Furthermore, research shows that the benefits derived from MPAs are commensurate with good design, the degree of resourcing providedⁱⁱⁱ, the degree of protection afforded through fair governance and effective management, and the scale at which they work together as a conservation network. With the rapid decline in ocean health, scientists, conservationists and some governments have called for at least 30% of the ocean to be highly protected in no-take MPAs, to support resilience and recovery for ecosystems, habitats and species^{iv}. The benefits, opportunities, and advantages of well-designed, established, and managed MPAs are proven and documented to grow over time.

For an area to qualify and be recognized as an MPA it must meet the IUCN protected area definition:

A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

MPAs fall into several different categories on a continuum from fully protected areas with no take, through to multiple use areas, as defined by the Guidelines for applying the IUON Protected Area Management Categories to Marine Protected Areas. The benefits to people and coastal communities, and the degree of delivery of conservation outcomes generally increase with the level of protection and effective management, and by a commensurate reduction in the intensity of use and exploitation.

MPAs are part of a suite of management options needed to help sustain ocean health. MPAs provide high quality, in situ, and targeted nature conservation, and can range from fully protected areas, to areas that zone and allow for some multiple use. The strategy and focus for MPAs and MPA networks

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- o Has adequate resourcing, including staff capacity, as this is shown to be a key determinant for management effectiveness and success.
- o Has sufficient investment in compliance.
- o Has monitoring to track performance and inform adaptive management. Such
- o Meets or exceeds the stated nature conservation objectives and goals.
- o Demonstrates successful long-term conservation of major natural values, with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.