

CANADA'S NATIONAL NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1 What is a 'Marine Protected Area' (MPA)?

A1 In the context of Canada's national network of MPAs, a marine protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. The term MPA is used very broadly to encompass a range of federal, provincial and territorial protected areas with marine components.

What an MPA protects depends on its conservation objective. An MPA may be created to protect sensitive areas, special or unique marine features, areas of high productivity or representative examples of marine habitats. When used in conjunction with other Integrated Oceans Management tools, MPAs can help restore our oceans to their natural state and protect marine environments from future degradation.

Q2 What is a network of MPAs?

A2 A network of MPAs is a collection of individual MPAs that operates cooperatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales, and with a range of protection levels, in order to fulfill ecological aims more effectively and comprehensively than individual sites could alone.

MPAs in a network are linked ecologically or functionally, but not necessarily physically, in order to achieve a set of broader network objectives. Network objectives are additional to site-specific objectives set for individual MPAs.

Q3 Will one MPA network cover all of Canada's oceans?

A3 Canada's national network of MPAs will be composed of 13 bioregional networks—12 within Canada's oceans, one in the Great Lakes. All of these bioregional networks will share a common foundation, including vision, goals, principles, design properties and eligibility criteria, as outlined in the *National Framework for Canada's Network of Marine Protected Areas*. Each bioregional network will be designed to suit its own unique geography, management tools, and ecological and socio-economic objectives.

Q4 Why establish a network of MPAs?

A4 The network concept corresponds to the highly interconnected quality of our oceans' life systems and allows the pieces of the ocean "puzzle" to stay intact and connected, even when not in close

proximity. A network better protects spatially separate but highly linked habitats – such as those needed by migratory marine mammals to complete life stages like calving or nursing, and by migratory seabirds for breeding and feeding. Effective networks also protect representative examples of habitat types in a region, as well as special or unique areas and features.

MPAs networks cannot be used in isolation however. For maximum effectiveness, a range of complementary measures, developed as part of the overall ecosystem approach to integrated management of the oceans, must also be employed. These include industry stewardship and best practices, fisheries and habitat management, risk management approaches and environmental effects monitoring.

Q5 Will all activities be restricted within MPAs in the network?

A5 No. Not all MPAs are no-take areas (areas where all extractive activities are prohibited) or include no-take zones. At times, no-take zones may be needed, for example to protect the most sensitive or important components of marine ecosystems. Activities can generally continue in MPAs, as long as these activities are not harmful to what the MPA is designed to protect. Activities must be aligned with MPA conservation objectives and MPA zoning.

The establishment of zones within MPAs is an increasingly popular way to provide the greatest level of protection for the most important part of an MPA. Zoning means that while there may be no-take zones within an MPA, other zones will allow different levels of human activities. MPA zones are established in consultation with communities, partners and stakeholders—and both ecological and socio-economic goals are taken into consideration.

Q6 How long will it take to establish the network?

A6 An overarching and strategic *National Framework for Canada's Network of Marine Protected Areas* was submitted to the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers for approval in September 2011. The *National Framework* and complementary *Technical Guidance* will guide the design of bioregional MPA networks, as well as the drafting of bioregional MPA network plans. The design phase may take several years since it is an inclusive process that involves consultation with many groups. In the meantime, establishment of new MPAs may continue outside of bioregional design and planning processes, but will be consistent with national network principles, etc.

Implementation of the bioregional network plans will progress over time and as resources allow. Ultimately, the network will include as many protected areas and other kinds of management tools as are needed to achieve network goals and objectives.

Q7 How many areas are already included in Canada's MPA network?

A7 As of International Oceans Day (8 June) in 2011, there were 809 MPAs in place that could contribute to Canada's national network of MPAs. Of these, 84 are federal MPAs established by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada and Environment Canada. These organizations have different but complementary legislative mandates for MPA establishment. Most (713) are provincial and territorial coastal protected areas that have marine components that are considered to be MPAs. An additional twelve are non-governmental or co-managed marine areas. There are also other spatial management tools such as fisheries closures that can contribute to conservation of the marine environment, but these have yet to be inventoried.

Q8 What information will be used to propose areas for inclusion in the bioregional MPA networks?

A8 In marine areas where Integrated Oceans Management processes are ongoing, identified Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas; Species and Community Properties; and areas of known socio-economic and cultural importance will form the building blocks of the network design. Internationally-recognized network design criteria and properties (e.g., representativity, connectivity, replication, adequacy and viability) and social and economic considerations will then guide network designers in identifying the best sites to address the network objective(s) being targeted. Following a gap analysis exercise, areas not yet protected or requiring additional protection will be identified and the best management measures selected.

Q9 What percentage of the oceans will be targeted for protection within the network?

A9 No specific target for a percentage of ocean protection has been set for the national network of MPAs. Canada is developing an objectives-based approach to network planning instead of pursuing prescriptive numerical targets nationally. Should numerical targets for network goals and objectives be required, they may be identified at the bioregional level.

In 2010, the Conference of the Parties under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity set this global target: "By 2020, at least... 10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascapes". Canada currently protects 1% of its oceans and Great Lakes, well below most other countries' protection levels.

Q10 Why are multiple areas in need of protection?

A10 A broad range of "stressors" exert pressures on the marine environment or threaten specific elements of

that environment. These stressors include maritime traffic; climate change; habitat destruction and pollution; recreational activities; and renewable and non-renewable resource extraction (such as fishing, oil and gas, and renewable energy like wind and tidal).

In some cases a single MPA may be needed to protect a particular habitat or species from a specific pressure or threat (e.g., protection of productive coral areas from fishing impacts). In other cases, replicate MPAs may be needed for insurance against catastrophic events, and to improve the overall resilience of the marine environment so that it can better withstand the cumulative impacts of multiple stressors and maintain healthy ecological functions (e.g., protection of representative areas, important habitats, larval sources).

While individual MPAs can provide localized, site-specific benefits, a strategically designed MPA network can scale benefits up to the regional level.

Q11 How do the five Large Oceans Management Areas (LOMAs) and the 13 MPA network bioregions relate to each other?

A11 Canada's five LOMAs were established as initial pilot areas for moving forward with Integrated Oceans Management. Plans are now underway to expand MPA network planning beyond the boundaries of these pilot areas.

The 13 bioregional boundaries were identified scientifically based on physical and biological properties of the marine environment. MPA network planning will occur at the full bioregional scale and will not be confined to the five existing LOMAs. However, established management mechanisms and processes, such as stakeholder advisory committees, will be used in network planning where possible to avoid duplication of existing governance bodies.

In areas where LOMA governance structures do not currently exist, working with other regional committees to build a network planning team will be an important first step.

Q12 How are Canadians involved in MPA network planning?

A12 The draft *National Framework for Canada's Network of Marine Protected Areas* was posted online for public review from early December 2010 to late February 2011. Some 63 comments or lengthier submissions were received from organizations, groups or individuals from a range of sectors, and the *National Framework* was subsequently revised in response. A number of public engagement opportunities also occurred throughout the drafting process, including presentations to a variety of national and regional organizations. Now that the *National Framework* has been finalized, bioregional MPA network planning will be getting underway. An early step will be to identify and invite additional government bodies, Aboriginal groups, stakeholders and other interested parties to be directly involved in the planning process from the onset and throughout, building on existing governance structures and processes.