

# THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAS: SNAPSHOT OF UNITED STATES MPAS

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

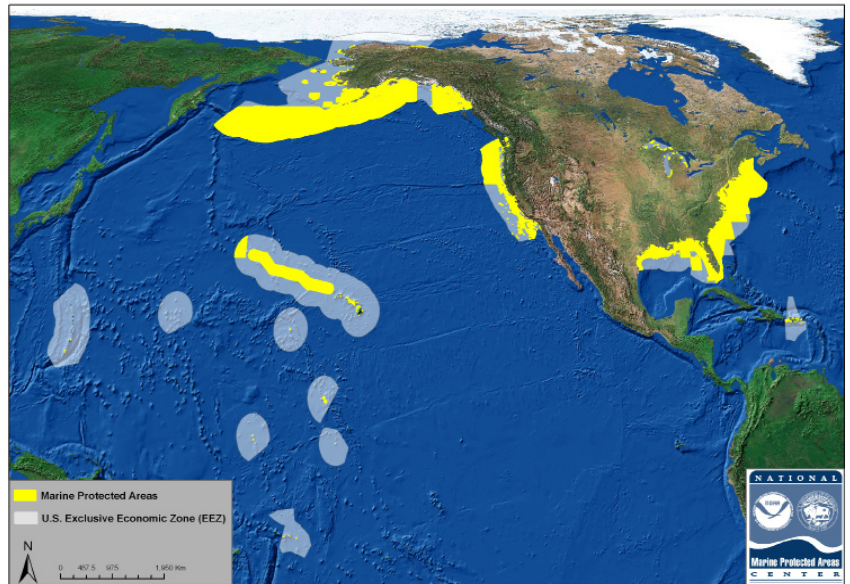
The information provided here is current as of October 2008, and is from the Marine Protected Areas Inventory (MPA Inventory) – a comprehensive geospatial database designed to catalog and classify marine protected areas within U.S. waters. The MPA Inventory was developed from information provided by 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 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*.

## PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER ON MPAS

In May 2000, Presidential Executive Order 13158 was signed to enhance the management, protection, and conservation of U.S. marine resources through more effective and collaborative uses of MPAs as an ecosystem management tool. It directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of the Interior to work with other federal agencies and states, territories, tribes, and the public to develop a scientifically-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. The national system of MPAs aims to conserve the nation’s natural and cultural marine heritage, and to sustain production of living marine resources. It provides a transparent process to enhance coordination among MPAs across all levels of government to achieve common conservation goals and objectives.

