

SeaWeb

*American Attitudes Toward Marine Protected
Areas*

May 2001

A Nexus Of Activity On Protected Areas Led SeaWeb To Conduct Polling

- Executive and legislative activity at the national and regional levels
- Benchmark breakthroughs in Florida and California
- Advances in science and later, a scientific consensus statement
- New interaction among sectors– science, advocacy and government
- Energetic NGO activity – new coordination on west and east coast

Overview of Key Research Findings:

- The public has strong positive associations and emotional connections to the oceans
- The public believes the oceans are in trouble
- Most believe regulations protecting the oceans are too lax and there is broad support for taking a tougher regulatory approach to protect the ocean including establishing protected areas and strengthening protections in the National Marine Sanctuaries
- The public clearly perceives appropriate and inappropriate uses of the ocean in protected areas:
 - Support research and recreational activities
 - Oppose invasive or extractive commercial activities

Overview of Key Research Findings, Continued

- ☛ The public believes the main threat to the ocean is pollution. Fisheries problems are mostly below their radar
- ☛ Likewise, ocean problems are not top of mind environmental considerations
- ☛ People understand that “water and fish move around” and do not understand how we can draw boundaries in the ocean
- ☛ People assume a greater level of protection exists than actually does

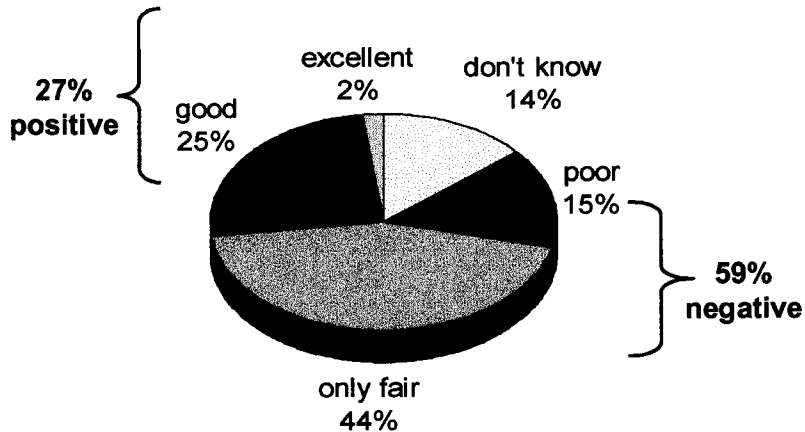
Methodology

Two studies are reported here:

- ☛ ***Attitudes Toward Marine Reserves***
 - 1000 adult Americans interviewed nationwide
 - Interviews conducted February 9-11, 2001
 - Margin of error +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level

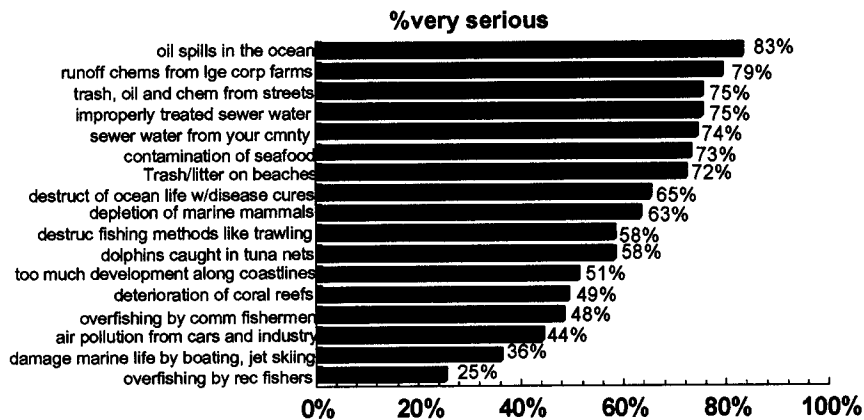
- ☛ ***Public Attitudes Toward Protected Areas in the Ocean***
 - Designed and conducted by the Mellman Group
 - 802 adult Americans were interviewed nationwide
 - An additional 250 adults residing in coastal states were also interviewed yielding 497 interviews among coastal state respondents
 - Interviews were conducted September 25 to October 3, 1999
 - Margin of error for the base sample is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level

