



ASSOCIATION *of*  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

Hall of the States  
444 North Capitol Street, NW  
Suite 725 • Washington, D.C. 20001  
Phone: 202-624-7890  
Fax: 202-624-7891  
E-mail: [info@fishwildlife.org](mailto:info@fishwildlife.org)  
[www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org)

## Policy Statement on Marine Protected Areas

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) represents all state fish and wildlife agencies regarding the conservation and management of fish and wildlife resources. Many of the member agencies have statutory management responsibilities for marine fish and the Association has a long history of assisting with the development of marine policy, regulations, and legislation including the recent re-authorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The Association policy regarding Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) to be considered by NOAA and other Federal and state governmental entities is:

- The Association expects a transparent, data-driven and science-based process for establishing MPA's. Clearly defined goals, coordination mechanisms, stakeholder input opportunities, and accountability measures are vital in order to obtain support and appreciation for MPA's from the fishing community. In addition, the Association urges NOAA and USFWS to be strongly guided by input from the eight Fishery Management Councils which already consider MPA's through their management plan processes when establishing federal MPA's.
- When MPA's are being considered, the Association believes that government entities should evaluate opportunities for maintaining sustainably managed fishing opportunities within MPA's. Low impact harvest strategies, like hook and line trolling, do provide fish stock and habitat protection which significantly reduce the necessity of having MPA's closed to all fishing. In addition, the Association believes fishery objectives or stock recovery targets should be established, with concomitant monitoring, so regulated fishing can be reinstated in those instances when it was necessary to close fishing at the outset.
- It is a long-standing policy of state and federal governments to allow the use of public lands and waters for purposes consistent with sound conservation. This policy is imbedded in the principles of our state and federal managed lands and should be considered in any decision to implement MPA's – especially no-take areas.

In summary, due consideration should be given to the economic, societal, and cultural values derived from the Nation's marine resources during the deliberation on MPA's. Any final determinations should be science based and developed in an open public process. The Association recognizes the important role of fishing, e.g. the recreational angler, in fisheries conservation as both a data source and a key element in funding state fishery conservation efforts. Providing fishing opportunity maintains the model under which this nation supports marine fishery resource management efforts.