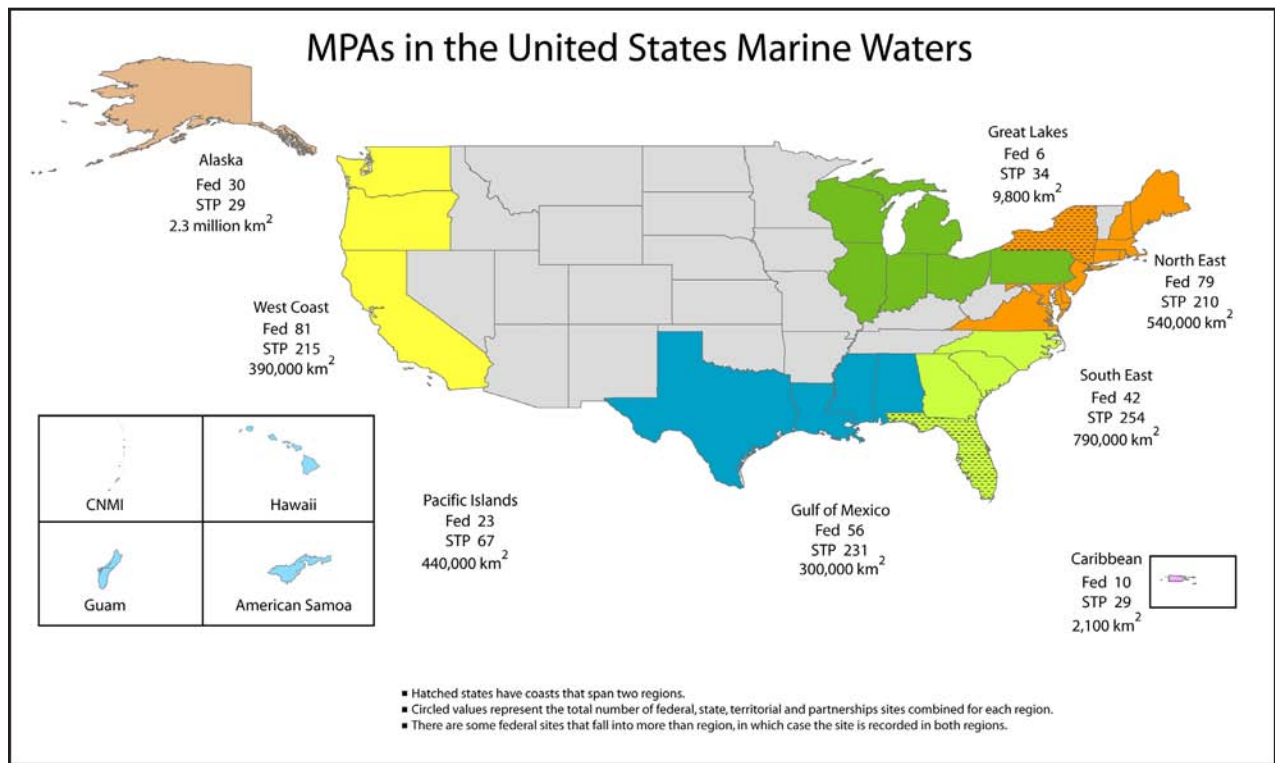


## UNITED STATES MPAS AT A GLANCE:

- The U.S. currently has nearly 1,700 MPAs
- About 1/3 of all U.S. waters are in some form of MPA
- Nearly all U.S. MPAs are multiple use
- “No take” MPAs occupy only about 1% of all U.S. waters
- Less than 3% of the area in MPAs in the U.S. is “no take”
- U.S. MPAs are designated and managed by over 100 federal, state, territorial and local laws and regulations
- State and territorial governments manage more than 65% of the nation’s MPAs
- Approximately 85% of U.S. MPA area is under federal jurisdiction

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.

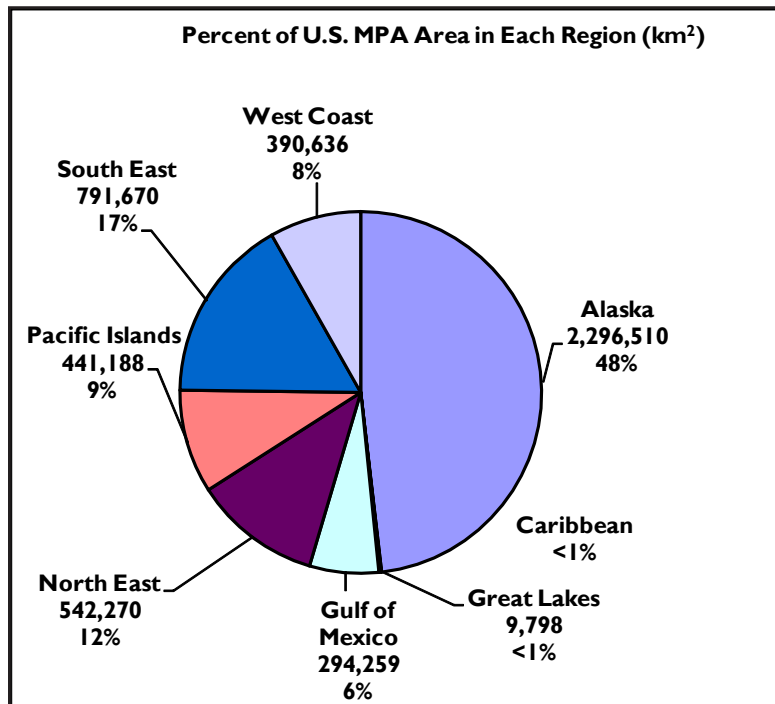




The map above illustrates MPA regional statistics, including the count of MPAs and total area of sites in each region. Site counts are separated into two categories: federal (fed), and state, territorial and partnership (STP). CNMI=Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

