

SNAPSHOT OF UNITED STATES MPAS

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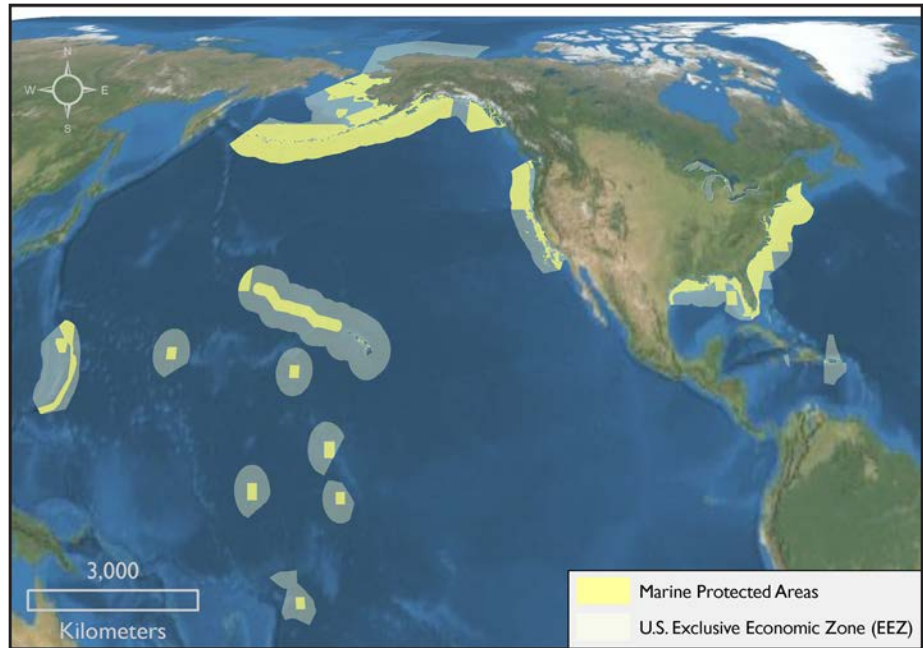
The information provided here is current as of April 2011, and is from the Marine Protected Areas Inventory (MPA Inventory) – a comprehensive geospatial database designed to catalog and classify marine protected areas within U.S. waters. The MPA Inventory was developed from information provided by state, 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 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 are defined in the *Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America*. This definition includes several large federal fishery management areas, which greatly expand the area in U.S. waters defined as MPAs.

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, areas of special biological significance, and others) is fragmented and complex, potentially missing opportunities for broader regional conservation through coordinated planning and management. In 2000, Presidential Executive Order 13158 directed the Department of Commerce to work with the Department of the Interior, other federal agencies, 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.



UNITED STATES MPAS AT A GLANCE:

- The U.S. currently has more than 1,600 MPAs
- About 40% of all U.S. waters are in some form of MPA
- Nearly all (86%) U.S. MPAs are multiple use
- “No take” MPAs occupy only about 3% of all U.S. waters
- Less than 8% of the area in MPAs in the U.S. is “no take”
- The majority of U.S. MPAs are located within the Virginian Atlantic marine ecoregion, which extends along Cape Hatteras northward to Cape Cod
- State and territorial governments manage approximately 75% of the nation’s MPAs, but most MPA area is managed by federal agencies

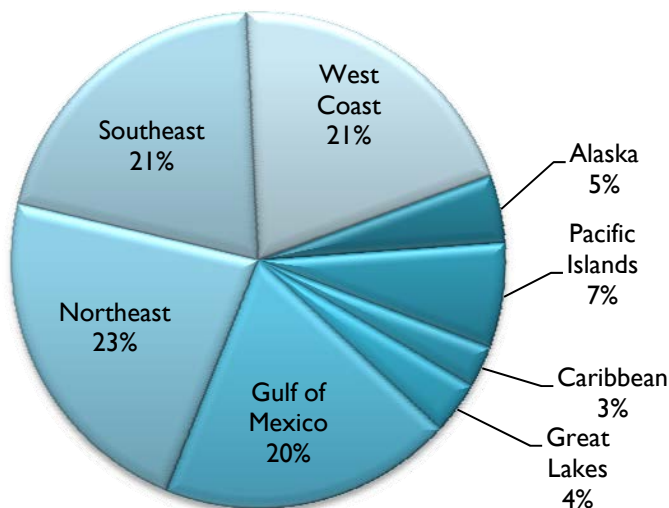
NOAA’s National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center’s mission is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation’s system of marine protected areas. The MPA Center works in partnership with federal, state, tribal, 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.



