



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

A clear understanding of where marine parks are, how they are managed and what they protect is essential to planning and managing the growing network of marine protected areas.



Coastal Ecosystems

Close to the land, the seas are at their most productive. They are also closest to people. Mangroves are important resources, but are increasingly at risk.

MANAGING THE OCEANS Marine Protected Areas

Oceans cover 70% of the Earth's surface. Nearly 40% of the world's population lives within 100km of the coast. Many rely on the oceans for food, transport, and recreation. However, these vital resources are being damaged by toxic wastes and sediments, excess nutrients and by unsustainable levels of exploitation.

Protected areas are among the most effective tools for preserving our coasts and oceans. Currently, over 3000 marine and coastal protected areas world-wide protect important ecosystems such as mangroves, coral reefs, kelp beds and seagrass meadows. However, they probably protect less than 2% of the world's oceans, and many suffer from poor design and management.

UNEP-WCMC, in close collaboration with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, maintains a global database on marine protected areas. This important information provides a global perspective on the developing network of marine parks, supporting planning and prioritisation and encouraging the exchange of information between sites world-wide.



Protecting living wealth

Marine protected areas can both safeguard biodiversity and enhance the livelihoods of local fishing communities. By providing fish with a refuge, strict "no-take" zones can facilitate a massive increase in productivity that extends to the surrounding areas.