

Marine parks bolster local communities

Victoria's oceans are one of our biggest assets, brimming with unique and beautiful marine life. But if they are to exist for generations to come they need the full protection marine national parks can give.

Most of our coastal towns have changed dramatically, with fishing no longer having the same economic significance as it once did. Some now act as dormitory suburbs, others as retirement areas, and all have tourism activity that does not depend on commercial or recreational fishing.

Marine national parks, when integrated with existing conservation reserves and other natural capital, and included within regional tourism, economic and environmental strategic planning, can produce significant, long-term regional development benefits.

They will broaden the tourism base of coastal towns, offer new employment opportunities and help to achieve a sustainable approach to resource utilisation. But to be effective they must be properly resourced and promoted.

Direct employment

Marine national parks will generate direct employment of park ranger and enforcement officer positions in coastal communities. The rangers will manage the parks, develop interpretation programs and educate the community about the significance and objectives of the marine national parks.

The enforcement officers will maintain the integrity of the marine national parks and work to reduce illegal fishing within all of Victoria's coastal waters. Some of the new rangers and enforcement officers will move into coastal communities with their families, generating new enrolments at schools and new demand in local shopping centres.

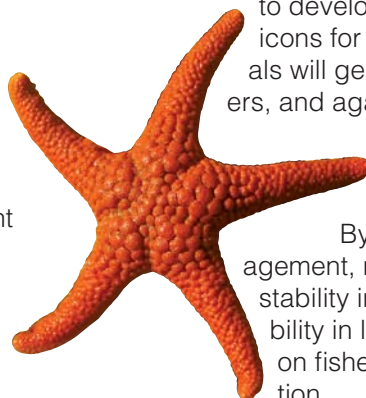
The parks and sanctuaries will also stimulate employment in other areas such as nature-based tourism, diving, snorkelling, charter-boat hire, educational activities (with spinoffs to local accommodation, take-away

businesses etc) and research scholarships.

Servicing of infrastructure

The marine national parks will require servicing of equipment, for example boats, and the provision of materials and equipment to ensure staff can successfully carry out their functions.

The parks will also create the need and opportunity to develop new information materials, images and icons for the regions. The production of these materials will generate work for local printers and designers, and again attract greater interest in the region.



Stable, sustainable fisheries

By underpinning sustainable fisheries management, marine national parks will generate more stability in regional fisheries, and therefore more stability in local economies that have greater reliance on fisheries for employment and income generation.

By acting as reference areas and benchmarks, marine national parks and sanctuaries will generate a better understanding of fisheries management and lead to further progress towards sustainability.

Marine research

Marine national parks will generate a considerable research effort in regional areas within government agencies such as Parks Victoria and Fisheries Victoria, but also within tertiary education institutions such as Deakin University at Warrnambool, and possibly through local research consultancies.

The marine national parks and sanctuaries will become a focus for scholarships, research consultancies and degree studies. This will contribute to the research-skills base of teaching staff and students (thus increasing their employment prospects) and add to the knowledge base about the marine resources of the region.

Marine national parks and sanctuaries will also se-

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Victorian National Parks Association

Fact sheet – Marine parks, creating sustainable communities



cure biological resources with, as yet, unknown potential. Victoria's marine plants and animals may hold the key to future medical, agrochemical and biotechnological advances, as marine creatures have done in other parts of the world.

The international significance of the network will ensure that Victoria attracts considerable attention from research institutions both nationally and internationally.

Our research institutions are likely to build considerable expertise that will make them globally competitive in the area of sustainable marine resource use.

Research will also be required to provide a foundation for the development of:

1. The management planning process for each of the marine national parks.
2. Monitoring and benchmarking programs (in this instance close cooperation with the Commonwealth Government is crucial to ensure consistency for all marine protected areas in Australia).
3. Sustainable-use management of the 93.8 per cent of coastal waters not included in the marine national parks system.
4. Ecosystem management of fisheries as opposed to single-species management.

Strategies to boost tourism

Around the world, sustainable tourism has provided regional economic benefits and increased community awareness of the natural environment. A growing number of Australians and overseas visitors are seeking nature-based tourism experiences, especially along Australia's magnificent coastline.

By establishing and promoting a system of marine national parks, Victoria has the opportunity to expand its marine-based tourism potential.

The marine national parks system will be a world class system that could attract many more people to the regions in which the parks are located. They will allow and encourage resource uses that are not dependent on collection or extraction eg. snorkelling, diving, swimming, sailing, kayaking and nature observation. Victoria's marine environment is the equal, and, in many ways, the superior, of the more-publicised tropical areas of Queensland.

Without the impacts of fishing and other extractive uses, the habitats in the marine national parks will remain intact and the size, diversity and abundance of fish and other species will increase, all adding to the wonder of the dive experience.

Cover photos: Weedy sea dragons, Parks Victoria/Mary Malloy; hermit crab, DSE/William Boyle; Southern Dumping Squid, Parks Victoria/Bill Boyle; sea-grass, Parks Victoria/Mary Malloy.



Marine-based tourism holds enormous potential for the towns along Victoria's Great Ocean Road. Photo: David Neilson

Environmental education

Environmental education programs will attract schools to the parks and sanctuaries in their regions. The visiting schools require accommodation, food and other resources that will be generated within the coastal region.

Successful programs carried out at the site of the proposed Discovery Bay Marine National Park are a case in point, as is the Marine Discovery Centre in Queenscliff, which services over 25,000 students each year.

Education programs will also need to be developed for recreational and commercial fishers, divers, and the broader community in relation to the objectives of marine national parks and the regulations surrounding them.

Helping achieve sustainable fisheries

Marine national parks can help Victoria achieve sustainable fisheries because they conserve marine resources, act as refuges for targeted fish, provide reference sites to assess the impacts of fishing, increase egg and larval production and insure against fish stocks collapse.

By excluding fishing from the marine national parks, the protected areas will return to more natural levels of productivity. Where fishing has been discontinued, species diversity, species size and abundance increase and reflect the natural system before fishing began. This can be used as a reference point to examine the impacts of fishing elsewhere and the ways in which these can be minimised.

Recreational and commercial fishers should be satisfied by the final marine national parks proposals. They will continue to have access to 94 per cent of Victoria's coastal waters and coastline, and should welcome highly protected marine areas, just as their colleagues have done in other parts of the world.