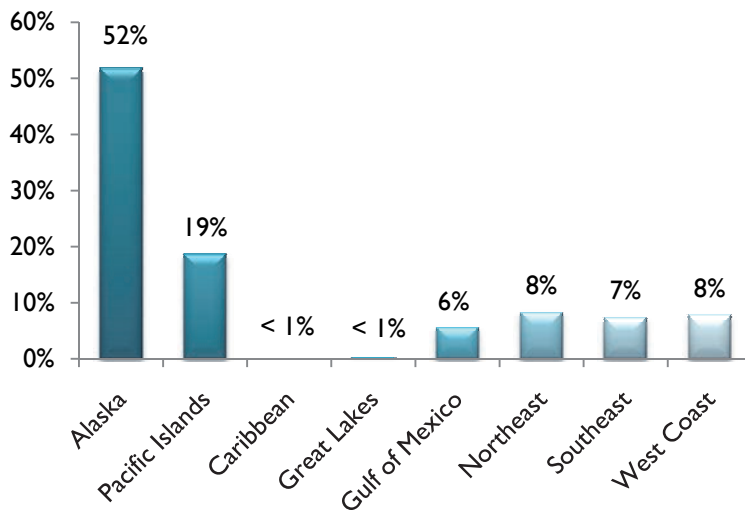
MPAs AROUND THE NATION

There are 1,681 MPAs in place in the U.S. These areas cover more than 40% of U.S. marine waters, and vary widely in purpose, legal authorities, managing agencies, management approaches, level of protection, and restrictions on human uses. Regionally, the Northeast region has the highest percentage of regional waters (0-200 nautical miles) in some form of MPA. The Alaska region has the largest MPA area while the Great Lakes and Caribbean regions combined have the least MPA area. Approximately 23% of U.S. MPAs are found in the Northeast region while 21% of U.S. MPAs are found in the Southeast region.

