

MPA information sheet



Marine Protected Areas

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is often characterized as a “clearly defined geographical space, recognized, 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 provide a comprehensive approach to addressing the different threats to coral reefs. They have been used in several locations and are proving to be one of the most successful solutions to the survival of coral reefs.

MPA frameworks cover areas of coastal land and water that are designated to protect natural resources and ecosystems. Within the framework is guidance for sustainable use and resource management that is specifically designed to sustain coral reef health.

They are most effective when combined with other management strategies such as integrated coastal management to address threats that originate outside the MPA boundary such as farming.

Increasingly networks of MPAs are being implemented as being more resilient than an individual MPA. Networks of MPAs can fulfill ecological aims more effectively than individual sites could.

Social and economic objectives need to be considered when designing and managing an MPA location or network. By having socioeconomic and biophysical objectives the MPA can have a more holistic approach which can create the foundation needed to transform the way people address conflicts between the environment and the economy.

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Social factors to consider in MPA design

- Education and research opportunities
- Recreation
- Conflicts of interest
- Culture (religious, historical)
- Social acceptance (does the community support the MPA)

Economic factors to consider in MPA design

- Economic benefits to local economy
- Importance to species
- Importance of reef to fisheries (number of dependent fisheries and size of yield)

There are several types of Marine Protected area. Each type of MPA has its own uses.

Core MPA

- Some scientific research is allowable with a permit
- Should surround a variety of habitats
- Prohibits nearly all activities

Buffer Zone

- Allows tourism and fishing with a permit
- Usually surrounds the fringes of the core MPA
- Helps to concentrate activities in certain areas, therefore protecting other areas

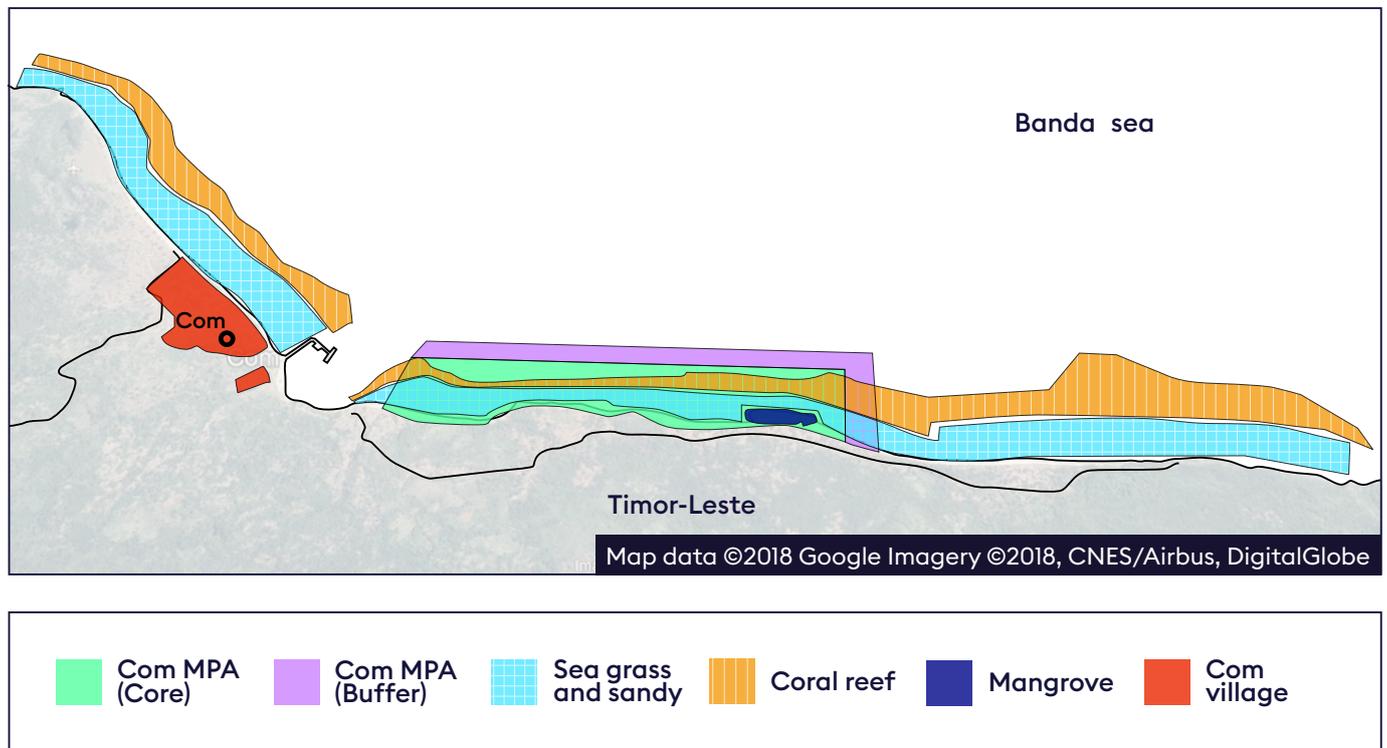
Scientific Research

- Allows scientific research, including the taking of samples
- Should be an area of scientific interest
- Requires a permit

No Take Zone

- Very restrictive. Makes activities like fishing and tourism illegal
- Usually surrounds a variety of habitats to protect spawning grounds of different species. Most effective where there is high biodiversity