Most Americans Have A Fairly Negative View Of The Overall Health Of The Oceans



Data from October 1999

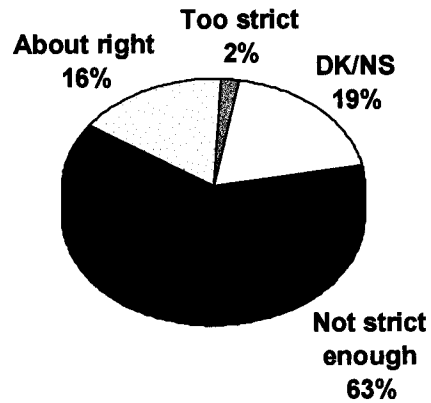
Pollution, Contaminated Seafood, And Dirty Beaches Top The List Of Ocean Concerns Recreation-related Concerns Are Seen As Less Serious



Data from October 1999

Nearly Two-Thirds Believe That Regulations Protecting The Ocean Are Too Lax

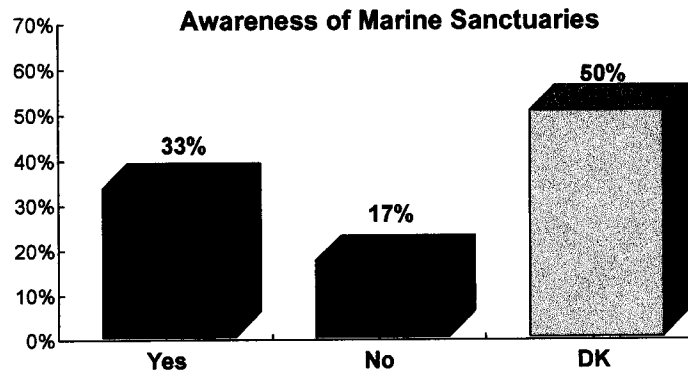
Are regulations protecting our oceans too strict, about right, not strict enough, or don't you have an opinion on this?



Data from October 1999

Only One-Third of Americans Are Even Dimly Aware Of The Existence of Marine Sanctuaries

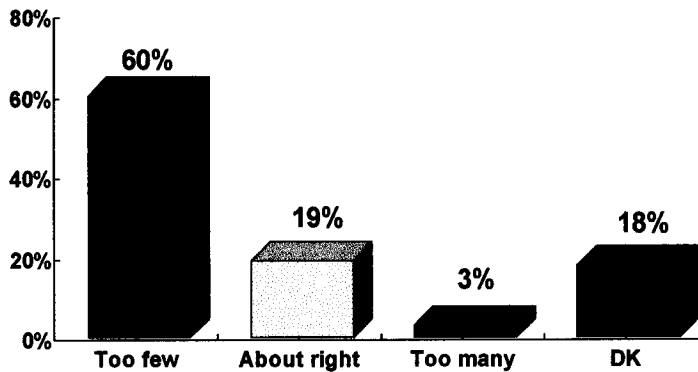
Do you happen to know whether or not the federal government has established certain areas of the ocean as marine sanctuaries -- or don't you happen to know?



Data from October 1999

Most Americans Think There Are Too Few Marine Sanctuaries

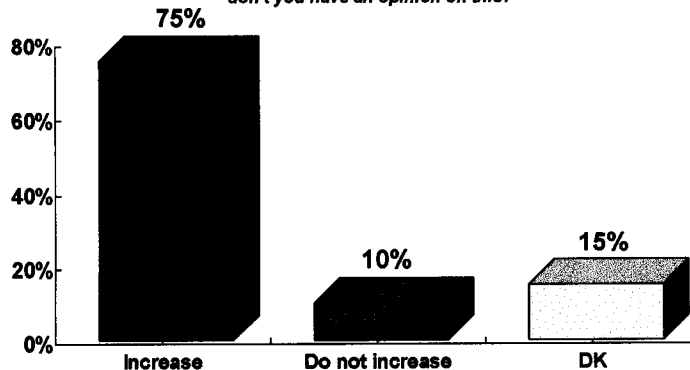
Currently there are 12 areas of the ocean in US territorial waters that are designated as marine sanctuaries. Do you think that is too many, about the right number, or too few?



