



Defending Our Oceans

"Greenpeace is committed to defending the health of the world's oceans and the plants, animals and people that depend upon them."

Making Marine Reserves Happen in Europe

"We are facing a gathering wave of ocean extinction... the seas have reached a tipping point, with scores of species of ocean-dwelling fish, birds and mammals edging toward extinction."

Pew Institute for Ocean Science 2005.





Europe is surrounded by four seas (the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean and North Seas) and two oceans (the Atlantic and Arctic) and twenty of the twenty-five Member States of the European Union (EU) are coastal states. These oceans and seas are essential for Europe: at least 16% of the EU's population live by the coast and more than €500–1,000 billion worth of economic assets (more than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Netherlands) are located within 500 metres of the coastline. Tourism is now the largest economic sector in many coastal areas, providing an estimated 43% of jobs in coastal France, for example, and generating more revenue than fishing or shipping. Yet today our marine environments face a crisis.

Most of Europe's fish stocks are already overexploited. More fish are being removed from our seas than populations can sustain. In addition, pollution, climate change, mineral extraction, increasing sea transport, coastal construction and tourism continue to take their toll, suffocating and destroying marine ecosystems. These threats together constitute a pressing challenge which governments and institutions must address urgently.

In response to this growing crisis, Greenpeace this year launched 'Defending Our Oceans', our most ambitious ship expedition ever. Greenpeace ships the Esperanza, the Arctic Sunrise, and the Rainbow Warrior have been circling the globe highlighting abuses such as pirate fishing, plastic pollution, environmentally damaging coastal developments and mineral mining.

Greenpeace has also been promoting a solution to the present crisis – the establishment of a global network of large-scale Marine Reserves covering 40% of the oceans, akin to national parks on land. Earlier this year, Greenpeace launched a report by Professor Callum Roberts, leading expert on Marine Reserves, detailing where high-seas Marine Reserves should be established around the world. We have also produced detailed maps outlining where Marine Reserve networks should be protected in the North, Baltic and Mediterranean Seas.

Marine Reserves as a unique and powerful tool

Less than 1% of our oceans is currently set aside for protection. What few areas exist, have been established on a case-by-case basis and all too often with little understanding of the impacts of human activities on marine ecosystems. A single-species or sector-by-sector approach is simply inadequate to protect the full variety of species and their habitats, and the complex interactions that make up an ecosystem.

In order to reverse the current decline in the health of the marine environment, a new approach is needed, one that sets out to protect the integrity of marine ecosystems. Marine Reserves, areas that are off-limits to all extractive and destructive uses - including fishing, are designed to do just this and are the most powerful tool available for the conservation of marine life.

Despite Marine Reserves being closed to fishing, a network of such marine parks can actually benefit fisheries in a number of ways. Research shows that they allow exploited stocks and damaged habitats to recover, and there is evidence that reserves help to build up fish population sizes in adjacent fishing grounds as fish migrate out of the reserves – the so-called spill-over effect. For more information see Fully Protected Marine Reserves: a guide by Callum Roberts and Julie Hawkins <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/marinereservescolor.pdf>

But of course it is not just about fish. In line with the ecosystem approach, Marine Reserves can and should be designed to benefit entire ecosystems. They should be established to benefit endangered and rare species or habitats, critical feeding grounds, nursery areas and migration routes. A network of large-scale Marine Reserves covering 40% of Europe's seas will help to ensure that they remain healthy and productive for future generations.

Creating a European network of Marine Reserves

Greenpeace has identified 7 potential Marine Reserves in the North Sea, 10 in the Baltic Sea, and 32 in the Mediterranean. Together these reserves would cover roughly 40% of the sea area in those regions. All identified sites are of equal priority and together form a cohesive network that adds to our proposal for a global network of high seas Marine Reserves.

