

WE WANT YOUR OPINION

DO YOU THINK A MARINE RESERVE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN THE OFFSHORE WATERS OF BERMUDA'S EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE?

The Bermuda Government is considering protecting a portion of the sea around Bermuda as a marine reserve. The concept is to protect the more distant waters of our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) while allowing for some measure of current and potential marine activities.

Having your say

The purpose of this consultation is to get your feedback on whether a marine reserve is the right option for the future protection of Bermuda's waters. Although the results of this consultation are not binding, the Government wants input from all residents on this issue. The decision on whether to restrict activity in a large portion of our offshore waters in the likelihood of maintaining and improving the health of the surrounding ocean, and reaping the associated benefits, is an important one.

Background

The sea around Bermuda, the Sargasso Sea, is vital to our island, and we have a strong tradition of caring for it. It supports our tourism, our valuable commercial, sport and recreational fisheries, and our way of life. Bermuda has rights and responsibilities for the area of ocean within 200 nautical miles of our island, known as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), 464,940 km², below.

Bermuda has a long history of managing its marine resources and regulatory measures are in place for activities in the EEZ. The next significant step forward would be to create a marine reserve, the equivalent of a national park, where harvesting and extraction would not be permitted at all. Establishing a "no-take" marine reserve in Bermuda's offshore waters would extend full protection to the designated area.



Why establish a marine reserve?

The Sargasso Sea is a unique and important ecosystem. Floating mats of seaweed provide a home for more than 100 species of fish and 145 types of invertebrates such as crabs, shrimp and sea slugs. Young turtles hide in the seaweed, eels and marlins come to breed, and humpback whales pass through during their yearly migrations. Abundant plant life plays an important role in regulating the global climate.



Yet this special place is threatened by fishing activities, which impact not only the oceanic fishes they catch, but can also harm other marine life, and by risks associated with shipping, pollution, seabed cables and other human activities.

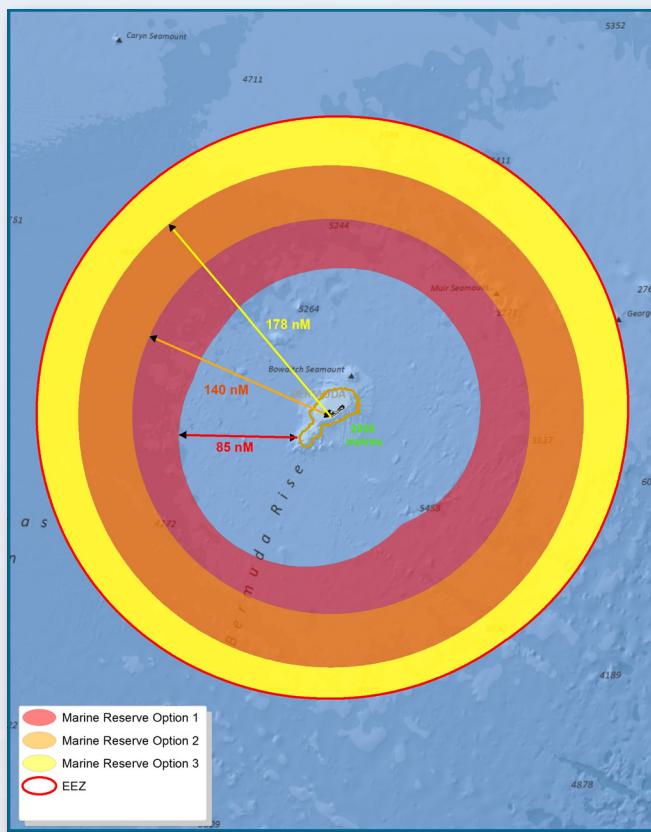
Habitats function better when their plant and animal communities are intact, and this helps them withstand other threats. It is likely that setting aside a large marine reserve where nothing would be taken from the sea will help maintain the health of this important part of the ocean.

Benefits and costs to consider

Bermudians have traditionally fished close to the island, and most other marine activities take place fairly close to shore. Future economic activities such as ocean energy generation or aquaculture are also likely to occur within this area. However, there is some fishing activity that occurs beyond this area. Depending on size and design, an offshore marine reserve could curtail this and limit future offshore fishing and other commercial activities such as seabed mining.

A marine reserve in our offshore waters would

- help protect open ocean and deep sea biodiversity; could enhance marine life and fisheries in waters close to shore.
- provide a useful comparison site for scientific studies and regional conservation management; visiting scientists could bring economic benefits.
- boost Bermuda's image as a tourist destination that cares about the environment; could result in economic benefits from increased tourism.
- demonstrate Bermuda's commitment to protecting the Sargasso Sea to the international community, paving the way for increased marine conservation globally.
- help leverage increased enforcement resources to counter illegal foreign fishing activity.
- require a management programme and this will require funding.
- restrict potential commercial activities in the future such as seabed mining and longline fishing



Potential Marine Reserve Designs

There are many ways a marine reserve could be designed for the EEZ. Below are three options for consideration that differ in size and impact on offshore activities.

Option 1: Protect ¾ of the EEZ

This option would have a minor impact on current offshore fishing and would limit future expansion of fishing and other commercial activities. The reserve would begin 85 nautical miles out from the 2,000 meter depth contour around Bermuda and the banks and extend out to the 200 nautical mile limit of Bermuda's EEZ. (**346,340 km²**)

Option 2: Protect ½ of the EEZ

This option would not affect current offshore fishing and would allow for some future expansion. The reserve would begin 140 nautical miles out from Gibb's Hill lighthouse and extend out to the 200 nautical mile limit of Bermuda's EEZ. (**254,023 km²**)

Option 3: Protect ¼ of the EEZ

This option would not affect current offshore fishing and would provide flexibility for expanding fishing and other future commercial activities offshore. The reserve would begin 178 nautical miles out from Gibb's Hill lighthouse and extend out to the 200 nautical mile limit of Bermuda's EEZ. (**122,502 km²**)

DO YOU THINK A "NO TAKE" MARINE RESERVE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN THE OFFSHORE WATERS OF BERMUDA'S EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE?

Please tick your preferred option.

- Option 1:** Yes – Protect ¾ of the EEZ.
- Option 2:** Yes – Protect ½ of the EEZ.
- Option 3:** Yes – Protect ¼ of the EEZ.
- Option 4:** No – We should not create a marine reserve in the waters around Bermuda.
- Option 5:** Yes – Bermuda should create a marine reserve in its EEZ, but I would propose a different design (size, location, shape and protections). (Please attach.)

Return by email to sdd@gov.bm or to the Sustainable Development Department, 31 Reid Street, Hamilton HM 12, by Thursday, October 31, 2013.

To answer this question online, click [here](#).

For more information visit www.sdbermuda.bm • Email: sdd@gov.bm • Phone: 294-5893

