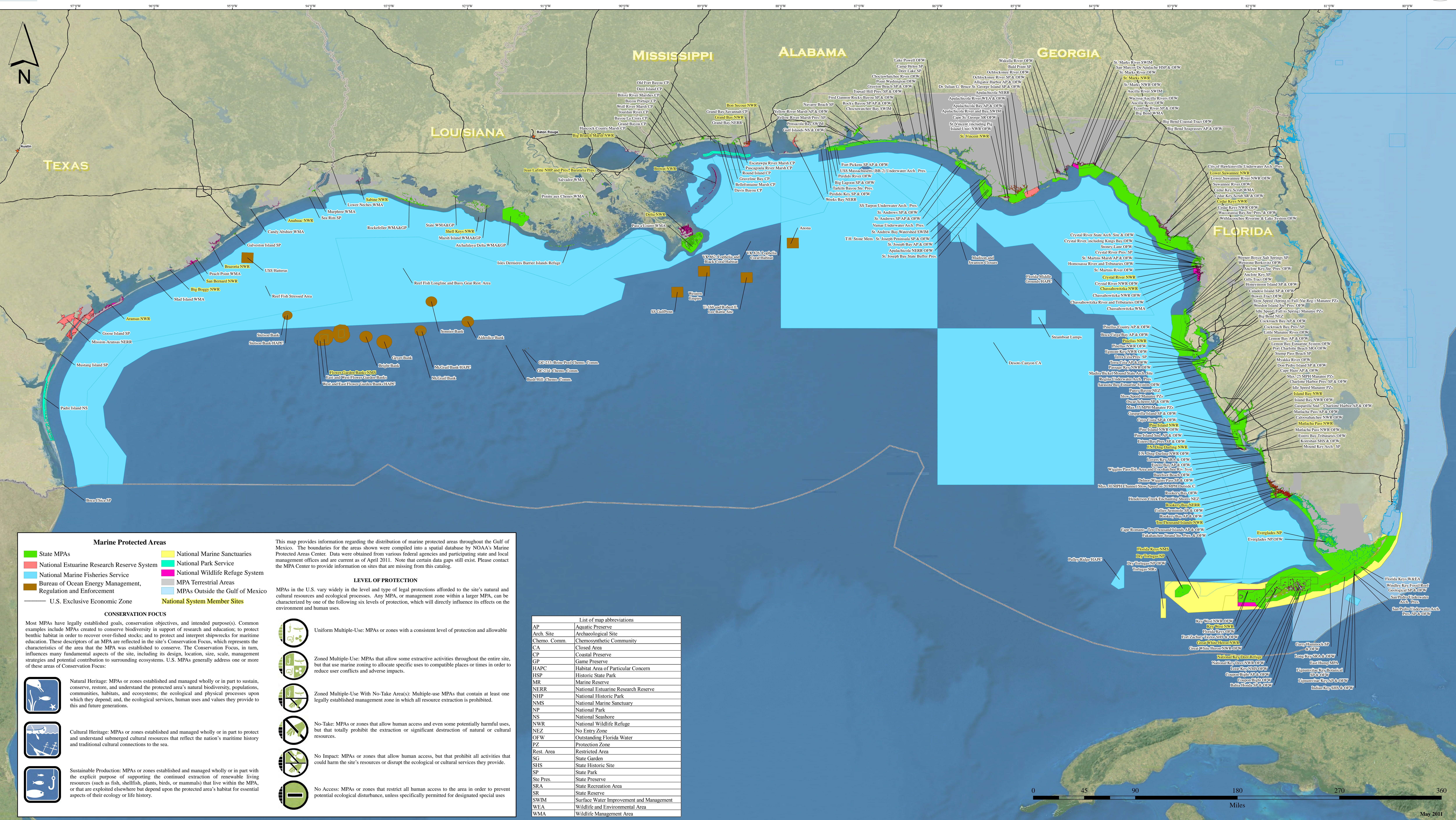


MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE GULF OF MEXICO



Marine Protected Areas

- State MPAs
- National Estuarine Research Reserve System
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement
- U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone
- National Marine Sanctuaries
- National Park Service
- National Wildlife Refuge System
- MPA Terrestrial Areas
- MPAs Outside the Gulf of Mexico
- National System Member Sites