darker shading=stronger intensity

Support For Strengthening Protections In The 12 Marine Sanctuaries Is Overwhelming

There are currently 12 marine sanctuaries in United States territorial waters which total about 1% of US waters and there are few restrictions on recreational or commercial activities within the sanctuaries. Do you think that we should increase protections that restrict human activities within the sanctuaries or do you think we should not increase protections that restrict human activities within the marine sanctuaries in U.S. waters or don't you have an opinion on this?



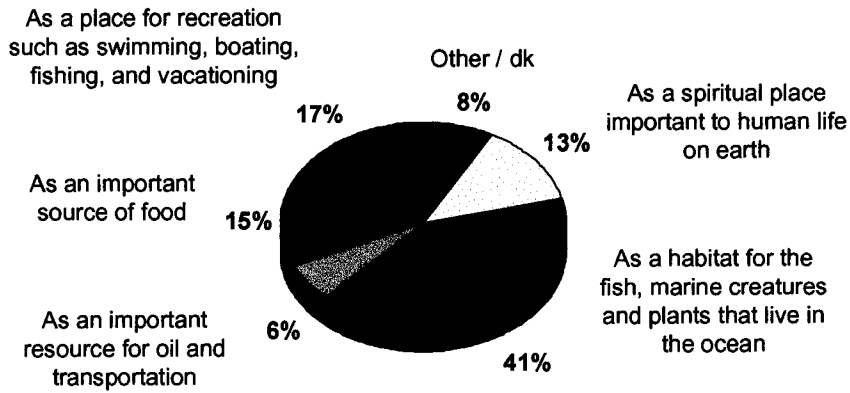
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Date from October 1999

A Plurality Think Of The Ocean As A Habitat For Marine Creatures

Only A Minority Think Of The Ocean In Purely Instrumental Terms

Which of the following best describes how you mainly think of the ocean?:



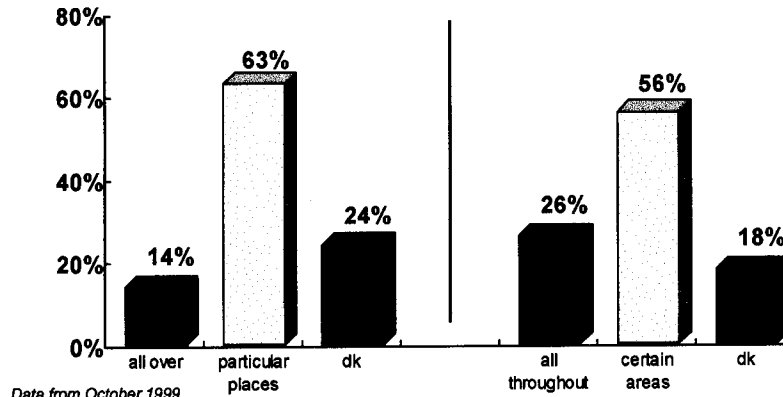
Data from October 1999

At The Same Time, People Are Not Sure Exactly How Ocean Systems Work

**Most, But Far From All, Think Fish Breeding Grounds And Coral Reefs
Are Found Only In Particular Places**

As far as you know, do most species of fish breed all throughout the ocean or do various species of fish breed in particular places within the ocean or don't you have an opinion on this?

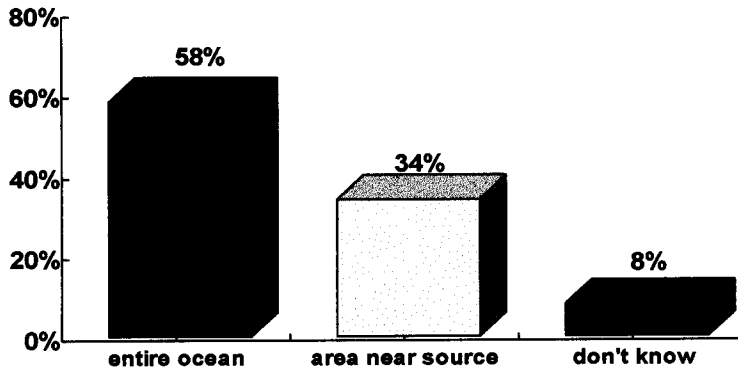
As far as you know, are coral reefs only found in certain areas of the ocean or are they found all throughout the ocean or don't you have an opinion on this?



