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Reader Challenge: When Was the First MPA Designated?

The past two decades have experienced a surge in the number of marine protected areas designated around the world. Some are small, some larger; some are no-take, some multiple-use. The global collection of MPAs -- consisting of thousands of sites worldwide -- has evolved to feature a broad range of designs, management regimes, and goals.

But from what did this MPA constellation evolve? How has MPA practice changed since the first marine protected area? And what do those changes mean for how practitioners should plan for the future?

To begin to answer these questions, one must first decide on when the first MPA was designated. This point is surprisingly unclear. Last month, in the *coral_list* online discussion group (see box at end of article), the question of when the first MPA was designated elicited answers suggesting sites across the globe, with designation dates ranging decades or more.

In the interest of getting to the bottom of this, MPA News presents a challenge to its readers. It consists of one question, to which we'd like your best effort to answer:

When was the first MPA designated?

Entries will be featured in an upcoming issue of MPA News. In addition, the oldest MPA nominated for each continent will be listed.

Here are the ground rules:

1. Each entry should provide the name of the MPA, year of its designation, country name, and some sort of documentation or reference to verify the entrant's claim.
2. For purposes of clarity, please use the IUCN definition of marine protected area: "An area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment."
3. Nominated MPAs must exist currently. (We realize that this turns the contest into more a question of the *oldest* MPA -- which is not necessarily the same as the *first* MPA. That said, if a really old, nonexistent MPA is nominated, we very well might mention it.)
4. The entrant who submits the entry for the oldest existing MPA will receive an official MPA News tote bag as a prize.
5. Submit entries to MPA News at mpanews@u.washington.edu. Entries must be received by October 15, 2001.

Thanks! We look forward to hearing from you.

Box: To join the *coral_list* online discussion group

For directions on subscribing to coral-list, go to <http://www.coral.noaa.gov>, move your mouse over "Popular" on the menu bar, then click on "Coral-List Listserver".

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