

# Summary

AFS Policy Statement #18:  
Marine Wilderness  
(Abbreviated)

All marine ecosystems are experiencing increased exploitation, interference, and alteration. Human exploitation significantly alters the natural population structure and community dynamics even though resource management attempts to achieve the continued existence of biological diversity and resource stocks. Although various marine parks, reserves, monuments, and sanctuaries have been established, none totally protect its resources from exploitation. Marine wilderness areas would serve that function.

Marine wilderness is defined as "a unique or representative ecosystem or subset with geographically defined boundaries that is set aside, or 'protected' for non-consumptive usage." The major distinction between marine wilderness areas and other managed areas is that significant consumptive usage would not be permitted. The primary use for marine wilderness would be for research, education, and fisheries management. Marine wilderness areas would: (1) complement traditional fisheries management by allowing undisturbed population reservoirs to act as sources of recruitment and repopulation for exploited areas, (2) help maintain natural age structure of populations, ecosystem balance, and the genetic diversity of exploited populations, and (3) act as environmental insurance in case of resource management failures by providing unexploited populations.

The AFS policy regarding marine wilderness is to:

1. Promote establishment of marine wilderness areas of adequate size to maintain populations without direct human interference, including adequate buffer zones around their perimeters.
2. Limit consumptive use on such areas to legitimate research and education activities operationally defined on a case-by-case basis.
3. Promote administration and enforcement of all activities and regulations on an international, national, or local level, as appropriate.
4. Promote public involvement, education, and support for such areas.