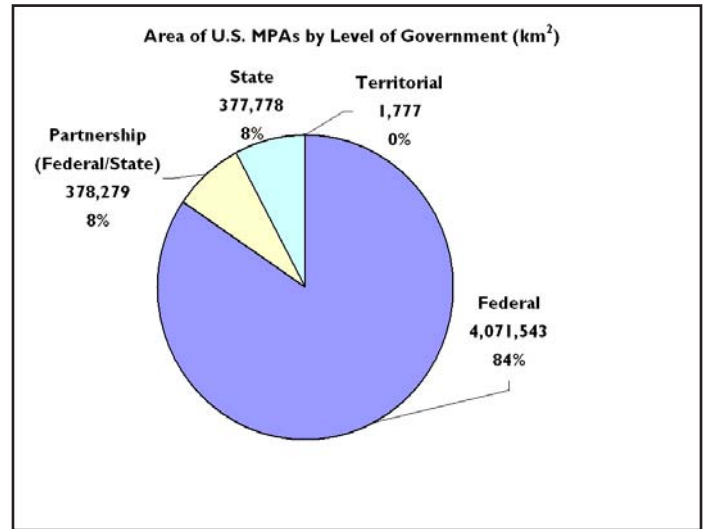
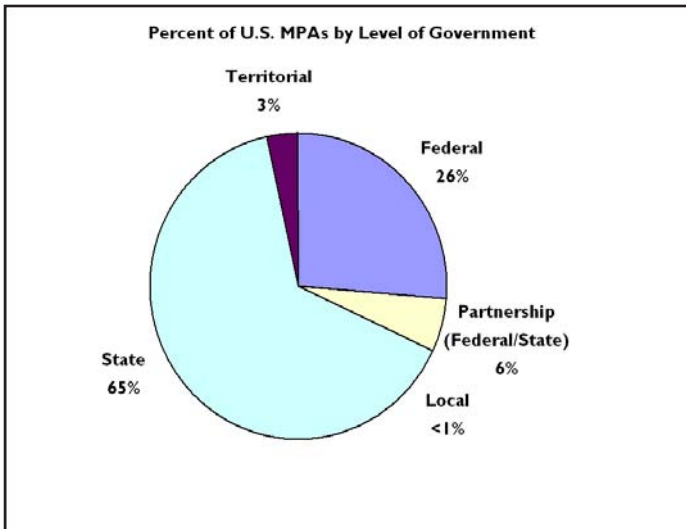
### MPAs AROUND THE NATION

Nearly 1,700 MPAs are currently in place in the U.S. These areas cover 34% of U.S. marine waters, and vary widely in purpose, legal authorities, managing agencies, management approaches, level of protection, and restrictions on human uses.



- The West Coast region has the highest number of MPAs
- The Alaska region has the largest area of MPAs
- The North East region has the highest percentage of regional waters (0-200 nautical miles) in some form of MPA
- The Pacific Islands region has the most area in no-take MPAs
- The highest percentage of cultural heritage MPAs are found in the Great Lakes region
- The highest percentage of natural heritage MPAs are found in the Gulf of Mexico region
- The Alaska region contains the highest percentage of sustainable production MPAs

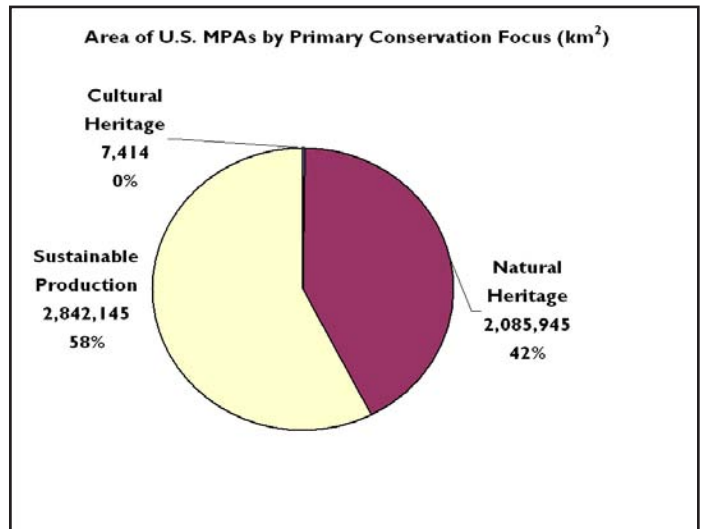
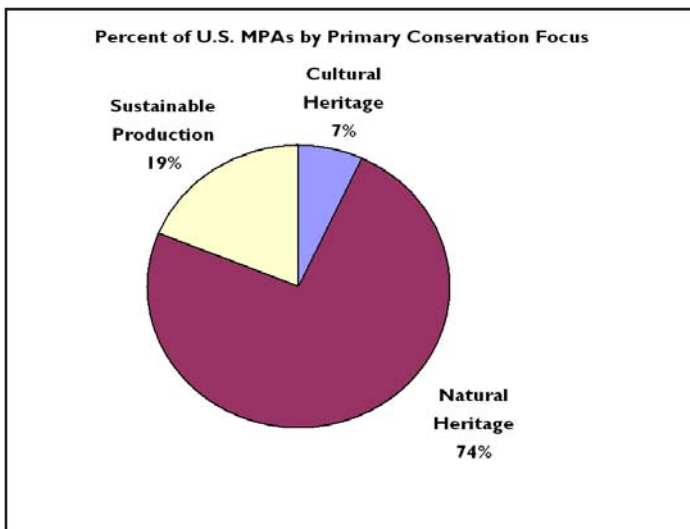
## MPAs BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT



Approximately 68% of the nation's MPAs are managed by coastal states and territories, while fewer than 30% are under federal jurisdiction. Many state MPAs were created to protect specific coastal habitats (e.g., beaches) and resources (e.g., nesting birds). Fewer than 1% of U.S. MPAs are managed by a local agency.