Data from October 1999

On The Other Hand, Most Feel That Pollution In One Area Affects The Whole Ocean...

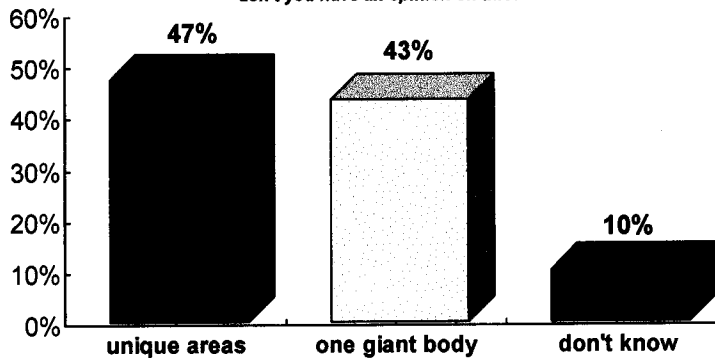
As far as you know, does pollution entering one area of the ocean affect the entire ocean, or does it mostly affect the area of the ocean near the source, or don't you have an opinion on this?



Data from October 1999

...Which Results In Division On Whether The Ocean Has Unique Areas That Can Be Protected

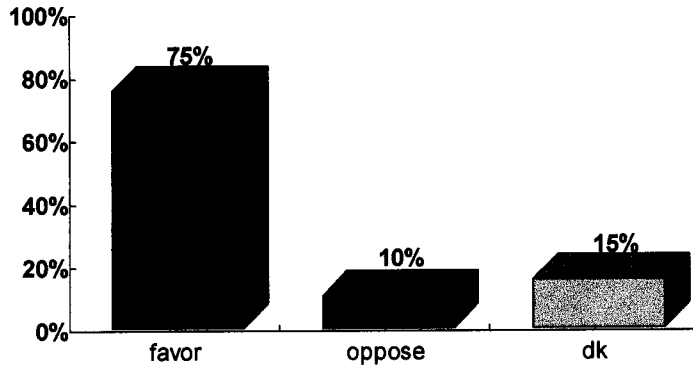
Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view:
The ocean, like the land, has certain areas that are unique and can be protected from pollution or overfishing OR The ocean is one giant body of water and protecting one particular area of it from pollution or overfishing is useless since anything that is done in one part of the ocean will affect every other part or don't you have an opinion on this?



Data from October 1999

Yet, When These Areas Are Described, Support For Protected Areas Is Broad And Strong

Do you favor or oppose the United States having certain areas of the ocean within U.S. territorial waters as ocean protected areas in which activities that can result in pollution, seriously deplete fish or marine life, or damage important underwater habitat such as coral reefs and other special places are limited, or don't you have an opinion on this?

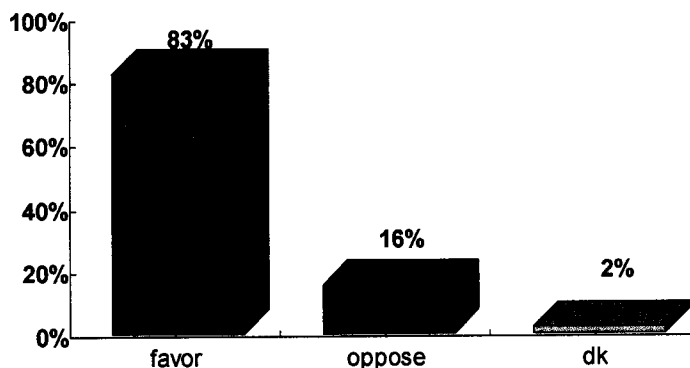


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Data from October 1999

More Recently, We Found Overwhelming Public Support For The Clinton Executive Order On Marine Reserves

Last May, former President Clinton signed an executive order calling on states, local governments and non-governmental organizations to create a system of protected areas in the oceans off the U.S. coasts. Do you favor or oppose this executive order to establish a system of marine protected areas in U.S. waters?



