

BENEFITS OF MPA NETWORK

WHY? The need for Marine Protected Areas and MPA Networks

Marine biodiversity in the Northern Shelf Bioregion, including species, habitats, and ecosystems is threatened by multiple stressors, including:

- habitat alteration
- land and sea-based pollutants
- global climate change
- resource use pressure
- invasive species

Multiple species and habitats in the region are declining, which affects:

- ecosystem health
- food security
- culture
- future economic opportunities

Benefits of Marine Protected Areas and MPA Networks

By mitigating localized stressors Marine Protected Area networks can deliver ecological, social, economic and cultural benefits by contributing to the protection and enhanced resilience of functional ecosystems.



Photo by Alan Dolan



Photo by Barb Dinning

Ecological benefits

MPAs and MPA networks may contribute to the protection of the structure, function, integrity, and resilience of ecosystems by:

- providing refuge to harvested species,
- protecting habitats critical to lifecycle stages such as spawning, juvenile rearing and feeding,
- complementing adjacent terrestrial protected areas for anadromous species (e.g., salmon),
- protecting spawning populations, biomass, and aggregations to enhance or maintain reproductive capacity,
- contributing to the restoration and recovery of species, habitats, and ecosystems,
- enhancing local and regional fish populations through increased recruitment and spillover of adults and juveniles into adjacent areas,
- assisting in conservation-based fisheries management regimes, and
- maintaining and enhancing healthy ecosystems that are more able to withstand and recover from stressors related to climate change.

Social, economic, and cultural benefits

Supported by the ecological benefits that MPAs can provide, building an effective and collaboratively developed MPA network may:

- ensure a stable, biodiverse resource base for non-consumptive and sustainable consumptive activities and livelihoods including fishing, recreation, and tourism,
- encourage expansion of our knowledge and understanding of marine systems,
- contribute to the coordination of ecosystem-based management of marine activities, thereby ensuring long term economic opportunities for sustainable use,
- provide researchers, educators, and policy makers with reference sites to serve as natural benchmarks (e.g., to assess management outcomes, climate change impacts),
- increase the wellbeing of surrounding communities,
- protect historical and contemporary culturally and spiritually significant sites, and
- support the continuance of First Nation governance, management systems, and harvesting practices.

* List of benefits adapted from the Canada-British Columbia Marine Protected Area Network Strategy (Canada and B.C. 2014, 3) and identified from the MPA literature (Bennett and Dearden 2012; Ban et al. 2019; Kerwath et al. 2013; Lester et al. 2009; Sala et al. 2021; Olson et al. 2020; Madin et al. 2016; Marshall et al. 2019; Akins and Bissonnette 2020).