



MARINE PROTECTED AREA POLICY

In 2002 the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) formed a Marine Protected area (MPA) Working Group (WG) to assist the Council in evaluating MPAs as a fishery management tool. The WG has assisted the Council in creating this policy for developing, evaluating and monitoring Marine Protected Areas.

Definitions of MPAs

Two MPA definition are detailed on the NOAA MPA Center web site (<http://www.mpa.gov/mpadescriptive/whatis.html>). Perhaps the most relevant is contained in the MPA Executive Order issued in 2000 that stimulated Council considerations of MPAs and development of this policy statement. Executive order 13158 defines Marine Protected Areas as

“any area of the marine environment 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.”

The World Conservation Union definition refers to just two habitats for which it explicitly lists several features:

“any area of the intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment” (IUCN, 1988; Kelleher, 1999).

Under these broad definitions, a wide variety of sites in the central and western Pacific could be considered for creating MPA's.

The purpose of Executive Order 13158

“This Executive Order will help protect the significant natural and cultural resources within the marine environment for the benefit of present and future generations by strengthening and expanding the Nation's system of marine protected areas (MPAs). An expanded and strengthened comprehensive system of marine protected areas throughout the marine environment would enhance the conservation of our Nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and the ecologically and economically sustainable use of the marine environment for future generations.

To this end, the purpose of this order is to, consistent with domestic and international law:

- a. strengthen the management, protection, and conservation of existing marine protected areas and establish new or expanded MPAs;
- b. develop a scientifically based, comprehensive national system of MPAs representing diverse U.S. marine ecosystems, and the Nation's natural and cultural resources; and
- c. avoid causing harm to MPAs through federally conducted, approved, or funded activities.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council recognizes that:

- It is important to work cooperatively and collaboratively with all relevant agencies
- MPAs are a useful and effective tool for dealing with a number of fishery management issues;
- The size, nature and location of MPAs are important factors which may be viewed differently by user groups and other constituents.
- Fishery management needs under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of various MPAs may differ among fisheries and geographic areas; and
- No take marine reserves are a subset of MPAs.

Thus, the Council's policy is to:

- Play a key role in joint efforts to establish MPAs in waters under Council jurisdiction;
- While MPAs are being established and developed, ensure that their objectives are clarified;
- Establish criteria for creating and establishing MPAs;
- Promote funding for not only establishing, but also for monitoring and evaluation of MPAs;
- Promote funding for basic research into the functioning and identification of the various characteristics that make MPAs effective management tools;
- Communicate, collaborate and coordinate with relevant parties to integrate existing and proposed MPAs when appropriate to optimize habitat protection and ecosystem integrity;
- Consider adjacent coastal area and watershed habitat and land use practices in designing MPAs;

- Develop specific technical and operational guidelines for the creation and evaluation of MPA programs under the authority of FMPs, as appropriate and in consultation with the fishing industry, user groups, other constituents, relevant federal state agencies, territorial, commonwealth and other agencies;
- Where appropriate and desirable, promote the development, establishment, monitoring and evaluation of specific MPAs and networks of MPAs, to assist fishery management programs in the region provide for sustainable use and protect important habitat;
- When developing MPAs, work in consultation with appropriate parties, to draft comprehensive environmental, social and economic impact assessments;
- When promoting MPAs and defining the nature of regulations and restrictions, consider the requirements, privileges and rights and cultural needs of the region's native people (Carolinian, Chamorro, Hawaiian and Samoan), traditional fishing practices and customary marine tenure in the region;
- When promoting MPAs and defining the nature of regulations and restrictions, consult with and involve affected user groups from the beginning so that they participate in the design, development, and where appropriate, monitoring and evaluation of both specific MPA and networks of MPAs;
- Promote outreach programs to provide to stakeholders, and the general public, unbiased information about MPAs in the Councils jurisdiction;
- Facilitate the exchange of information among agencies on the development, monitoring and effectiveness of MPAs across island jurisdictions, where connectivity may be appropriate for a regional network of MPAs; and
- Determine whether each MPA is meeting its objective(s) by periodic review.