

Under the authority of the Canada Wildlife Act, important wildlife habitats are set aside for purposes of wildlife research, conservation, and public education. On land and in coastal waters out to the 12-nautical-mile territorial sea limit, these areas are called National Wildlife Areas, while beyond they are known as Marine Wildlife Areas.

National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCAs) are part of a family of protected areas administered by Parks Canada to protect and commemorate the country's natural and cultural heritage. The objective of the National Marine Conservation Areas Program is to protect and conserve for all time marine areas that are representative of the country's ocean environments and Great Lakes, and to encourage public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of this marine heritage so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations. Waters of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans — out to 200 nautical miles — and Canada's Great Lakes waters have been divided into twenty-nine marine regions. The long-term goal is to establish NMCAs representing each region. While provisions exist under the National Parks Act to establish these areas, new legislation is being developed for the administration of NMCAs.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, under the authority of the Oceans Act, can establish Marine Protected Areas in marine waters under Canada's jurisdiction for the conservation and protection of fish and other living marine resources and their habitats; endangered and threatened species and their habitats; marine areas of high biodiversity or biological productivity; unique habitats; or for any other reason pursuant to the mandate of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

In 1998, Canada announced five pilot Marine Protected Areas: the Sable Gully, Gabriola Passage, Race Rocks, the Endeavour Hot Vents Area, and the Bowie Seamount Area.

The Oceans Act provides the coordination and planning framework that enables key stakeholders to help create an overall system of protected areas for Canada's estuarine, coastal, and marine waters.

MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Programmes of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

Degradation of the marine environment is a global problem that should be addressed through a concerted international and national effort. There are considerable social and economic pressures involved in this effort. The impacts of pollution from land-based activities include shellfish area closures, degraded beaches, destroyed fish habitat, and contaminated sites.