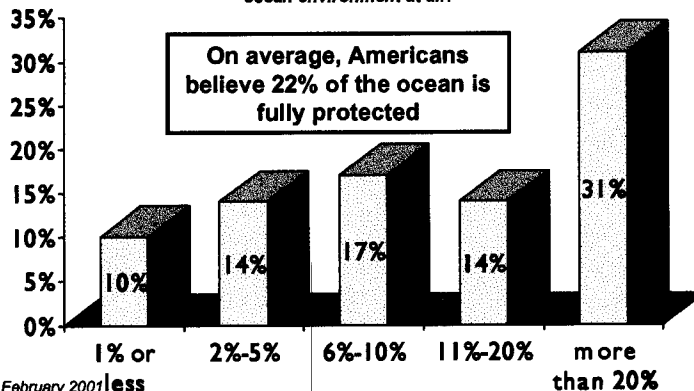
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Data from February 2001

SeaWeb Feb 2001

Americans Believe A Far Greater Percentage of Our Ocean Waters Are Fully Protected Than Actually Are

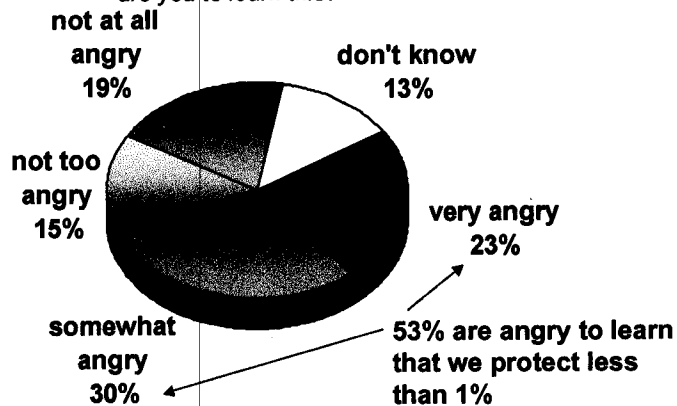
As you may know, there are different kinds of protected areas in American oceans – some are fully protected and allow no human activities that could harm the ocean environment at all. Other kinds of protected areas have lower levels of protected areas and ban only certain activities. What percentage of U.S. waters do you think are fully protected – that is, allow no human activities that could harm the ocean environment at all?



Data from February 2001

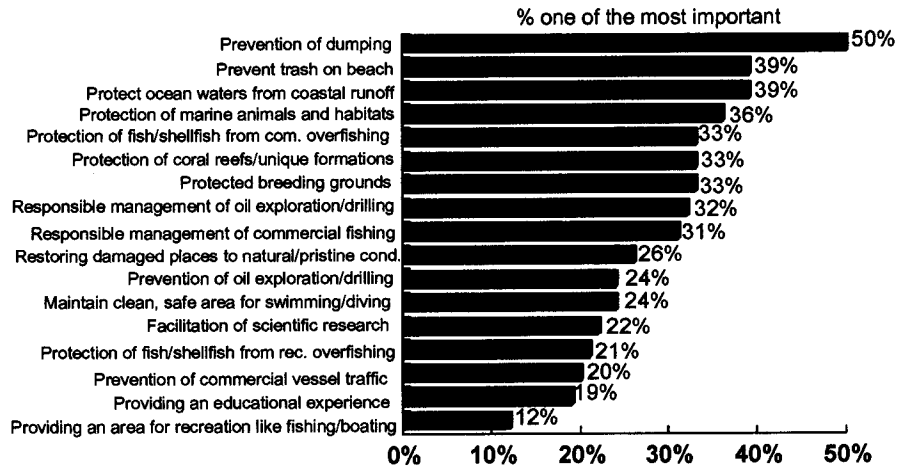
Americans Are Angered When They Learn How Small An Area Is Fully Protected

Actually, less than 1% of U.S. waters are fully protected and allow no human activities that could harm the ocean environment. How angry are you to learn this?



