

The Graphic Guide to Marine Protected Areas



How to define, track, and improve
ocean protection

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (or MPAs)

are a key tool for ocean conservation and management. Here's a simple explanation:

Areas in the ocean that are managed over the long term primarily for the conservation of habitats and species.

But the term "protected area" refers to so many different types of protection that it leads to confusion.

This confusion interferes with clear accounting and decisions.

For example, when does **"protection"** begin?

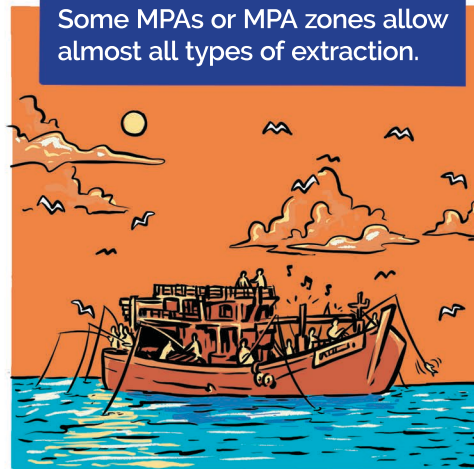
Does it begin when a government or other managing authority approves the creation of an MPA in law?



Or does it begin at the point at which measures are put in place with on-the-water management?

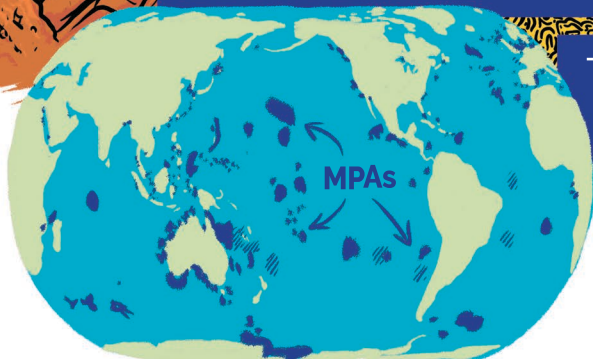
And what exactly does **"protection"** mean?

Some MPAs or MPA zones allow almost all types of extraction.



While other MPAs or MPA zones prohibit all types of extraction.

Different types of MPAs have different outcomes for people and nature. The MPA Guide clarifies what can be expected from different levels and stages of protection.



Stage of Establishment

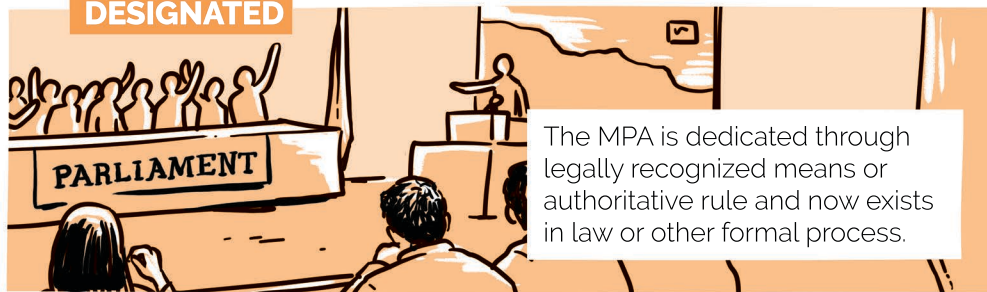
Establishment of an MPA can take years. Biodiversity is not safeguarded until the MPA is implemented and enforced.

The MPA Guide recognizes four stages in this process.