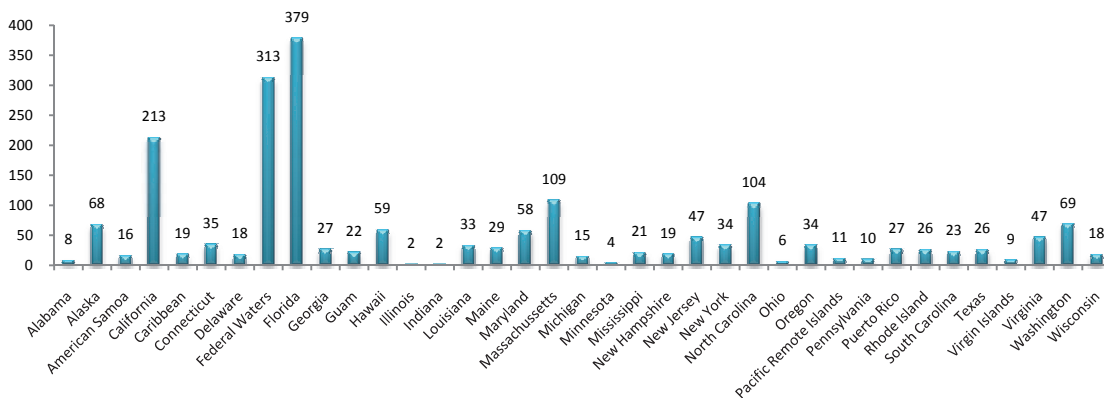
PERCENT OF SITES BY REGION



PERCENT OF AREA BY REGION

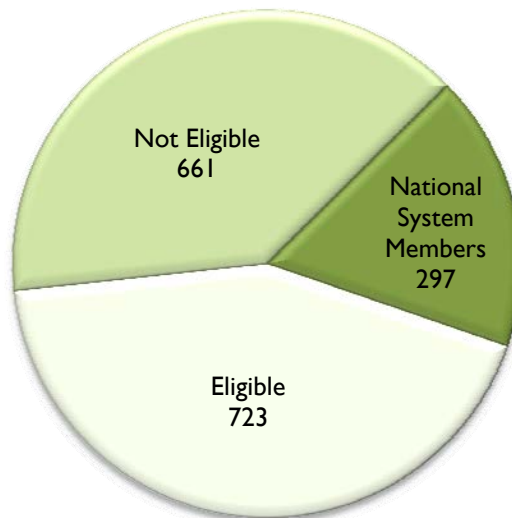


NUMBER OF MPAs BY STATE



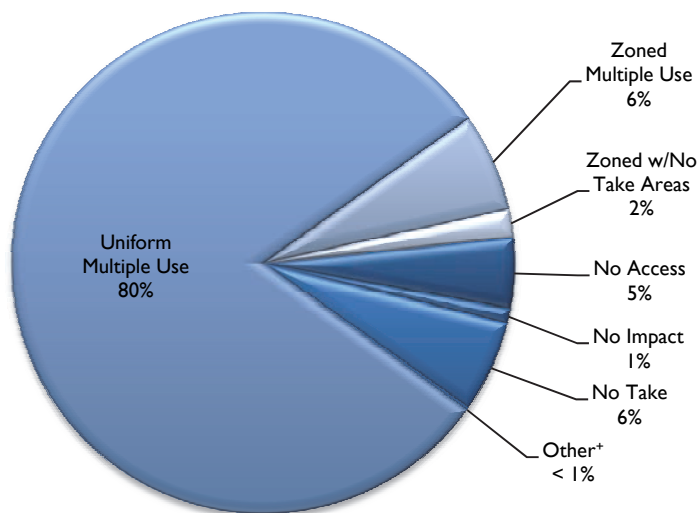
NATIONAL SYSTEM STATUS

The national system of MPAs is the group of MPA sites, networks and systems established and managed by all levels of government that collectively enhance conservation of the nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and represent its diverse ecosystems and resources. The national system does not bring state, territorial or local sites under federal authority, nor does it restrict or change the management of any MPA. There are currently 297 members of the national system (as of April 2011). An additional 723 sites are eligible for national system membership. To be eligible for the national system, a site must meet criteria set forth in the *Framework for the National System of MPAs of the United States*.

