

THE REALITIES OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAS)

DO MPAS TRULY DELIVER?

MPAs are often hailed as the solution to declining ocean biodiversity, but the truth is far more complex. They can raise unrealistic expectations without addressing the root causes of ocean decline.

What MPAs **DON'T** Protect Against:



In fact, MPAs often shift human pressures elsewhere rather than solving the problem.

Examples of MPA Limitations:

- In British Columbia, more than 60% of the marine protected area waters have not been effective at protecting biodiversity even though they have shutdown seafood production activities.
- Right Whale Corridor, Bay of Fundy: No longer used by Right Whales as climate change has altered migration patterns.
- Australia's Great Barrier Reef: Despite being a model of marine protection, warming waters caused severe coral bleaching and loss.
- Europe's MPAs: A 2020 study found 59% are illegally fished.



Impact on Seafood-Producing Communities

MPAs can significantly affect seafood production, particularly in coastal areas. They can lead to job losses, reduced food production, and economic hardship for remote communities—all without clear evidence of their ecological effectiveness.

Measuring Effectiveness Is a Challenge

- Most MPAs lack control sites, making it nearly impossible to measure their impact.
- External factors like climate change further complicate assessing their benefits.
- Effective MPAs require strict criteria: no-fishing zones, enforcement, size, age, and isolation from fishing areas—standards rarely met.

Enforcement Concerns

Government agencies already struggle to enforce existing ocean regulations. Adding MPAs creates an enforcement gap, leaving them vulnerable to illegal activities.

The Role of Aquaculture in Ocean Conservation

Atlantic Canada's finfish farming industry is already taking effective action to protect marine ecosystems:

- Adhering to stringent provincial and federal regulations.
- Implementing environmental management programs, pest management plans, and fallowing practices.
- Supporting ocean health without the need for MPAs, as shown in Passamaquoddy Bay, NB (an area with many salmon farms), where biodiversity has remained stable for 40 years.



A Political Facade, Not a Practical Plan

MPAs often serve political goals rather than addressing the real threats to our oceans. While Canada aims to designate 30% of its land and water as MPAs by 2030, we must prioritize meaningful plans over symbolic gestures.



Aquaculture: Sustainable by Design

Finfish farming in Atlantic Canada drives conservation, food security, and economic resilience. Let's focus on proven practices rather than misplaced reliance on MPAs to tackle the challenges facing our oceans.

