

Marine protected areas

About the proposed reforms

The Government is reviewing how we protect our marine environment within New Zealand's territorial sea. This is to ensure we have the most effective approach for sustainably managing our marine environment and enhancing, protecting and restoring marine biodiversity.

For this review, the Government is consulting on a new policy for marine protected areas in the territorial sea. The reforms aim to achieve an appropriate balance between protecting our marine environment and maximising commercial, recreational and cultural opportunities now and into the future.

If agreed, the proposed reforms would form the basis of a Marine Protected Areas Act. This new Act would replace the Marine Reserves Act 1971.

What the proposed reforms would bring

The proposed MPA Act will meet the following objectives:

- A representative and adaptable network of MPAs is created over time to enhance, protect and restore marine biodiversity in New Zealand's territorial sea.
- Decisions about environmental protection and economic growth are made in a planned and integrated way, based on sound evidence, to maximise the benefits to New Zealand.
- Customary rights and values are recognised, ensuring the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are met and the Crown's Treaty obligations are delivered.
- Collaboration is supported through meaningful engagement with iwi/Māori, local communities, business and the wider public.
- Varying levels of protection and use are provided for, including consideration of all existing and future uses and values.
- New Zealand's international obligations in relation to the marine environment are met.

The reforms would not affect special legislation for marine protection (eg, in Fiordland and Kaikoura). The Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary would also not be affected as it is being created under special legislation with specific rules and is based in New Zealand's exclusive economic zone rather than the territorial sea.

If introduced, the Marine Protected Areas Act would establish the following four types of marine protected areas. Having four options of varying marine protection and use would provide choices when determining the best way to safeguard a particular area.

Four types of marine protected areas

Marine reserves	Strictly protected with the purpose of conserving biodiversity in its natural state. (The same as under the current Marine Reserves Act 1971.)
Species-specific sanctuaries	Similar to current marine mammal sanctuaries but available to other marine life such as albatross or great white sharks, with rules focussed on the specific protection of that species.
Seabed reserves	Protect areas of the seafloor and include prohibitions on seabed mining, bottom trawl fishing and dredging.

Recreational fishing parks	Recognise that there are areas where the recreational fishing experience could be improved by providing a preference for non-commercial fishing for some species Customary fishing and marine farming will continue.
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Public events and hui

Public events and hui will be held throughout the country to provide further information on the detail of the proposals.

For details of these events see the [Public events and hui for consultation on the proposed reforms](#) web page [Ministry for the Environment].

How to have your say

To find out more about the proposed reforms and have your say, see [Consultation on proposed reforms to the management of marine protected areas](#) on the Ministry for the Environment website.

Find out more

For information on current marine reserves in New Zealand see [Marine reserves A-Z](#).