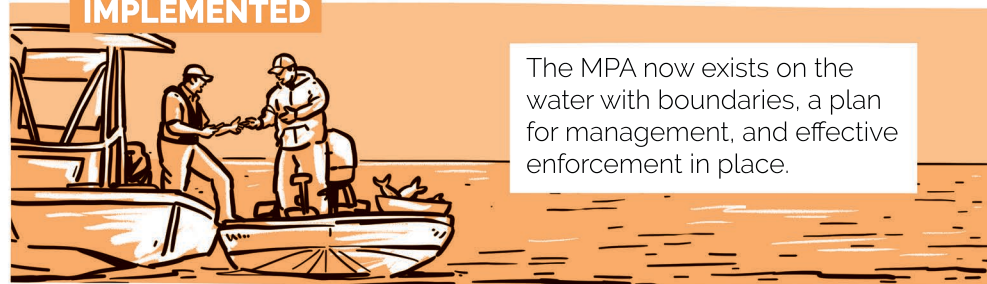
PROPOSED/COMMITTED



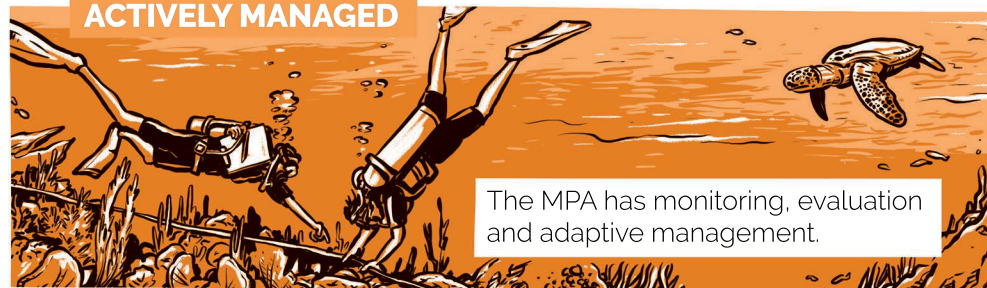
DESIGNATED



IMPLEMENTED



ACTIVELY MANAGED



Level of Protection

The MPA Guide recognizes four levels of protection of biodiversity from extractive and destructive activities. These protection levels can be for the entire MPA or in a specific MPA zone. Effective design, compliance and enforcement are essential for each level.

MINIMALLY PROTECTED



LIGHTLY PROTECTED



HIGHLY PROTECTED



FULLY PROTECTED



Using these two metrics, we can talk about all MPAs with clarity and transparency.

STAGE OF ESTABLISHMENT

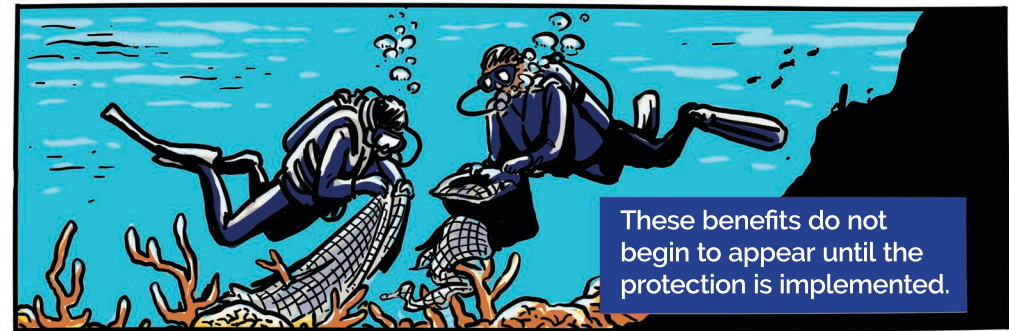
	Committed	Designated	Implemented	Actively Managed
Fully Protected				
Highly Protected				
Lightly Protected				
Minimally Protected				

Each successive stage of establishment is an important milestone in achieving conservation outcomes, but no actual conservation benefit is realized until the MPA is implemented.

Then, the more fully protected and actively managed an area is, the better the conservation outcomes.

The Level of Protection and Stage of Establishment determine conservation and social benefits of an MPA.

A Fully Protected and Actively Managed MPA is expected to result in recovery of previously exploited species and habitats, stronger potential for carbon storage and adaptation to climate and other environmental changes, and greater opportunities for livelihoods that depend upon a healthy ecosystem.



These benefits do not begin to appear until the protection is implemented.



And an MPA with minimal protection may include significant human use, but is expected to deliver fewer conservation benefits.

The bottom line: The MPA Guide helps unify the tracking of MPAs. It also guides choices about the level of protection needed to achieve goals.

Not all MPAs are the same. Use The MPA Guide to identify the best type of MPA to achieve your goals for biodiversity and people.

Effective MPAs help build healthy oceans for generations to come.

Sources:

An Introduction to The MPA Guide (2019),
<https://www.protectedplanet.net/c/mpa-guide>.

IUCN WCPA (2018) Applying IUCN's Global Conservation Standards to Marine Protected Areas (MPA). Version 1.0. Gland, Switzerland.

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