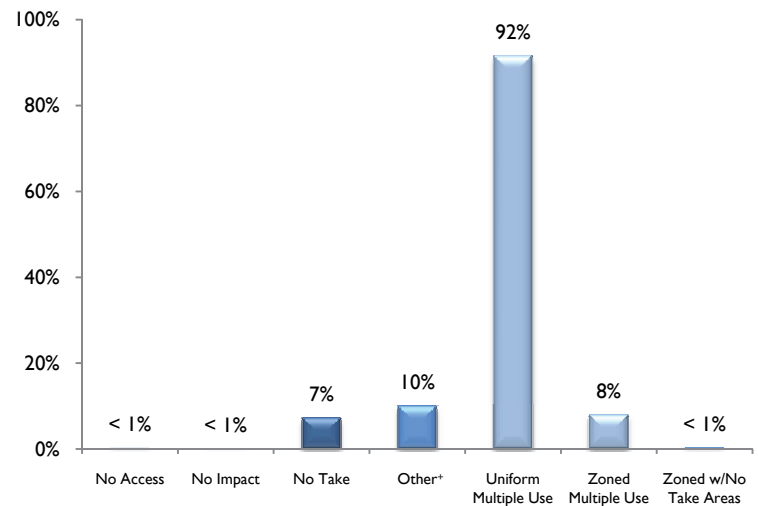


MPAs BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

PERCENT OF SITES BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION



PERCENT OF AREA BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

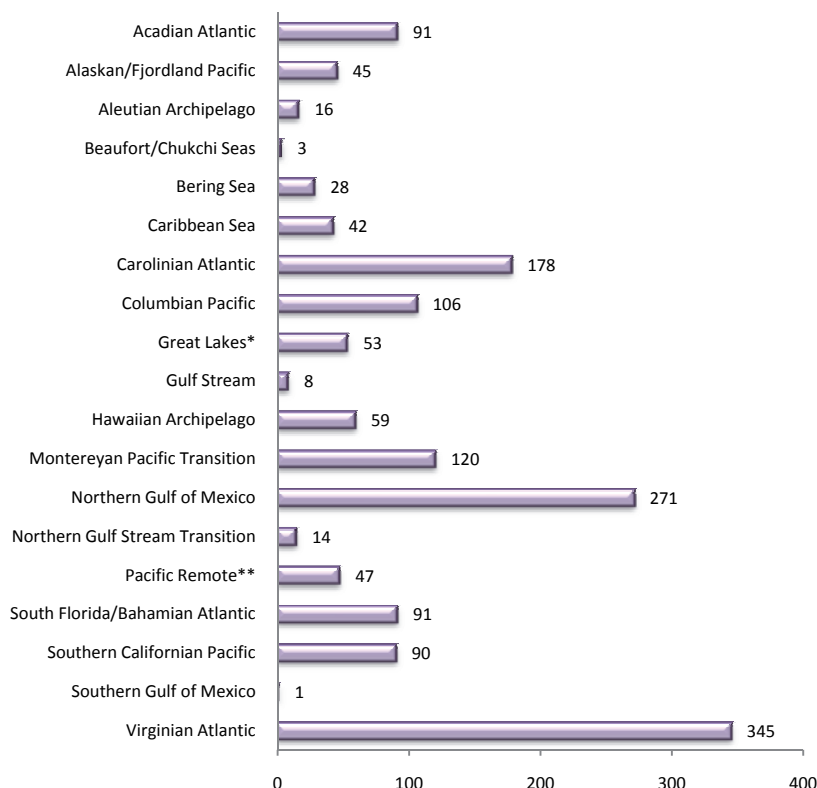


Almost all (86%) of our nation’s MPAs are multiple-use sites that allow a variety of human activities, including fishing and other extractive uses. In contrast, only 14% of all U.S. MPAs are no take areas that prohibit the extraction or significant destruction of natural or cultural resources. The size 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 8% of the area in MPAs in the U.S. is no-take. No-take MPAs occupy only 3% of all U.S. waters.

⁺ Other = not yet determined

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 U.S. waters may be different from the area of MPAs based on their classifications.



* This is an unofficial ecoregion, including all MPAs in the MPA Center Great Lakes Region

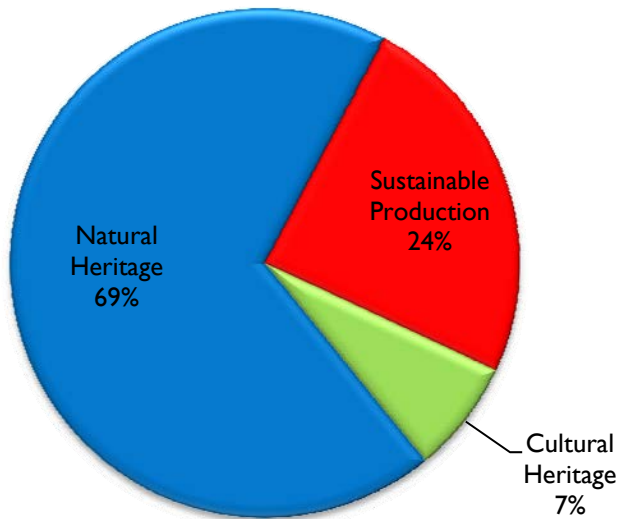
** This is an unofficial ecoregion, including all MPAs in the MPA Center Pacific Region, excluding the Hawaiian Archipelago

MPAs BY ECOREGION (CEC MARINE ECOREGIONS)

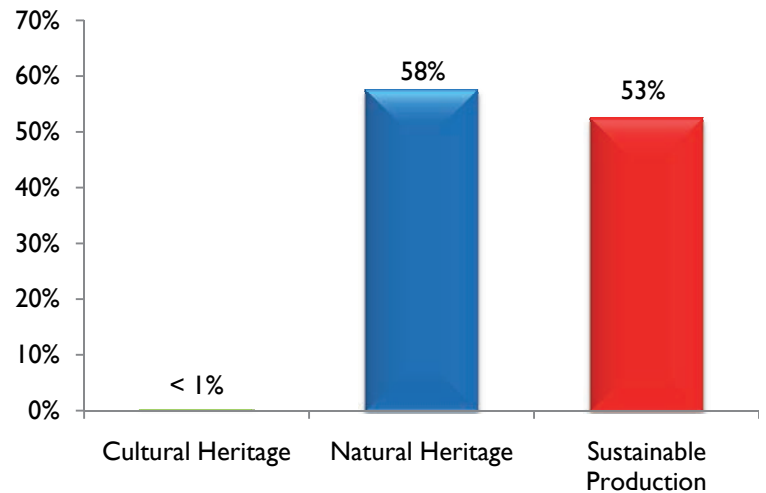
Analysis by ecoregion provides a picture of the degree to which existing MPAs in U.S. waters represent diverse ecological regions. Created by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, (CEC), the Marine Ecoregions of North America classifies marine ecoregions according to oceanographic features and geographically distinct assemblages of species from the Beaufort Sea to the Gulf of Mexico, covering the continent’s territorial waters in the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. The largest number (345, or 23%) of U.S. MPAs are located within the Virginian Atlantic marine ecoregion, which extends along Cape Hatteras northward to Cape Cod. Only one MPA is found in the Southern Gulf of Mexico marine ecoregion. However, the second highest number (271, or 18%) of all U.S. MPAs, are found in the Northern Gulf of Mexico marine ecoregion.

