

HOW WELL DOES YOUR STATE PROTECT YOUR COASTAL WATERS?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People's lives and livelihoods depend critically on healthy oceans, but human activities now threaten marine life and, hence, our lives. Marine biologists recommend creating strong **no-take marine reserves** to safeguard marine life. While many coastal states and territories have established scattered marine protected areas, these zones are often weak and temporary, offering few benefits to marine life and people. In contrast, **no-take marine reserves** are free from extractive activities such as fishing, mining and oil & gas development. Protecting biodiversity increases the abundance of fishes and promotes the quantity of marine life exported to surrounding areas, securing food resources for millions of people.

Our finding: Few states provide strong protection for marine ecosystems. There is still an enormous need for ocean protection.

STATE AND TERRITORIES

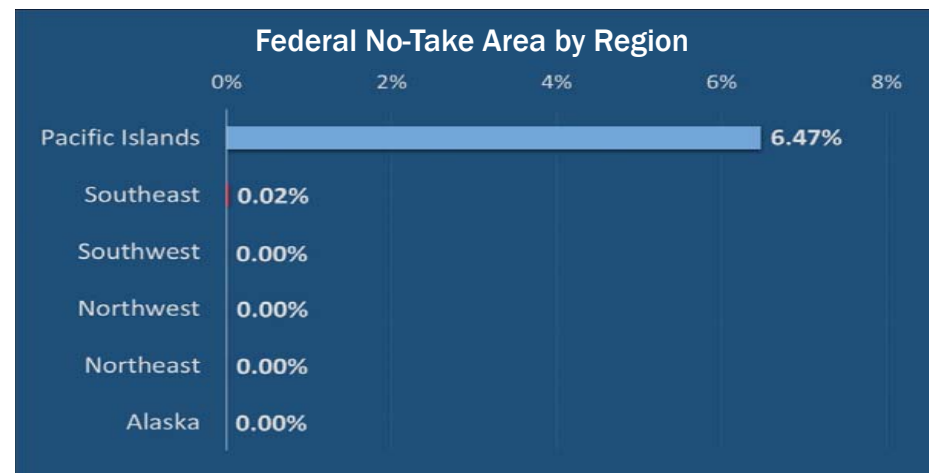
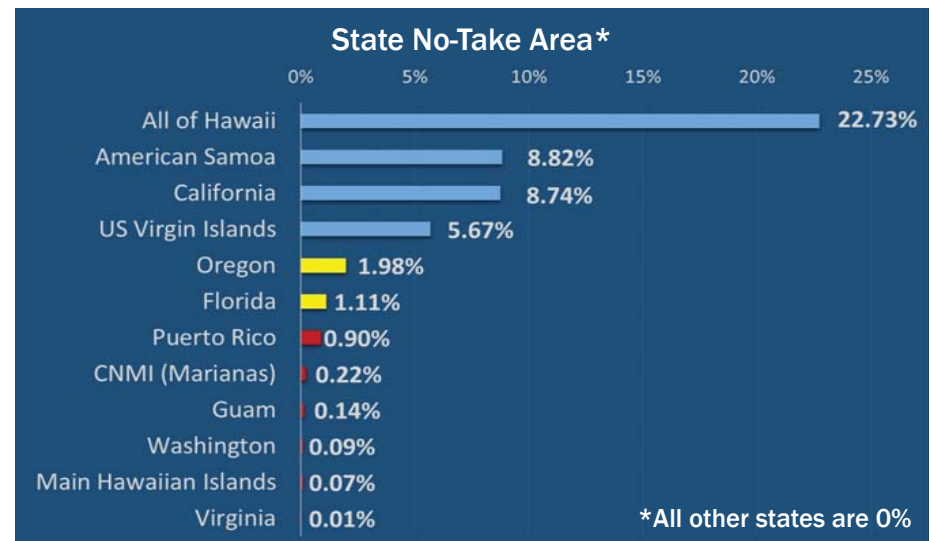
The best-protected states and territories are American Samoa, California, and the US Virgin Islands. In the last year, Oregon was the only US state to increase protection of its waters. Disappointingly, the majority of states do not have marine reserves in their coastal waters, which generally include all marine area within 3 nautical miles from shore.

FEDERAL WATERS

This year we expanded our analysis to waters between the limit of state jurisdiction and the US exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which includes waters out to 200 nautical miles (230.16 statute miles) from the coast. Very few no-take areas exist in the US EEZ. While there are a large number of fishing regulations, only the Southeast Region (0.02% no-take area) and the Pacific Islands (6.47% no-take area) protect more than a single square mile of their region with no-take marine reserves.