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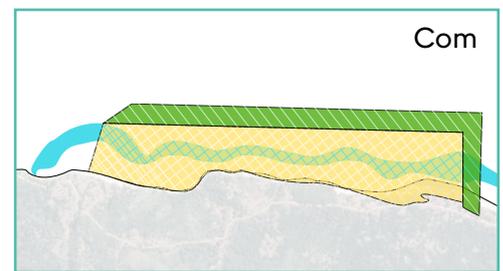
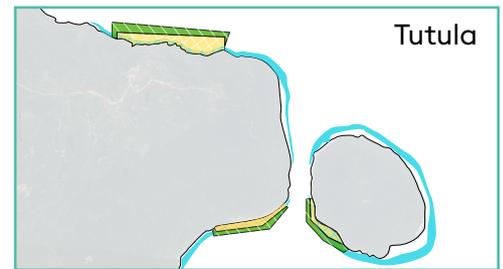
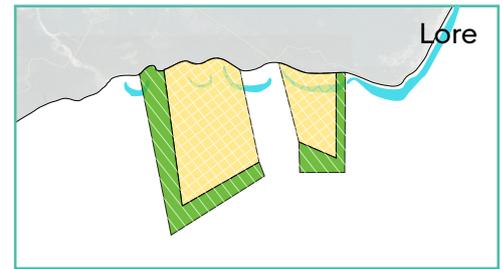
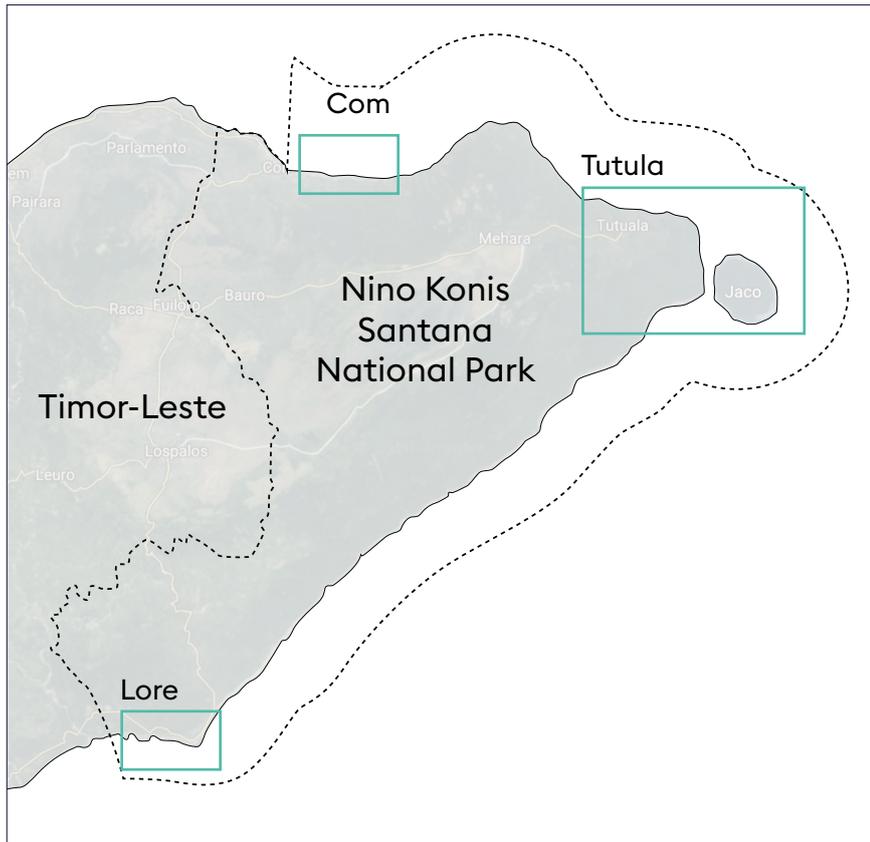
The map above shows the MPA for Com, a small coastal community in Timor-Leste, five hours away from the capital Dili. It is an example of Community Conservation and is part of a much larger national park. The Nino Konis Santana National Park was declared in 2007. The area of coverage of the Com MPA is 207km².

In 2013 the government of Timor-Leste launched seven community based 'No Take Zones' (NTZ) on the coral reefs near Com. These zones include restrictions on fishing to enable the fishing stocks to become replenished and support local people. These zones include coral reefs which will serve as fish spawning sites and protect key dive and snorkel sites for tourism purposes.

The NTZ were implemented after a marine survey showed that the coastal waters surrounding Timor-Leste contain the second highest average of reef fish species per site for any region on Earth and the coral reefs in Timor-Leste are some of the healthiest and most diverse in the world. With appropriate management these resources could hold significant potential for food security and economic development for Timor-Leste, the world's newest and one of the least developed countries.

The 'No Take Zones' will be enforced through a co-management approach between local, district and national fisheries authorities, funded by the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) as part of the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP).

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Com, Tutula and Lore MPAs  No take zone  Buffer zone  Coral reefs

The focus of the MPA in Timor-Leste was to develop a low-cost but effective management solution that included strong community participation. The co-management of the MPA is a collaboration between Conservation International – Timor-Leste and a local consultancy firm, Rai Consultadoria. Through this approach they hope to develop the knowledge and key skills needed for effective marine management within National, District and Village level. Local communities have been included throughout the implementation of the ‘No Take Zones’. They were taken through the whole planning process to: identify priority resources, including species and habitats and their status; identify major threats to those resources and their causes; and subsequently develop solutions to better manage their resources.

Within the Nino Konis Santana National Park there are also buffer zones, special regulation zones and a mix of gear restrictions, temporal closures and species specific take limits.