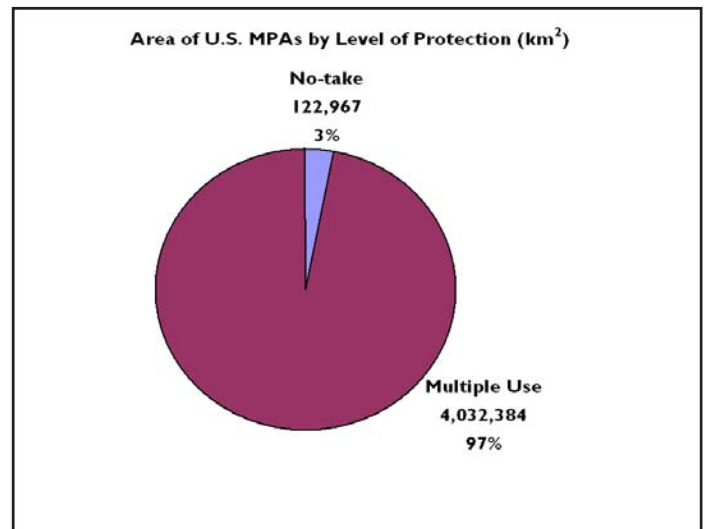
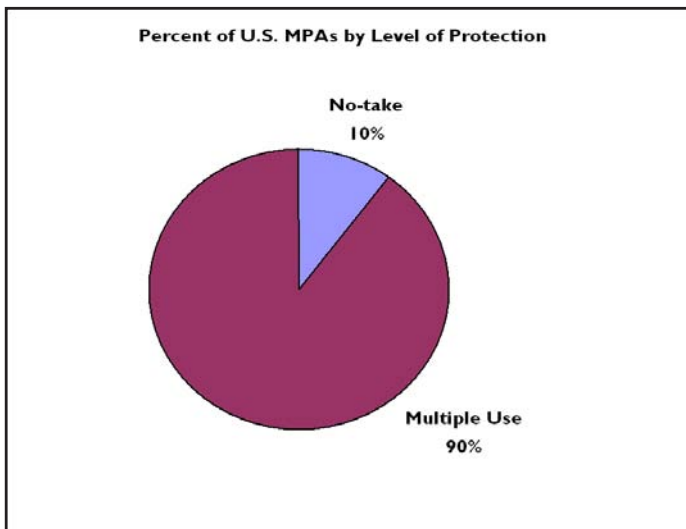
Although the majority of U.S. MPAs are not federally managed, several federal MPAs (e.g., Federal fishery closures) are very large and can span several states. For this reason, approximately 85% of the total MPA area in U.S. waters is under federal jurisdiction.

## MPAs BY PRIMARY CONSERVATION FOCUS



U.S. MPAs are used to conserve natural and cultural heritage, and/or to support sustainable production of our marine resources. Many MPAs have more than one conservation focus. Seventy four percent were created, at least in part, to conserve natural heritage values such as biodiversity, ecosystems, or protected species. Approximately 20% of U.S. MPAs focus primarily on sustainable production, and 7% focus primarily on conserving our nation's cultural heritage.

## MPAs BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION



Almost all (90%) of our nation’s MPAs are multiple-use sites in which a variety of human activities, including fishing and other extractive uses, are allowed. In contrast, only 10% of all U.S. MPAs are no-take areas that prohibit the extraction or significant destruction of natural or cultural resources.

The relative size of multiple-use and no-take MPAs shows even stronger contrast. In most states and regions, no-take MPAs cover only a small fraction of the area of multiple-use MPAs. Less than 3% of the area in MPAs in the U.S. is no-take. No-take MPAs occupy less than 1% of all U.S. waters.

## MPAs BY PERMANENCE OF PROTECTION

Nearly all U.S. MPAs (98%) provide permanent protection to the areas they encompass. Only a few require active reauthorization by the managing agency or other decision makers to persist.

## MPAs BY YEAR-ROUND CONSTANCY OF PROTECTION

Approximately 95% of U.S. MPAs provide year-round protection to the resources they encompass. In contrast, 5% are seasonal and were established to protect habitats, such as spawning or nesting sites, where environmentally sensitive areas or important ecological processes may be threatened by human activities during certain times of the year.

## ABOUT THE DATA

The information presented in this fact sheet is based on data from the National MPA Center’s MPA Inventory. **Statistics are current as of October 1, 2008** and are based on 1,175 sites in U.S. marine waters (0-200 nautical miles) with GIS data.

Some upstream and estuarine MPAs meet the definition of “marine” and thus are included in the national and regional number of MPAs. However, they are not included in statistics on MPA area because they are not located geographically within the area defined as “U.S. marine waters” (0-200 nautical miles) or Great Lakes. For more information, see [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov), or contact [Mimi.Diorio@noaa.gov](mailto:Mimi.Diorio@noaa.gov).

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