



Sustainable Seas®

Sustainable Seas Position Statement On Marine Reserves

Marine reserves or protected areas with either limited or prohibited fishing are generally accepted as effective conservation measures. Sustainable Seas supports the creation and enforcement of marine reserves.

There are numerous kinds of marine reserves. Two basic concepts are briefly discussed here:

NATIONAL RESERVES

Numerous countries have created coastal reserves within their national exclusive economic zones (EEZs – ocean waters within 200 miles of shore). These aim to reestablish the growth of mega-fauna (mature brood stocks), which are exponentially more productive than younger mature fish. Fecundity of older specimens of a stock is high and, in theory, as these older members of the species are allowed to escape capture, grow and reproduce, stocks become healthier and more abundant, both within and outside of the marine protected areas.

HIGH SEAS RESERVES

Highly migratory species like tuna do not reside in coastal areas (EEZs), but rather travel thousands of miles following their instinctual routes. These fish travel through the EEZs of many nations where they are captured in accord to local and regional management schemes. At times there are pockets of international water that are completely surrounded by the EEZs. These are essentially islands of international waters accessible only by passage through national waters where a vessel may not have authorization to fish. Often these small areas of ocean are the objects of intense fishing and enforcement of fishing restriction within the adjacent 200-mile EEZs of nearby nations is difficult. Thus, illegal fishing frequently occurs.

There are several such international water enclaves that have been recommended for marine reserve status in the Western Central Pacific. Sustainable Seas supports these proposed marine reserve enclaves, as these would allow tuna and other fish stocks some measure of relief from intense harvest effort.

Humans have become too proficient at fishing. There is a need to employ a number of precautionary measures to ensure that fish stocks are maintained at healthy, robust levels and that the oceans maintain the biodiversity necessary for the oceanic web of life to thrive. Sustainable Seas believes marine protected areas, including marine reserves, to be one of these important conservation measures.