



IUCN Global Standard for Marine Protected Areas

This summary has been compiled following a seminar at ZSL London Zoo on Monday 3 December 2018.

Representatives of the Blue Belt Programme, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, research agencies, Governments of the UK, St Helena and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and UK NGOs met to discuss the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) [Global Standard for Marine Protected Areas](#) an event hosted by the Great British Oceans coalition.

Presentations were given by Professor Dan Laffoley, Dr Naomi Kingston and Dr Stephen Woodley, who have confirmed the accuracy of this record.

What is the IUCN MPA Standard for Marine Protected Areas?

In 2018, the IUCN published a document: Applying IUCN's Global Conservation Standards to Marine Protected Areas (known as *the MPA Standards*). A key objective of the paper was to provide clarity on what constitutes an internationally recognised MPA building on already approved policies. This was deemed necessary as the array of approved IUCN resolutions, recommendations and guidance documents had created some challenges within the international community regarding bringing the scattered advice together to understand what activities are permitted in MPAs and how they should be designed and managed. Consequently, there is a concern that some protections submitted to the World Database on Protected Areas by countries (and therefore counted against Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)) are falsely categorised as MPAs. This results in a false sense of progress against global marine conservation targets.

An MPA is: *"A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."*

According to the Standard, what are the essential characteristics that an MPA needs to have?

Only those sites where the main goal or outcome is conserving nature should be considered protected areas.

Essential characteristics that a MPA needs to have:

- conservation focused with nature as the priority
- defined goals and objectives which reflect these conservation values
- suitable size, location, and design that deliver the conservation values
- defined and fairly agreed boundary
- management plan or equivalent, which addresses the needs for conservation of the MPA's major values, and achievement of its social and economic goals and objectives
- resources and capacity to effectively implement

MPAs are therefore areas dedicated to conservation, where if there is a conflict in objectives, conservation comes first. Evidence should be provided to demonstrate how the whole area within the MPA boundary is being treated through management to have a primary focus on conservation. It is insufficient to take restricted measures for fisheries in an area and fail to explicitly define comprehensive in situ conservation objectives and associated management measures for the whole area, and still call it an MPA. Areas only with such fisheries measures need to be recognised and celebrated under another CBD international target – Target 6.

Unsustainable extractive activities, particularly those on the industrial scale, temporary management measures, zoned water column protections, single species protections, or bans on damaging gear will not lead to the long-term conservation of the whole ecosystem and therefore do not qualify as MPAs. To elaborate on key points discussed during the workshop:

1. As set out within the Standard, IUCN has a strong presumption against vertical zoning of MPAs, as it is ecological nonsense due to vertical connectivity (biological, physical and chemical) and anyway simply impossible to manage and enforce. As such, benthic closed areas should not be counted as MPAs but recognised under the CBD Fisheries Target 6.
2. Large scale industrial activities – a resolution was made at the WCC that these are not compatible with protected areas on land or in the ocean.
3. Large scale commercial fishing – governments are expected to articulate their definitions of ‘industrial’ and set that against clear guidance from IUCN on the levels of fishing permissible within the categories, and the fact that by resolution industrial scale activities are not compatible with protected areas.

What are Other Effective area based Conservation Measures (OECM)?

“Other effective area-based conservation measure” (OECM) means “a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”. OECMs will be called ‘conserved areas’ moving forwards.

New sets of IUCN guidelines are currently being developed for both MPAs and OECMs – both of which count against Aichi Target 11. The IUCN, as well as CBD guidance, asserts that the conservation benefits of OECMs should not be weaker than those within MPAs. As such, as with MPAs, fisheries or habitat management measures which apply broadly across wider seascapes rather than to distinct and well-defined geographic areas, are not in place for the long-term, focus on single species, and do not achieve sustained long-term outcomes for the overall *in situ* conservation of biodiversity should not be classified as OECMs.

What are the IUCN Green List standards?

The IUCN have also issued a [Green List Standard](#) for Protected and Conserved Areas. The following Green List criteria are intended to help evaluate and improve the performance of MPAs:

- Good governance,
- Sound planning and design, and
- Effective management, which leads to,
- Conservation outcomes

What is the role of the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)?

UN Environment WCMC is a centre of excellence for biodiversity insights and hosts the World Database on Protected Areas. This collates data from around 600 sources, helping to track the addition, revision or delisting of protected sites globally. The database is updated monthly and the latest Protected Planet Report shows a large increase in [marine protection](#) within EEZs in recent years.

Country and territory level summaries are available through the [Protected Planet website](#). Countries report progress towards the Aichi targets and WCMC staff have limited capacity to check all claims. The international community has an important role to play in helping to check entries and to provide support and advice. Evidence shows that good governance is equated to well performing protected areas.

There is now a mandate to build a database of the ‘other effective area based conservation measures’.