshore MPAs, a suitable level of protection may just involve addressing effects like fishing and mineral exploration; but for some nearshore areas, land-based effects like unnatural levels of sedimentation and pollution may also need to be addressed. The level of protection needed will also take into account how well a habitat or ecosystem is able to recover from natural or human-induced impacts.

This means that while the Protection Standard will be the same for MPAs everywhere, the regulatory and legislative tools needed to achieve this will vary. Therefore, a range of government agencies will be involved in planning New Zealand's MPA network.

3. Deciding what new areas we need

The habitat and ecosystem types currently protected by marine reserves and other coastal and marine management tools will be compared against the MPA Protection Standard. If they meet it, those areas will become part of the MPA network. This list of MPAs will be compared against the range of habitats and ecosystems identified by the classification process, and the gaps in the network identified.

The government's priorities in filling these gaps will be to protect under-represented habitats and ecosystems, and outstanding, rare, distinctive, or nationally or internationally important habitats or ecosystems. Priorities will also be influenced by the threats posed to under-represented habitats or ecosystems.

It is envisaged that the rollout of MPA planning will largely be based around those Biogeographic Regions with the biggest 'gaps'.



Photo: Sean Cooper



Photo: Malcolm Francis



Photo: NIWA

4. Choosing new MPAs

The MPA network needs to be established in a way that minimises the impacts on existing users of the marine environment and on Treaty settlement obligations. This means involving marine users, tangata whenua, and communities in the process.

All planning for offshore MPAs will involve government agencies working with tangata whenua and stakeholders at a national level, while planning for nearshore MPAs will happen at a regional level.

Special planning groups will be convened for this purpose, and will include representatives of tangata whenua, relevant marine user groups, and environmental interests.

These groups will be given the range of habitat and ecosystem types to be protected in their region of interest, and asked to suggest MPA locations and management tools that reduce the impacts on existing users and Treaty obligations yet still meet the MPA Protection Standard.

The government wants at least one example of each habitat or ecosystem type to be protected by the highest level of protection possible – a marine reserve.