Data from February 2001

**Top Goals For Ocean Protected Areas Focus On Dumping And Pollution, Followed By Protection Of Sea Life And Habitats
Middle Tier Goals Focus On Management Of Commercial Enterprise**



Americans Want Invasive And Extractive Activities Prohibited In Reserves, But Would Allow Low-Impact Recreation

NOT ALLOW

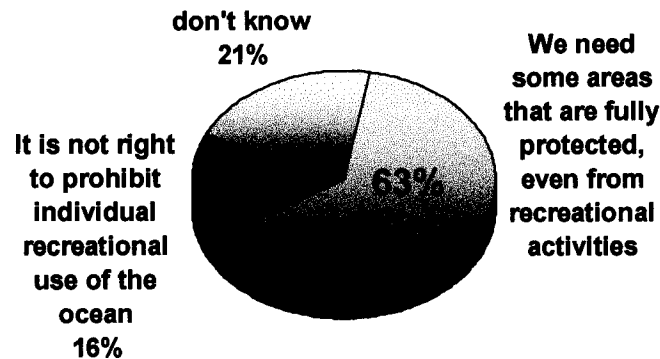
- Trawling 82%
- Disposal of dredged materials 82%
- Collecting tropical fish/coral 71%
- Drilling for oil 65%
- Commercial fishing 59%
- Motorboating 49%
- Sportfishing on commercial charters 46%

ALLOW

- Scientific research 81%
- Canoeing/sailing 76%
- Scuba diving 74%
- Charter boats for whale watching 55%
- Private sportfishing 49%

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Americans See A Value In Fully Protected Marine Reserves With No Exceptions for Even Recreational Activities



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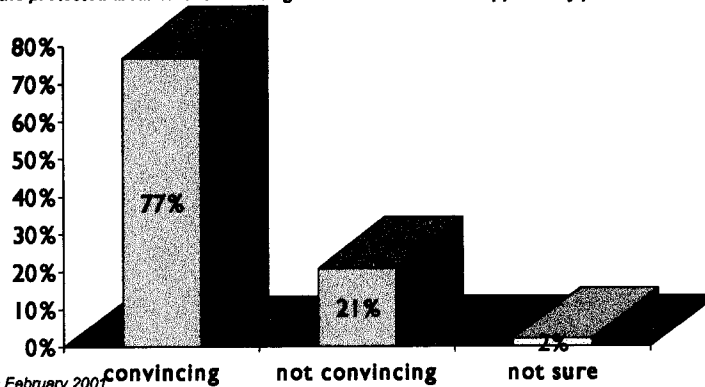
Recently, A Scientific Consensus Statement About The Effectiveness of Fully Protected Areas Was Issued

Recent analyses by scientists at NCEAS and others made the following conclusions:

- There are positive ecological effects *within* reserve boundaries
- There are positive ecological effects *outside* reserve boundaries
- There are positive ecological effects of reserve *networks*

The Public Finds Scientific Consensus To Be A Compelling Reason To Support Fully Protected Marine Areas

Leading marine scientists issued a statement recently saying that we need fully protected ocean areas that prohibit all invasive and extractive human activities, both recreational and commercial. These scientists say that the research shows that full protection in these areas leads to more robust and diverse marine life within the area, and also provides greater benefits to ocean habitat and marine life outside the protected area. How convincing is this as a reason to support fully protected ocean areas?



Some Implications

- **There Is Opportunity To Create A New Debate About The Mission of US Marine Sanctuaries**
- **Language Makes A Difference In How the Public Understands Protected Areas**
- **Although Support For Stronger Ocean Protection Is Overwhelming, Communicating The Need For and Efficacy of Protecting Specific Areas Is Important**
- **We Must Acknowledge The Desire To Enjoy And Use The Ocean Responsibly**