

# The Sensible Environmentalist

## Protecting Marine Environments

(NAPSA)—DEAR DR. MOORE:

**I've heard that some marine protected areas don't prohibit fishing. Isn't the point to restore depleted fish stocks?**



Dr. Moore

“No-take areas”, where all fishing is prohibited, are usually designated as marine or ecological reserves. But “marine protected area” (MPA) is a broad term that covers a variety of conservation goals. Many do help restore fish stocks by providing safe spawning and mating areas close to commercial fisheries. Others are created to protect, among other things, endangered species, habitats or submerged vessels (considered part of our marine heritage). The majority of MPAs are multiple use areas that ban or restrict commercial fishing while permitting sport fishing and other recreational uses.

MPAs have been referred to as the environmental issue of this decade. Over the past 10 years, countries such as ours focused on the land, making sure our forests are managed sustainably and setting aside networks of parks and protected areas. Many people considered oceans too large to suffer any real harm—but that has proven false. As a result, we must now work quickly to ensure that our fisheries are sustainable and

expand our network of protected marine ecosystems.

It's worth noting that, despite the recent flurry of attention, MPAs are nothing new. As long ago as 1947, more than 100 miles of coastline were set aside as part of Everglades National Park—and there are many other examples. What is new is the increasing sense of urgency.

It's encouraging that countries around the world now recognize the value of MPAs as a marine conservation tool. Unfortunately, despite good intentions, less than one percent of the world's marine ecosystems are currently protected and many of those receive little or no enforcement. We can and must do better.

Over-fishing has had devastating impacts on the populations of many species of fish and shellfish and MPAs can help protect important spawning and rearing areas—especially on reefs. On land, North America has set aside a greater area of parks and protected areas than any other region in the world. As sensible environmentalists, we should be encouraging our governments to give marine environments the same level of protection.

*Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to [Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com](mailto:Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com).*