



Marine Spatial Tools: Marine Protected Areas and Closed Areas

Introduction

Identifying specific areas of the sea for managing single or sets of activities is a commonly used tool for both nature conservation i.e. marine protected areas (MPA), and for fisheries management i.e. closed areas or no take zones. Such approaches have proved to be valuable tools in the maintenance and conservation of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and in the sustainable management of marine living resources such as fisheries. However the use of terminology covering nature conservation and fisheries spatial tools has led to some confusion, particularly on what constitutes a MPA. **In this briefing, WWF looks to clarify the definitions and roles of the two sets of marine spatial tools, particularly with respect to their contribution to international marine obligations.**

Marine Nature Conservation Spatial Tools - Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Networks of MPAs should be representative of the full range of biodiversity (habitats, species and marine scapes), and have an explicit conservation management goal. Different strategies can be used to manage activities that take place within and in the vicinity of MPAs. These include:

- (i) strict or high level protection where no extractive or other damaging activities are permitted. The purpose of such strict controls is, in particular, to conserve particularly sensitive habitats and species; the maintenance of a 'pristine' system; recovery and restoration, or long-term monitoring for scientific purposes; or
- (ii) multi-use (sometimes referred to as sustainable use) i.e. activities which are compatible with the nature conservation interest, as defined by an appropriate assessment (for example), are allowed to continue sometime with specific conditions attached. *See Figure 1.*

Particularly in Europe, emphasis has been placed on multi-use management strategies, however, the case is building for the need for more stringent management mechanisms

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including the use of highly protected areas. Such an approach is in line with a tiered approach to MPA designation and management as advocated by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Globally, MPAs can vary enormously in size and complexity and, within a single MPA both strict protection and multi-use areas may be identified. Different management strategies can be developed through zoning for example as illustrated in the Great Barrier Reef. The policy and legislative basis for the designation of MPAs is generally driven from environment and/or conservation sectors of governments, however some management aspects may have to be driven from other governance structures (bodies and legislation) e.g. fisheries and shipping.

WWF uses the term Marine Protected Area as an overarching description of:

An area designated to protect marine ecosystems, processes, habitats, and species, which can contribute to the restoration and replenishment of resources for social, economic, and cultural enrichment.

Fisheries Spatial Tools - Closed Areas

Closed areas are established with the objective to help in the management of fish stocks for commercial exploitation or potentially as a restoration tool for a fishery that has been over-exploited. They will, however, never be the only tool for fish stock and fisheries management. Closed areas or periods can also be introduced as a way to manage fishing effort. Days-at-sea regimes under the current CFP can be regarded as a "closed period" management tool. Furthermore closed areas can encompass sites closed to all fishing activities or areas with gear or vessel restrictions which in turn may be temporal or permanent.

More recently, in both non-EU and EU member states (particularly in light of changes to the Common Fisheries Policy) there has been an acceptance of the need for fisheries closed areas to take into account broader ecosystem issues. Consequently two different objectives for fisheries closed areas are possible:

- (iii) areas closed to fishing due to damage to sensitive habitats or conflict with vulnerable species e.g. Røst reef in Norway and Darwin Mounds in the UK.

In such cases, WWF considers that the goal necessitates permanent closure, or for as long as the threatened habitat or species is present.

- (iv) fisheries management tool e.g. for stock management, fish stock recovery, eg. cod breeding grounds in the Baltic. *See Figure 1 over the page.*

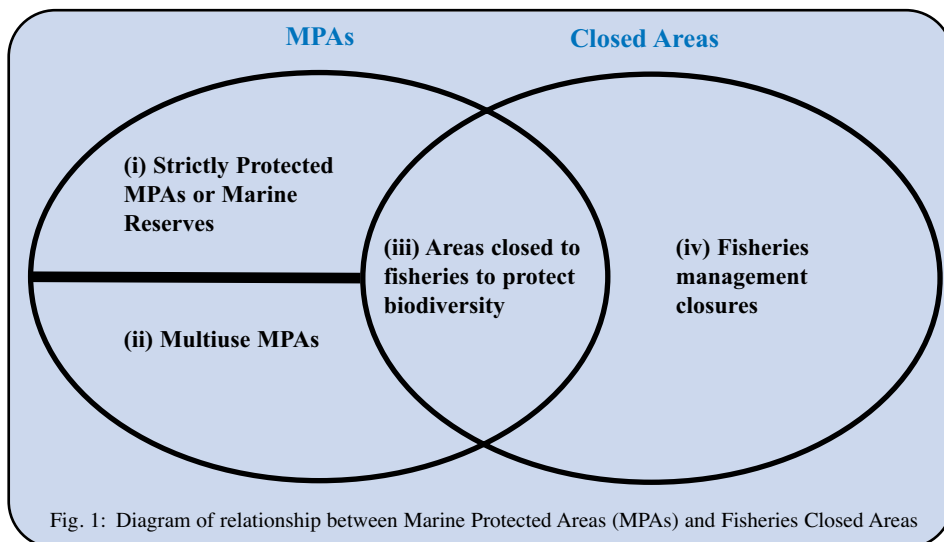


Fig. 1: Diagram of relationship between Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Fisheries Closed Areas

management closures have the potential to provide benefits for conservation – healthier stocks which not only support the fishing industry but also trophic structures and populations of marine predators. In some cases, therefore, it may be possible to explicitly combine objectives for both nature conservation and fish stock management within one site, however it is important that this is incorporated into monitoring regimes.

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Fisheries closures can be permanent / non-permanent, gear type specific, fish species specific, vessel type / size specific, etc. The policy and legislative basis for spatial fisheries management tools will be fisheries based e.g. government fisheries departments and (in EEC) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) regulation.

Marine Spatial Tools and International Biodiversity Obligations

A number of obligations currently exist that work towards achieving the conservation of biodiversity, and include the implementation of effective management:

- The Jakarta Mandate of the CBD encompasses a recommendation that has acknowledged that marine and coastal protected areas are an essential element in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The importance of MPAs is also recognised in the WSSD Plan of Implementation to establish by 2012 a global network of MPAs, and measures to conserve biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- Commitments on biodiversity conservation through MPAs under the Regional Seas Conventions such as BARCon/UNEP MAP, HELCOM and OSPAR.
- Natura 2000 sites under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

WWF believes it is important to clarify the goals of the different marine spatial tools not only to steer management and monitoring schemes in order to determine the overall effectiveness of such measures, but also to identify which tools can legitimately contribute to the range of international biodiversity related commitments.

Fisheries closed areas designated for environmental purposes which do not overlap with MPAs, particularly when permanent will potentially contribute to biodiversity obligations.

As each type of spatial tool (MPA for biodiversity conservation and closed area for fisheries management) has specific objectives and desired outputs WWF consider that they must be developed in parallel. In some cases, however, MPAs for biodiversity related objectives will also provide benefits for fish stocks and for fisheries management, for example spillover effects and protection of nursery and spawning grounds respectively. Similarly fisheries

WWF calls upon the North Sea Ministerial Meeting

- to acknowledge the synergies between marine protected areas (MPAs) designated for the conservation and/or restoration of the marine environment and closed areas for fisheries management in the context of marine spatial planning, and the need to develop management plans for fisheries in MPAs; and work to establish, by 2010, an ecologically coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) designated for the conservation and/or restoration of the marine environment.
- to urge the competent fisheries management authorities to designate, by 2008, experimental closed areas of sufficient size and duration aimed at contributing to the recovery of demersal fish stocks; and closely collaborate in implementing the management regimes associated with MPAs.

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