For more information, visit us at www.seastates.us

2014 RANKINGS

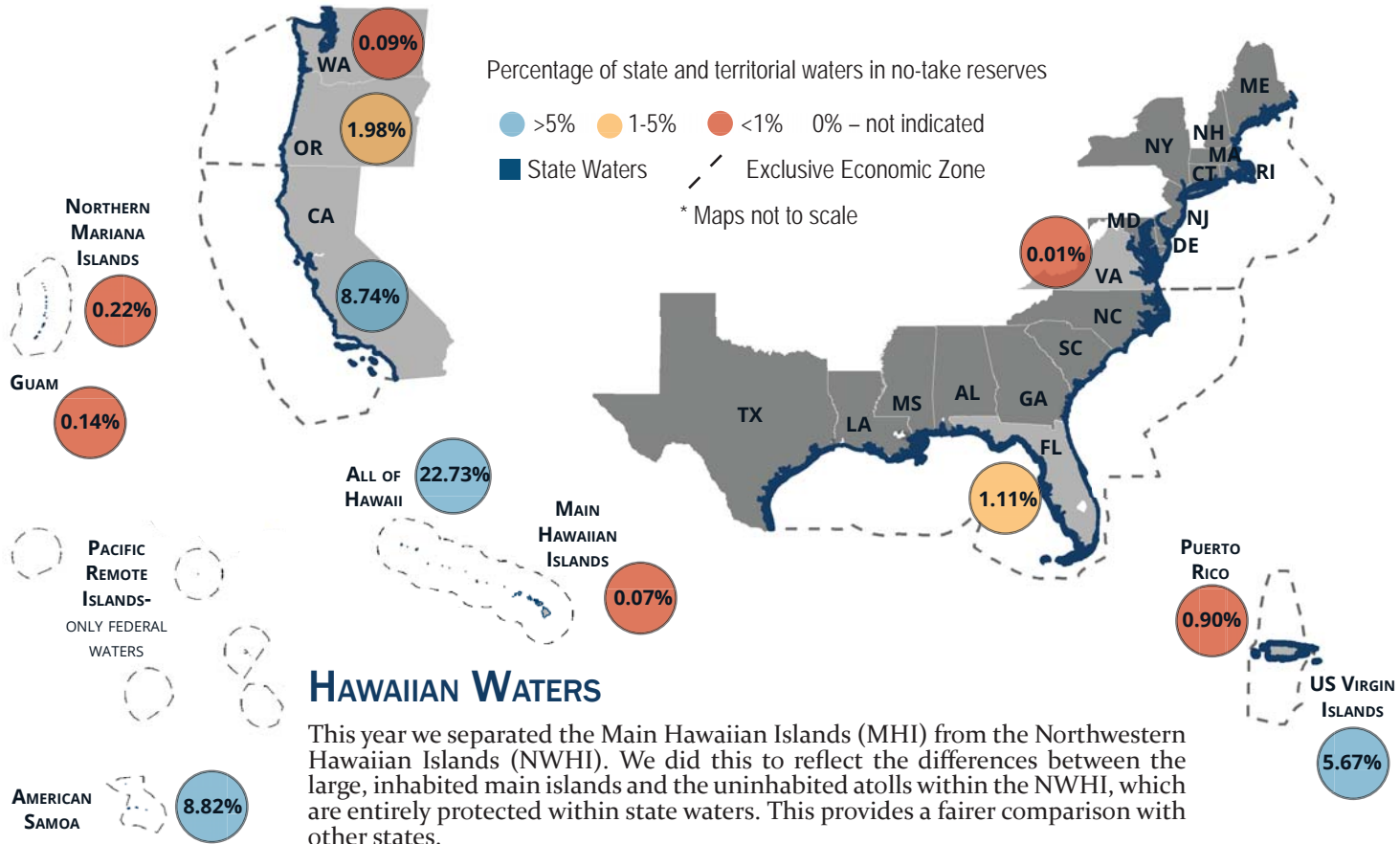


WHAT CHANGED THIS YEAR?

The biggest change in the ranking of states' no-take area this year was American Samoa which moved up from 10th overall to 2nd most area set aside in marine reserves. This was due to increased protection in Rose Atoll Marine National Monument. Oregon's two new marine reserves at Cape Perpetua and Cascade Head moved the state up to 5th place overall, ahead of Florida and Puerto Rico.

Another big advance in the past year occurred in the US possessions in the Pacific. No-take areas were established from shore to 12 nautical miles (13.8 statute miles) in the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) for a total of 5,277 square miles of newly protected ocean. These small islands and atolls in the Central Pacific Ocean are not formally a state or territory and are entirely managed by the federal government. Thus, possessions were not included in our 2013 SeaStates report.

Next year we hope to see a dramatic increase in the amount of no-take protection following President Obama's proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.



HAWAIIAN WATERS

This year we separated the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). We did this to reflect the differences between the large, inhabited main islands and the uninhabited atolls within the NWHI, which are entirely protected within state waters. This provides a fairer comparison with other states.

MARINE PROTECTED AREA VERSUS MARINE RESERVE?

Studies show that no-take marine reserves are the most effective type of protected areas. Marine reserves prohibit all extractive activities and therefore deliver the conservation benefits that communities need and expect from protecting these areas. A marine reserve is analogous to a savings account, if you maintain a principle balance you can earn an income from it.

In contrast, throughout the US most marine protected areas offer limited protections. For example, some may allow bottom trawling or other types of fishing, while others may allow dredging, mining, oil and gas development and other detrimental activities.

Many so-called protected areas are more appropriately termed fisheries management areas as they do not have strong conservation objectives. Fishing regulations do offer some protections in the form of restricted fishing seasons, gear choices, or prohibitions on certain species, but they do not offer the full suite of safeguards critical to ensuring the resilience of our ocean ecosystems.

To successfully recover and maintain healthy oceans, scientists recommend protecting at least 20% of each biogeographic region in no-take marine reserves. Currently, only 1.26% out of all US waters are protected at this level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Front image of the Channel Islands National Park courtesy of Brett Seymour, National Park Service Submerged Resources Center. Data for SeaStates provided by US National Marine Protected Areas Center and MPAAtlas. For more information, please visit www.SeaStates.us and www.MPAAtlas.org