MPAs BY PRIMARY CONSERVATION FOCUS

PERCENT OF SITES BY CONSERVATION FOCUS



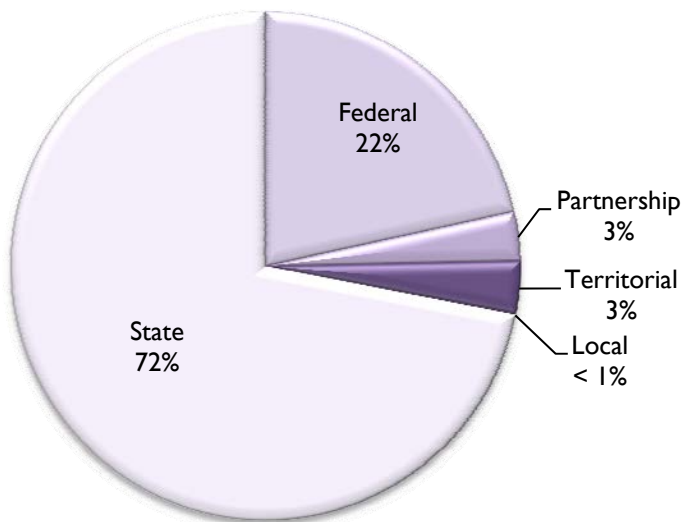
PERCENT OF AREA BY CONSERVATION FOCUS



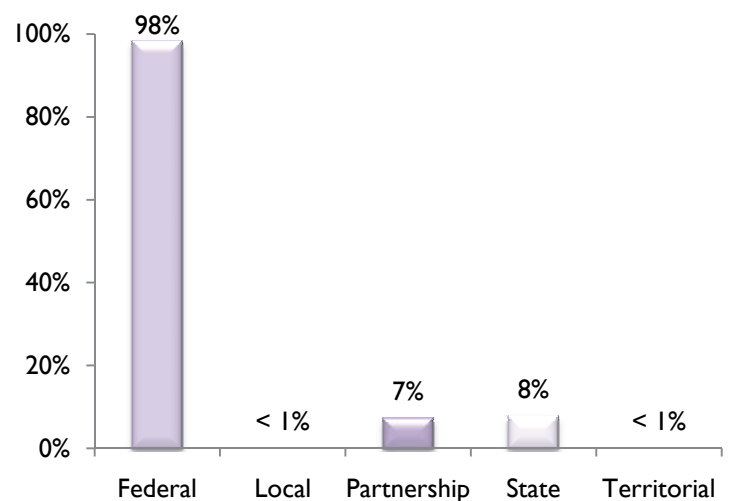
U.S. MPAs are used to conserve natural and cultural heritage, and/or to support sustainable production of our marine resources. Many MPAs have more than one conservation focus. Sixty-nine percent were created, at least in part, to conserve natural heritage values such as biodiversity, ecosystems, or protected species. Approximately 24% of U.S. MPAs focus on sustainable production, and 7% focus primarily on conserving our nation’s cultural heritage.

MPAs BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

PERCENT OF SITES BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT



PERCENT OF AREA BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT



Approximately 72% of the nation’s MPAs are managed by coastal states and territories, while 22% are under federal jurisdiction. Fewer than 1% of U.S. MPAs are managed by a local agency. Although most U.S. MPAs are managed by states and territories, these areas are typically quite small. In contrast, federally managed areas such as Federal fishery closures and National Monuments are often very large. For this reason, approximately 98% of the total MPA area is managed by federal agencies.

ABOUT THE DATA

The information presented in this fact sheet is based on data from the National MPA Center’s MPA Inventory. Statistics are based on 1,511 sites in U.S. marine waters (0-200 nautical miles) with GIS data. For more information, see www.mpa.gov, or contact Mimi.Diorio@noaa.gov.

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