Defining MPAs and their Level of Protection

Version 1

This Guide is intended to help you determine the Level of Protection of your MPA or MPA zone. If you have questions about whether your area is an MPA (i.e., if it is instead an OECM, a Fisheries Management Area, or another area-based management tool), please refer to the IUCN Global Conservation Standards for MPAs¹. This Guide is specific to MPAs, as per the IUCN definition.



Minimally Protected

Extensive extraction and other impacts are allowed, but site still provides some conservation benefit to the area.



Lightly Protected

Some protection of biodiversity exists but moderate to significant extraction and other impacts are allowed.



Highly Protected

Only light extractive activities are allowed with low total impact, and all other abatable impacts minimized.



Fully Protected

No extractive or destructive activities are allowed, and all abatable impacts are minimized.