



To: Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister for the Environment

Date: 18/06/15
Tracking #: 15-
B-01036

New Zealand's international obligations and comparative progress regarding Marine Protected Areas

Purpose

1. You asked for advice at status on 08 June, on New Zealand's international marine protection obligations and the extent of our Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) compared with other countries.

Ministry Advice

2. A view about the extent of marine protection in New Zealand and how we compare internationally depends on whether Benthic Protected Areas (BPAs) are considered part of our marine protection network. New Zealand's reporting on the extent of marine areas under protection has varied, primarily over whether BPAs are included. We believe that protection of representative examples of bioregions is the key indicator of the effectiveness of New Zealand's marine protection regime. On this basis New Zealand's current marine protection is well below average when compared to international standards and the performance of other countries, notably Australia and the United States.

International Commitments Relevant to Marine Protection

3. New Zealand's obligations concerning Marine Protected Areas are found primarily in the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992 (CBD). The scope of the CBD includes Exclusive Economic Zones and extended continental shelf areas.
4. The main international commitment that is relevant to MPA reform is the CBD Aichi Target 11. This states that *by 2020... 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.*
5. This is the standard against which the international community assesses progress in marine protection by states. New Zealand committed to the Aichi targets in 2011 and re-affirmed the importance of implementing them at Rio+20 in 2012.
6. BPAs have been reported to the CBD, so New Zealand could be considered well ahead of its target at over 20% of protection. However if we use our own domestic standards of marine protection based on the Marine Protected Areas Policy and Implementation Plan 2005, which exclude BPAs, then we are well behind our target at less than 1% (see Appendix I).

International Comparison

7. The United States and Australia are world leaders in marine protection with the U.S. having upwards of 30% of their marine estate classified as being protected under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Most MPAs in the US and Australia are for multiple-use purposes eg, around 40% of the Gulf of Mexico is in some form of MPA. This provides both internationally recognised marine protection and commercial use¹ in a manner similar to your proposed reforms.
8. It is difficult to compare New Zealand's marine protection internationally over our entire marine estate. New Zealand's marine protection in the EEZ compares poorly with other countries when BPAs are not included (see Appendix II). Even when comparing protection in the territorial sea New Zealand ranks at around the world average, well below several comparable countries (see Appendix III).

New Zealand Marine Protected Areas

9. You will be aware that there are currently 44 marine reserves in New Zealand ranging in size from 0.93 km² to 7,480 km². They cover a total area of 17,698 km², or around 9.8% of New Zealand's Territorial Sea (12% when other types of marine protection such as cable and fisheries closures are included), or 0.29% of New Zealand's total marine estate.²
10. Existing protection is most prominent around the Kermadec and Subantarctic Islands bioregions. Additional protected areas are required to ensure adequate representation of New Zealand's biodiversity within marine protected areas.³
11. Benthic Protected Areas cover around 32% of the EEZ or 19% of New Zealand's total marine estate (territorial sea, EEZ and extended continental shelf).⁴ These areas are not recognised as Marine Protected Areas domestically under the Marine Protected Areas Policy and Implementation Plan 2005, but have been reported internationally. This difference in interpretation defines whether New Zealand is a world leader in marine protection or not.

Signed: Glenn Wigley, Director Environmental Systems

Contents noted.

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Minister for the Environment

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¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (United States Department of Commerce)

² Marine Mammal Sanctuaries are not considered MPAs either domestically or internationally.

³ DOC and MPI 2011: Coastal marine habitats and marine protected areas in the New Zealand Territorial Sea: a broad scale gap analysis

⁴ DOC and MPI joint network fact sheet September 2014