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Peer reviewed

Review: Marine Reserves: A Guide to Science, Design and Use

By Jack Sobel and Craig Dahlgren

Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller
San Francisco, USA

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Jack Sobel and Craig Dahlgren. *Marine Reserves: A Guide to Science, Design and Use*. Island Press (2004). 383 pages. Trade Paper ISBN: 1-55963-841-9 US \$35.00 Trade Cloth ISBN: 1-55963-840-0 US \$70.00 Printed on recycled, acid-free paper.

This thorough explanation of and rationale for marine protected areas details in common sense terms why they are necessary. Marine reserves can protect the seeding grounds for fish and therefore also the fishery stocks that fishing communities have depended upon. They can also protect the denizens of marine ecosystems that have been adversely affected by fishing. As the authors note:

“Considerable evidence that marine reserves are capable of increasing the abundance or density of exploited species is...provided by studies that have examined the change in the abundance or density of exploited species in an area over time before and after a reserve has been created. These studies typically show an increase in the abundance of exploited species within the reserve area for several years following its designation” (p. 97).

The political and legal history of marine protection is somewhat complicated due to numerous marine protection area designations and laws, but it is presented clearly and in a concerned way by the authors. Jack Sobel is a director at the Ocean Conservancy, and Craig Dahlgren is a science director at the Caribbean Research Center at the Perry Institute for Marine Science. Also included are chapters by others in the marine conservation field.

This internationally oriented book details the damage to marine systems and the signs of hope from the West Coast of America all the way around the world to Chile. Discussed in detail are research issues and methods, social considerations and implications, and lessons learned from establishing marine reserves so far. But there is still more to learn. “[The creation of] larger reserves and reserve networks provide[s] opportunities to greatly expand and document reserve benefits related to both ecosystem protection and fisheries conservation” (p. 358).

The authors argue for an “ocean ethic” akin to Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” as a means to advance ocean conservation and marine no-take reserves. This

helpful book abounds with reflection, introspection, concern, and vision.

Suprisingly there is no designation mentioned for those who do not eat fish for moral or health reasons. How about "nonpiscavore".

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Ryder W. Miller <dolphin1965@hotmail.com> is a freelance environmental and science reporter who has been published in *Sierra Magazine*, *California Coast & Ocean*, *California Wild*, and *Hydrosphere*.