

Marine Protected Area Coverage for the United States



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National Marine Protected Areas Center

The nation's hub for building innovative partnerships and tools to protect special ocean places

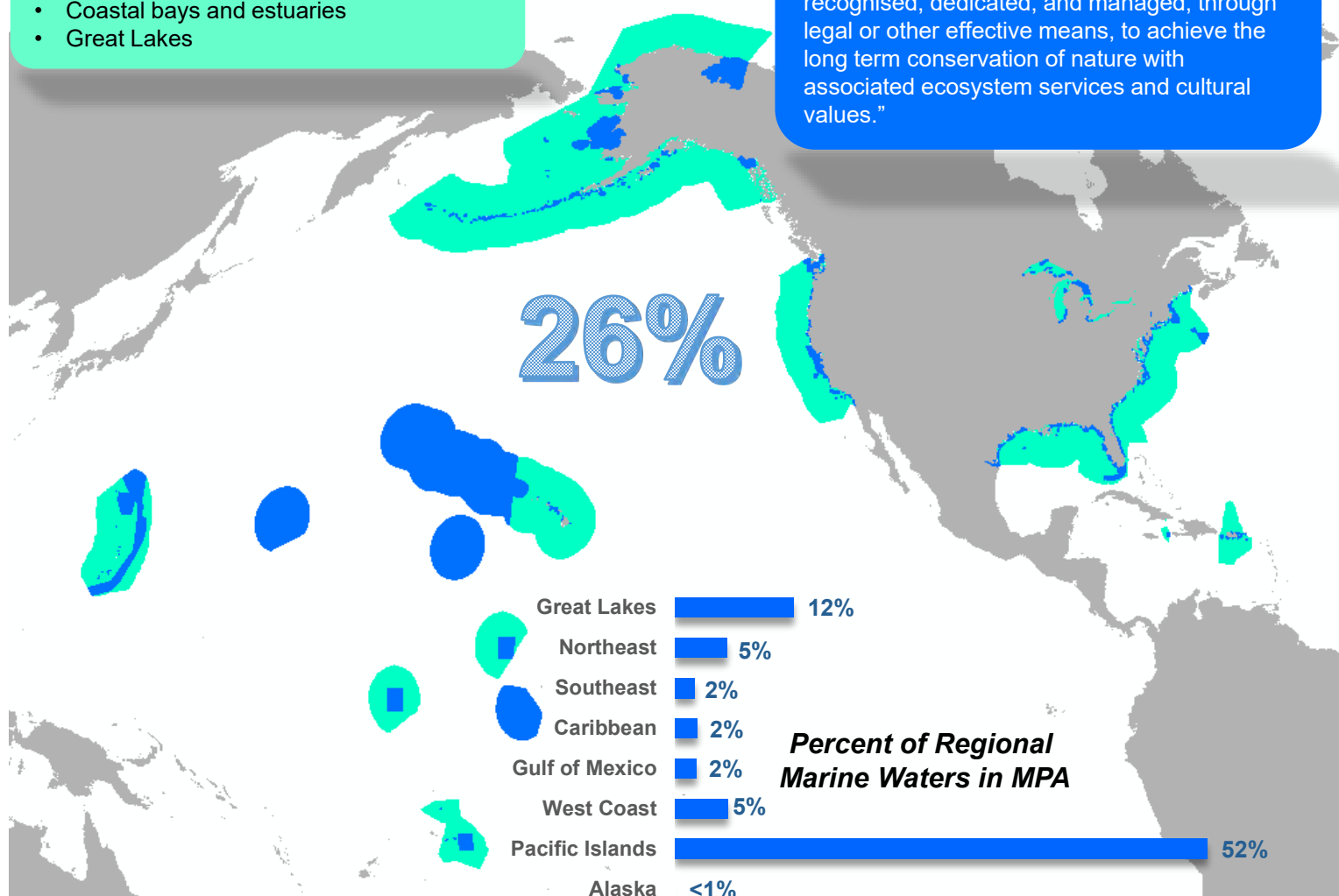
Marine protected areas (MPAs) cover 26% of U.S. marine waters. This statistic refers to the proportion of marine waters that are within a MPA that meet the international definition set by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is calculated in a GIS using boundary data from NOAA's MPA Inventory, removing any land areas and overlap that among sites.