Most MPAs have legally established goals, conservation objectives, and intended purpose(s). Common examples include MPAs created to conserve biodiversity in support of research and education; to protect benthic habitat in order to recover over-fished stocks; and to protect and interpret shipwrecks for maritime education. These descriptors of an MPA are reflected in the site's Conservation Focus, which represents the characteristics of the area that the MPA was established to conserve. The Conservation Focus, in turn, influences many fundamental aspects of the site, including its design, location, size, scale, management strategies and potential contribution to surrounding ecosystems. U.S. MPAs generally address one or more of these areas of Conservation Focus:

- Natural Heritage:** MPAs or zones established and managed wholly or in part to sustain, conserve, restore, and understand the protected area's natural biodiversity, populations, communities, habitats, and ecosystems; the ecological and physical processes upon which they depend; and, the ecological services, human uses and values they provide to this and future generations.
- Cultural Heritage:** MPAs or zones established and managed wholly or in part to protect and understand submerged cultural resources that reflect the nation's maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea.
- Sustainable Production:** MPAs or zones established and managed wholly or in part with the explicit purpose of supporting the continued extraction of renewable living resources (such as fish, shellfish, plants, birds, or mammals) that live within the MPA, or that are exploited elsewhere but depend upon the protected area's habitat for essential aspects of their ecology or life history.

This map provides information regarding the distribution of marine protected areas throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The boundaries for the areas shown were compiled into a spatial database by NOAA's Marine Protected Areas Center. Data were obtained from various federal agencies and participating state and local management offices and are current as of April 2011. Note that certain data gaps still exist. Please contact the MPA Center to provide information on sites that are missing from this catalog.

LEVEL OF PROTECTION

MPAs in the U.S. vary widely in the level and type of legal protections afforded to the site's natural and cultural resources and ecological processes. Any MPA, or management zone within a larger MPA, can be characterized by one of the following six levels of protection, which will directly influence its effects on the environment and human uses.

- Uniform Multiple-Use:** MPAs or zones with a consistent level of protection and allowable activities.
- Zoned Multiple-Use:** MPAs that allow some extractive activities throughout the entire site, but that use marine zoning to allocate specific uses to compatible places or times in order to reduce user conflicts and adverse impacts.
- Zoned Multiple-Use With No-Take Area(s):** Multiple-use MPAs that contain at least one legally established management zone in which all resource extraction is prohibited.
- No-Take:** MPAs or zones that allow human access and even some potentially harmful uses, but that totally prohibit the extraction or significant destruction of natural or cultural resources.
- No Impact:** MPAs or zones that allow human access, but that prohibit all activities that could harm the site's resources or disrupt the ecological or cultural services they provide.
- No Access:** MPAs or zones that restrict all human access to the area in order to prevent potential ecological disturbance, unless specifically permitted for designated special uses.

List of map abbreviations

AP	Aquatic Preserve
Arch. Site	Archaeological Site
Chemo. Comm.	Chemosynthetic Community
CA	Closed Area
CP	Coastal Preserve
GP	Game Preserve
HAPC	Habitat Area of Particular Concern
HSP	Historic State Park
MR	Marine Reserve
NERR	National Estuarine Research Reserve
NHP	National Historic Park
NMS	National Marine Sanctuary
NP	National Park
NS	National Seashore
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
NEZ	No Entry Zone
OFW	Outstanding Florida Water
PZ	Protection Zone
Rest. Area	Restricted Area
SG	State Garden
SHS	State Historic Site
SP	State Park
Site Pres.	State Preserve
SRA	State Recreation Area
SR	State Reserve
SWIM	Surface Water Improvement and Management
WEA	Wildlife and Environmental Area
WMA	Wildlife Management Area

