



for a living planet®

Get engaged

Carefully planned and implemented MPA networks can provide the long-term foundation for healthy oceans and healthy coastal economies.

If you're involved in marine management or you use marine resources, you have a role in making it happen. We'd like to hear from you. Contact us to give us your feedback, to get more information, or to request a copy of our full report, *A Policy and Planning Framework for Marine Protected Area Networks in Canada's Oceans*.

Help put Canada's commitment into action – effectively.

Making good on the promise.



WWF-Canada

245 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 410
Toronto, Ontario M4P 3J1
Telephone: 416-489-8800
Toll-free: 1-800-267-2632
ca-panda@wwfcanada.org
wwf.ca

Atlantic Region Office

5251 Duke Street, Suite 1202
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1P3
Telephone: 902-482-1105
ca-atlantic@wwfcanada.org

Pacific Region Office

409 Granville Street, Suite 512B
Vancouver, British Columbia V6C 1T2
Telephone: 604-678-5152
pacificregion@wwfcanada.org

Northeast Pacific Marine Region Office

#3-437 Third Avenue West
Prince Rupert, British Columbia V8J 1L6
Telephone: 250-624-3706
pacificmarine@wwfcanada.org

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity;
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable; and
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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Canada has committed to create a national network of marine protected areas by 2012. The payoff will be bigger fish, healthier seas, and stronger coastal economies.

Inside is a strategy for making it happen.

Canada's oceans need help.

Many of our fish stocks are depleted and others are in serious decline, decimating the economies of coastal communities. The warning is clear: if we don't begin managing our marine resources in a more sustainable way, our oceans and the communities that depend on them face a grim future.

Marine protected areas are a key part of the solution – if they are well designed and well managed.

Canada's commitment to action

At the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002, Canada agreed to create a national, representative network of marine protected areas (MPAs) by 2012. By making sure the activities that take place within key areas don't harm biodiversity, MPAs can help restore healthy oceans and coastal economies.

Although Canada's commitment is backed up by strong legislation such as the *Oceans Act*, change on the water has been slow. We have protected only 0.5% of our oceans and coasts to date, compared to over 8% of our land base. At the current rate, it will take decades to achieve the national MPA network we have promised to create.

Charting the way forward

Canada's track record of piecemeal marine conservation has not matched the scale of the challenge. While it has taken years to protect just a handful of sites, our marine resources continue to be developed at an unsustainable

pace and important habitats are being degraded. Reaping the benefits of regional MPA networks will require a new, proactive approach to planning for conservation.

WWF-Canada has created a framework for planning effective MPA networks, based on expert knowledge and best practices from around the world. This framework describes the steps of the process and distills a set of key principles for planning, design, implementation and management.

By using this transparent, systematic process of setting goals, collecting data, considering all options, and putting effective protection in place, we can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Canada's approach.

The need for national leadership

If Canada is going to meet its commitment, we need engagement and leadership at all levels, with the federal government providing overarching guidance, timetables and milestones for implementing MPA networks, and reporting regularly on progress.

The federal government can also fill gaps in our knowledge through more marine research and build support for MPA networks and marine conservation through a national public awareness campaign.

Finally, it can expedite the designation of long-awaited sites that have strong local support and provide interim protection for other candidate sites so that key species and habitats aren't lost in a rush to exploit resources before conservation decisions are made.

The power of networks

Because the state of our oceans is a large-scale problem, the solution must be equally broad. Experience proves that MPAs can boost fish numbers, increase fish size, and restore fragile ecosystems – if they are well planned and well managed, based on strong science and developed through consultation.

By planning *networks* of MPAs – not just single, unconnected sites – we can multiply those benefits, creating a foundation for sustainability across a region. Networks help us to protect important habitats, recover endangered species, and contribute to sustainable fishing by balancing conservation with the needs of ocean users.

Principles for good planning

- Define the purpose and goals of an MPA network, so that everyone can work together without duplication of effort or resources.
- Recognize the interests of First Nations and involve them in a government-to-government capacity where appropriate.
- Involve stakeholders from the beginning, providing an opportunity to contribute knowledge and ideas and to shape MPA decisions.
- Make sure that everyone involved has equal access to the data that will inform site selection.
- Be prepared to act on the best available information, but incorporate new information as it becomes available.
- Plan networks at an ecologically meaningful scale – usually hundreds of thousands of square kilometres.
- Use public outreach to let the wider community know about the process and encourage participation and feedback.

Principles for good design

- Identify and map the habitats and species that need protection, and set specific goalposts to measure success.
- Set clear and effective protection standards by determining the most appropriate levels of protection and allowable activities for each habitat or species.

- Design networks to ensure that sites are large enough to be self-sustaining and are connected so that nutrients and species can flow between sites. Protecting more than one example of each habitat or distinctive value is often necessary to guard against catastrophes.
- Consider practical management constraints by establishing common-sense boundaries, for example, and work with ocean users to minimize economic impacts.
- Select sites using a transparent method, beginning by generating possible options, then creating draft plans, getting feedback from stakeholders, and using that feedback to refine the plans.

Principles for good implementation and management

- Choose the right legislative or regulatory tool for each site to create effective and lasting protection, striking a balance between network-scale goals and local needs.
- Monitor and evaluate the network, and fine-tune MPA management strategies based on experience, new data, or changing environmental conditions.

