

Marine protected areas in New Zealand: 40+ years of progress?

Introduction

The concept of establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) in New Zealand was initiated in 1965. Since then, interest in marine protection has grown, a number of MPAs have been established, and others proposed. The many MPA proposals that have been prepared represent a significant information resource. The challenge now is to ensure this information becomes accessible as we work towards developing a network of MPAs.

Details of MPA proposals

A literature review revealed 84 documents relating to establishing marine protected areas in New Zealand. These documents, dating from 1972, include:

- National MPA network planning strategies¹
- Proposals for individual marine reserves or marine protected areas²
- Discussion documents suggesting multiple areas considered as warranting protection³

The majority of the documents were MPA proposals and applications. Some documents simply identified areas while others provided detailed proposals, various size options and locations of boundaries. Many provided supporting information about the value of the proposed areas, including historical, cultural, socio-economic, biological and physical attributes of the sites.

In all, 349 MPA proposals were identified, about a third from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, another third from the Department of Conservation and the rest from groups and societies such as the French Pass Residents Association, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Guardians of Fiordland Fisheries & Marine Environment and the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen (see Fig. 1). The proposals are mostly clustered in the nearshore environment in the north and along the east coast of the New Zealand mainland. These MPA proposals are shown on the map.

Of the 349 MPA proposals, 52% proposed marine reserve status, 31% were for what could be considered medium protection such as marine parks with areas of no-take, and 2% proposed fishing restrictions such as bans on commercial fishing. For the remaining 15%, the type of protection suggested was not indicated (see Fig. 2).

A number of locations have been proposed several times. In total, there have been 226 separate locations proposed for marine protection, 33 of which are now marine reserves, and three are marine parks (Mimiwhangata Marine Park, Tawharanui Marine Park and Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands). These MPAs are shown on the map.

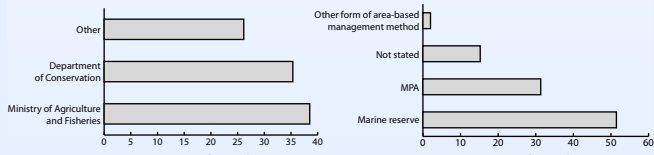


Figure 1: MPA Proposals by proposer (n = 349)

Figure 2: MPA Proposals by type (n = 349)

Protecting the information contained in MPA proposals and making it available

Under the new regional approach to MPA planning, local stakeholder forums will be established to make MPA recommendations based on best available information.

To assist this process, the existing MPA documents have been digitally scanned, proposed locations for MPAs georeferenced to their corresponding location along the New Zealand coast, and proposal details digitised in a GIS (Geographic Information System).

The spatial GIS layers and documents collated through this exercise, along with other regional mapping and information gathering currently underway, will be digitally provided to the local stakeholder forums as a tool to support planning for MPAs.

If you would like to find out more about this project, please contact Ann McCrone amccrone@doc.govt.nz

References

- 1 Department of Conservation and Ministry of Fisheries 2005: Marine protected areas policy: policy and implementation plan. Department of Conservation and Ministry of Fisheries, Wellington.
- Francis, M.P. 1984: Marine Reserves in New Zealand: History, current status and recommendations for future progress. Fisheries Research Division Internal Report No. 17. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Wellington.
- Handford, C. 1987: Towards an action plan for marine protected areas in New Zealand. In: Conserving the natural heritage of the Antarctic Region. Proceedings of the 29th Working Session of the IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, 15-21 August 1987.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 1985: A proposed national policy for marine reserves. Fisheries Management Division, Wellington, p. 6.
- Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation 2008: Marine protected areas: classification, protection standard and implementation guidelines. Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation, Wellington, 54 p.
- Walls, K., McAlpine, G. 1993: Developing a strategy for a network of marine reserves around New Zealand—a manager's perspective. Pp. 57-62 in: Battershill, C.N.; Schiel, D.R.; Jones, G.P.; Cresso, R.G.; MacDiarmid, A.B. (Eds): Proceedings of the Second International Temperate Reef Symposium. NWA Marine, Kibrima, Wellington.
- 2 Department of Conservation 1990: Kapiti Island marine reserve proposal: a public discussion document. Department of Conservation, Wellington, 17 p.
- Terney, L. (Comp.) 2002: Draft integrated management strategy for Fiordland's fisheries and marine environment. Guardians of Fiordland's Fisheries & Marine Environment Inc; Invercargill.
- 3 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 1985: Auckland Region marine reserves plan—a discussion paper. Fisheries Management Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Auckland, 64 p.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 1996: A discussion paper on marine protected areas: Southern Region. Fisheries Management Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 33 p.

