

Marine Reserves

New Zealand's first marine reserve (Cape Rodney – Okakari Point Marine Reserve) was established in 1975 and was one of the world's first no-take marine reserves. There are now over 30 marine reserves established in New Zealand waters.

Marine reserves are specified areas of the sea and foreshore that are managed to preserve them in their natural state as the habitat of marine life for scientific study. Marine reserves may be established in areas that contain underwater scenery, natural features, or marine life of such distinctive quality, or so typical, beautiful or unique that their continued preservation is in the national interest.



Marine Reserves protect areas of national interest

Of New Zealand's total marine environment, just 0.3% is protected in marine reserves. Currently the highest level of protection outside of our Territorial Sea is through fisheries closures on trawling for 18 seamounts. The inclusion of these closures brings the area of marine protection in New Zealand's marine environment to just over 3%.

Within a marine reserve, all marine life is protected and fishing and the removal or disturbance of any living or non-living marine resource is prohibited, except as necessary for permitted monitoring or research. This includes dredging, dumping or discharging any matter or waste whatsoever.



The public is welcome and encouraged to enjoy marine reserves. In all marine reserves you may dive, snorkel, take photos, swim, kayak, anchor (with care) and navigate through these areas.

Over half of these marine reserves were external applications lodged by interest groups including tangata whenua, conservation groups, fishers, divers and marine science interest groups.

Collectively, these reserves protect 7.6% of New Zealand's territorial sea. However, 99% of this is in two marine reserves around isolated offshore island groups (Auckland and Kermadec), and very little, in fact less than the area of our smallest National Park (Abel Tasman), in our mainland territorial sea.

Before visiting a marine reserve be sure to check with the Department of Conservation for relevant information on the particular marine reserve you wish to explore.

www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/marine-and-coastal