

Hi! I'm Tony. I make my living from fishing, just like you.

And when I first heard about *Marine Reserves*, I had fears and suspicions.

I came to the Keys in 1973 from Point Judith, Rhode Island. I had been working the off-shore lobster boats up there when I heard about the plentiful fishing and warm weather in the Keys. I left the cold and have been fishing here ever since – lobster trap lines, hand-lines, gill nets, everything legal. The Keys aren't the same place they were back then. In the 1970's, you could take a nap in the middle of the night on U.S. 1 and the only things you'd have to worry about were the mosquitoes. When we first heard about marine reserves there was a lot of fear. We didn't believe that they had much to offer us as commercial fishermen, and felt that they were being forced upon us. However, once people here got involved in the process the fear started to fade away. I have come to see that marine reserves are a valuable tool that can help address overfishing, and conserve critical habitat. I am very proud of the role of the industry and the part I have played in promoting a no-take marine reserve for Florida's Dry Tortugas.

Tony Iarocci, Commercial Fisherman, USA

Why Fishermen Support Marine Reserves.

More and more fishermen are supporting the establishment of 'no-take-zones' or marine reserves. They have realized that protecting some fish so that they can grow larger and breed more successfully is common sense.

Within a reserve, fish live longer and grow larger. ***One 10 kg snapper can produce more than 20 times as many eggs in a single spawning as ten 1kg snappers.*** Leaving fish to grow large within a reserve is like leaving money in the bank and waiting for the interest...

- In the Bahamas Exuma Cays, the reproductive output of Nassau grouper has been shown to be six times greater in a reserve than outside.
- In the western USA, the number of rockfish eggs and larvae originating within one reserve has been shown to be 55 times greater than that outside it. For lingcod the figure is 20 times as many.

As the number of fish within a reserve increases, fish leave the reserve and enter fishing grounds. So fishermen can catch a proportion of the fish protected by the reserve.

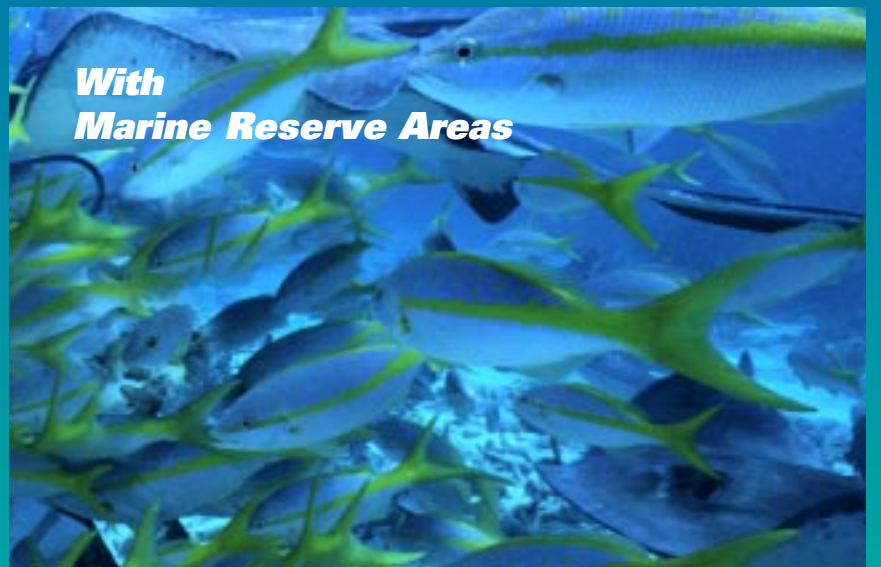
- In fishing grounds close to Mombassa Marine National Park in Kenya, catch per unit effort is up 110% and in Spain there are reports of 50–85% higher catches close to Tabarca Marine Reserve. These results are being recorded within 2–5 years of closure.
- Visit reserves in New Zealand or the Florida Keys and you will see fishermen congregating to fish the boundaries of marine reserves. They know that these areas are productive fishing grounds.

Without Marine Reserve Areas



Increase your fish catch. Inquire about a Marine Reserve in your area.

With Marine Reserve Areas



Getting Involved – Planning a Marine Reserve in the Dry Tortugas.

Looking for Practical Solutions

“It's taken more than one attempt to come up with a design for the Dry Tortugas Reserve here in the Keys. The first time around the government had not done its homework and the area they proposed would have affected a lot of people's livelihoods. The result of that was that many people did not trust those involved in planning the reserve. However, this time everyone was involved from the start, and everyone had a chance to raise their concerns and thoughts about the reserve before working on possible boundaries for the design. This meant that we had a chance to help shape the reserve so fisheries would be only minimally affected but still gain the maximum benefit. I think the proposal we came up with has achieved that goal – for example, the some proposals included an area that we fish when the winds come from the North. On those days, that's the only area we can get to safely. Everyone understood the importance of that area to us so that was left out of the proposal.”

“I soon learned that we weren't the only ones with practical concerns about putting a reserve in place. People came up with all sorts of interesting designs for the shape of the reserve but the officers who would be responsible for enforcing regulations couldn't handle that idea. It made practical sense to have a rectangular reserve based on latitude/longitude. That way everyone could clearly see where the reserve was and work around it.”

What the Science Tells Us

“We spent a good deal of time listening to presentations from scientists. Much of what they told us we knew from experience – where fish aggregate to breed and where juveniles are commonly located for example. But we also learnt a good deal about fish reproduction and the distribution of fish larvae by ocean currents. I had not realized the extent to which this area was responsible for re-populating fisheries all along the Florida coastline, which put the importance of protecting breeding populations in this area in perspective”

Building Agreement

“Developing a plan that everyone could live with was not easy, with divers, recreational fishermen, commercial fishermen and conservationists in the room there's a lot of different interests and objectives to deal with. But as the process went on it became clear to everyone that a reserve could provide some real benefits, both for fisheries and conservationists. People got to know each other and recognize each other's needs and concerns, and as a result it became a little easier to look at compromises. There were some larger proposed areas and the conservationists would have preferred it if a larger area had been protected, but they were prepared to compromise to keep fishing grounds open and that was certainly a surprise for some of us.”

In the end everyone agreed on one proposal, a unanimous vote. I'm sure no one came out of there with exactly what they had hoped for but the important thing was that we have a reserve proposal that everyone can live with. Now its up to us to help make it work. I'm looking forward to seeing how the fishery responds to this kind of protection and whether the scientists are right. We've tried a lot of different management tools to keep this fishery sustainable and they all take their



toll on our capacity to fish, but I can honestly say that this time around I think our concerns were recognized – and that is a big step forward in managing the use of this area.”

Tony Iarocci – Commercial Fisherman

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