To identify these sites, a research team collected as many data sets as possible relating to ecologically important species and habitats, the location of MPAs (existing and proposed). These data sets were sourced from the relevant authorities, research institutes and NGOs. The data was then inputted into a Geographical Information System (GIS) that can map information on the computer. This software made it possible to overlay the different data sets, thus enabling determination of the areas of greatest ecological value. By adding the locations of fisheries and other potentially damaging human activities, human impacts could also be assessed.

It is now up to EU Member States to make such a network of large-scale Marine Reserves a reality. All EU Member States have already committed to the establishment of a global network of marine protected areas by 2012 (Decision VII/28) in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity's 7th Conference of the Parties (CoP 7) in 2004. At regional level, further agreements have reinforced the commitment to protect and manage coastal areas and seas, yet effective action is still lacking.

EU Member States have also committed to protect areas of sea under the EU's Habitats and Birds Directives. However, these commitments do not go far enough and do not address the full range of marine habitats, species and functions. Implementation in the marine environment is many years behind schedule and even if fully implemented would be insufficient to protect the wider marine ecosystem from activities such as fishing. Meanwhile, measures taken under the EU's Common Fisheries Policy have also failed to prevent or mitigate the impacts of fishing on dwindling stocks, non-target species and habitats.

Greenpeace's proposals are consistent with recommendations from a number of international fora and institutions, not least:

- in 2003, the World Parks Congress recommended that "networks should be extensive and include strictly protected areas that amount to at least 20-30% of each habitat."
- In 2004, the UK's Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) recommended that 30% of the UK's EEZ be designated as no-take zones to reverse the impact of fisheries on the marine environment
- In 2005, the United Nations Millennium Project also called for 10% of the oceans to be covered by Marine Reserves in the short to medium term, with a long-term goal of 30%.

Time for Action

This year, the European Union (EU) has a unique opportunity to lay the foundation for a long-overdue, coherent and effective EU marine law – the EU's first real chance to translate global commitments into real action for the management of both Europe's territorial seas and the international waters that lie beyond national jurisdiction. The Member States of the European Union must take collective responsibility by committing jointly to restore, maintain and protect the marine environment with the overall aim of achieving biologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas that are safe, clean, healthy and productive now and in future.

The proposed new marine law – which takes the form of an EU Marine Directive - should acknowledge and build on the recommendations from the United Nations Millennium Project, World Parks Congress, the RCEP and others. This means, EU Member States must agree to raise the bar on spatial marine protection, consistent with these recommendations, by including provisions for the use of large-scale Marine Reserves as a mandatory component of regional marine protection strategies. The Directive must further ensure the full implementation of all relevant EU legislation and international agreements that deal with the marine environment.

As it stands, the draft text of the Directive fails to put large-scale Marine Reserves into law and will fall short of meeting the following agreed targets.

- 1)** to protect, and restore marine biodiversity and ecosystems
- 2)** to change fisheries management to reverse the decline in stocks, ensure sustainable fisheries and healthy ecosystems
- 3)** to make human 'use' of the seas sustainable
- 4)** to apply the principles of good governance, both within Europe and globally.

Greenpeace calls on the European governments to fulfil their promise and make Marine Reserves happen. Europe's seas straddle political borders and are therefore our collective responsibility. Governments have to act jointly to protect them for now and for future generations. The proposed EU marine law provides them with the opportunity to do this – but to succeed that law must include provisions for the creation and protection of large-scale Marine Reserves.

Greenpeace Proposal for European Marine Reserve Network

Map showing areas in the Mediterranean, Baltic and North Seas proposed by Greenpeace as future marine reserves.

A marine reserve network covering 40% of European waters is needed to ensure a future for Europe's marine life and the people who depend on it.

For more information see:

The Baltic Seas – a Roadmap to Recovery
Marine Reserves for the Mediterranean Sea
Rescuing the North and Baltic Sea.

*These reports available for download at
www.oceans.greenpeace.org*



Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation, which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions essential to a green and peaceful future

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