U.S. marine waters include:

- State, territorial, and federal waters
- Coastal bays and estuaries
- Great Lakes

An MPA is defined as:

"a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."



Total area in an MPA

1.24 million mi²

Total area of U.S. marine waters

4.80 million mi²

26%

About MPAs

Kinds of MPAs

- National marine sanctuaries
- National monuments
- National parks
- National wildlife refuges
- National estuarine research reserves
- State, local, and tribal MPAs

What is Protected?

Many ecologically significant ecosystem types, habitats, processes, and taxa are protected by federal and state MPAs. For example, 83% of mangroves, 80% of shallow tropical corals, 63% of seagrasses, and 54% of deep corals (based on their current extent mapped) are contained within an MPA in U.S. waters.

What is Allowed?

Most MPAs allow multiple uses, while MPAs that completely prohibit extraction of living resources (e.g., marine reserves) cover only 3% of U.S. marine waters.

Effective Management

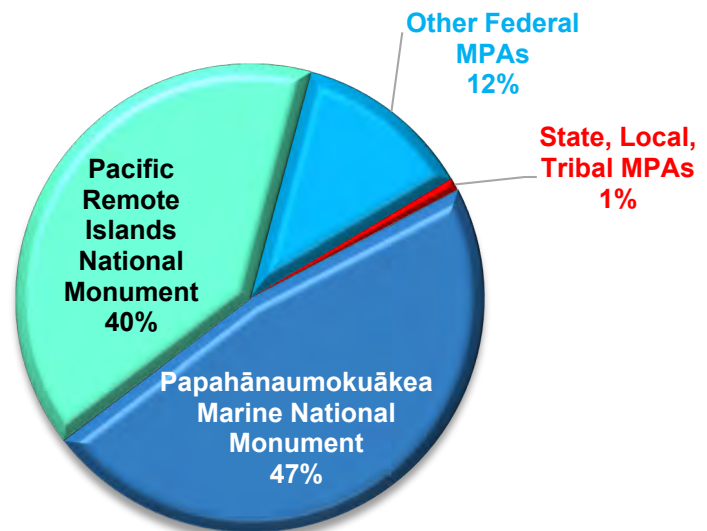
The spatial coverage of MPAs is just one part of the picture. MPAs must be effectively managed in order to deliver conservation outcomes. Key elements of effective management include: robust research and monitoring programs that inform science-based decision making; meaningful engagement with stakeholders and governments; appropriate boundaries and regulations to meet conservation objectives; a sustainable and reliable enforcement regime; and sufficient staff and resources.

MPAs by Size

Largest U.S. MPAs

MPA Name	Marine Area (mi ²)
Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument	585k
Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument	490k
Marianas Trench Marine National Monument and Marianas Trench National Wildlife Refuge*	96k
National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa and Rose Atoll National Marine Monument**	14k
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary	6k
Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument	5k
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge	4k
Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary	4k
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary	4k
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary	3k

* Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (96k mi²) and Marianas Trench National Wildlife Refuge (80k mi²) largely overlap. **These areas almost entirely overlap.



U.S. MPA Breakdown of Area

Considerations

Land vs. Marine: Some protected areas include both terrestrial and marine area. Only the marine area of these sites is included in MPA statistics.

Geospatial Analysis: Statistics reported by the MPA Center may differ from other sources due to a difference in analysis methods. This can include use of different geospatial projections, varying approaches to removal of land and overlap, and differing definitions of U.S. marine waters. NOAA's MPA Center is the official authoritative source for U.S. MPA data and statistics.

Partnerships: The MPA Center collaborates with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to integrate MPA boundaries and classification information into the Protected Areas Database of the U.S., the national data source that serves U.S. protected areas data to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA).

Conserved Areas: The U.S. is now beginning a new initiative to increase conservation of its lands and waters. This will involve broad-based public engagement, including on what should be included in the definition of "conserved."