

Paper parks fail to protect marine life

*Urgent action needed to improve compliance
in marine protected areas*

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Responsibility

The Canadian government is responsible for ensuring that compliance is monitored & grows within marine protected areas (MPAs). Failure to do so enables the ongoing depletion of marine life, which can impair the social, cultural, and economic well being of coastal communities



Issue

The federal government has limited capacity for an on-the-water presence across all 3 coasts, which restricts its ability to monitor and grow compliance



What's at stake

Establishing new MPAs without addressing existing compliance problems undermines conservation objectives, erodes social license, and contributes to increased numbers of paper parks



Policy opportunity

Support and enable community-based stewardship and monitoring initiatives using federal legal and financial tools so that people who live on and near the water can effectively take care of life in the sea



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Canada's commitment to marine conservation

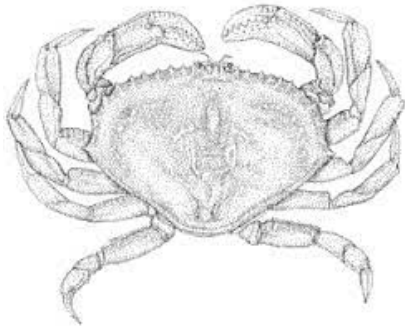
- In June 2020, Canada committed to protecting 25% of our territorial waters by 2025 and 30% by 2030. This bold marine conservation goal builds upon Canada's successful accomplishment of Aichi Target 11 (to protect 10% of our territorial ocean by 2020) established under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Sustainable Development Goal 14 - life below water¹
- Achieving these targets will involve designating new marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (e.g. fisheries closures) along Canada's 3 coasts
- Marine protected areas are designed to protect the health and abundance of life in the sea by regulating extractive human activities such as fishing, mining and development
- Effectively protecting 30% of our ocean by 2030 will establish Canada as a global leader in marine conservation, and protect marine life as well as coastal communities whose economic, cultural and social well-being directly depend upon a healthy ocean
- Unfortunately, these positive outcomes can be jeopardized due to a systemic underlying problem: **many marine protected areas are paper parks that fail to achieve their conservation goals due to low compliance**²



What is a paper park?

- The term paper park refers to protected areas that fail to deliver conservation benefits for a variety of reasons, such as inappropriate design (e.g. too small, wrong location), lack of enforcement, and low compliance. Paper parks are especially common in the ocean due to the costs and barriers associated with regulating efforts at sea
- Non-compliance can be intentional or unintentional. Addressing each of these categories requires policymakers and managers to pay attention to the **human dimensions** of marine conservation, such as governance, economic incentives, social norms, and rightsholder and stakeholder conflict and collaboration potential³

Community leadership case study 1:



Policy opportunity:

Support the alignment of Indigenous and federal legal tools and support the implementation of co-governance & co-management frameworks to protect marine life and manage compliance within MPAs

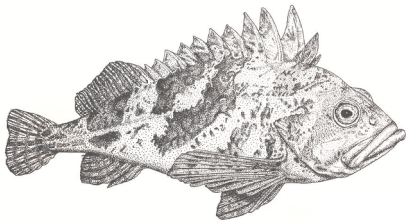
Implementing Indigenous law leads to high voluntary compliance

Indigenous nations throughout the world have created Guardian programs to uphold Indigenous laws, governance responsibilities, and stewardship within their territories. **Guardian programs are often referred to as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the land and water⁴.**

In Canada, Indigenous Guardian programs along British Columbia’s Central and North Coasts play a major role in enforcing regulations declared under Indigenous law. For example, in 2014 the Heiltsuk, Kitsoo/Xai’Xais, Nuxalk, and Wuikinuxv First Nations proposed a network of fisheries closures to protect declining Dungeness crab populations. Initially, the federal government refused to acknowledge these closures. Therefore, the nations communicated directly with recreational and commercial fishers and secured high voluntary compliance. Following the implementation of these voluntary Indigenous-led closures, crab abundance and body size increased within the closed areas. Indigenous Guardians continue to monitor compliance and marine life recovery in these areas⁵.

On April 1st 2021, the four First Nations and DFO announced the implementation of a collaborative governance framework that will guide decision-making associated with several species within this region going forward.

Community leadership case study 2:



Policy opportunity:

Ensure that MPA management plans support and build the capacity of community-based monitoring initiatives, which can increase awareness and reduce unintentional non-compliance within protected areas

Community – academic partnerships lead to 28% decline in illegal fishing

From 2003-2007, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans established 164 Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) along British Columbia’s coastline to protect vulnerable groundfish species from over-fishing. These fisheries closures restrict bottom contact fishing by both commercial and recreational fishing sectors. Unfortunately, the efficacy of RCAs is uncertain in many places within British Columbia due to high rates of non-compliance: in a coastwide study up to a quarter of recreational fishers reported unintentional or intentional non-compliance⁶.

Recent research demonstrated that unintentional non-compliance can be effectively addressed via outreach, public education, and shore-based monitoring techniques. Through distributing informational brochures, installing signage, conducting dockside surveys, and using trail cameras to monitor illegal fishing activity within RCAs in the Salish Sea, researchers observed a drop in unintentional compliance by 28% over a four year period⁷.

1. Government of Canada. Reaching Canada’s marine conservation targets (2020). 2. Agardy T, di Sciara GN, Christie P. *Marine Policy*. 35:2, 226-232 (2011). 3. Pieraccini M, Coppa S, De Lucia A. *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and freshwater ecosystems*. 27(1): 177-196 (2016). 4. Hewson S, Nowlan L, Lloyd-Smith G, Carlson D, Bissonnette M. *West Coast Environmental Law*. 324pp (2020). 5. Frid A, McGreer M, Stevenson A. *Global Ecology and Conservation*. 6: 48-57 (2020). 6. Lancaster D, Dearden P, Ban N. *Global Ecology and Conservation*. 4: 645-657 (2015). 7. Ban N, Kushneryk K, Falk J, Vachon A, Sleight L. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. 77(6): 2308-2318 (2019).