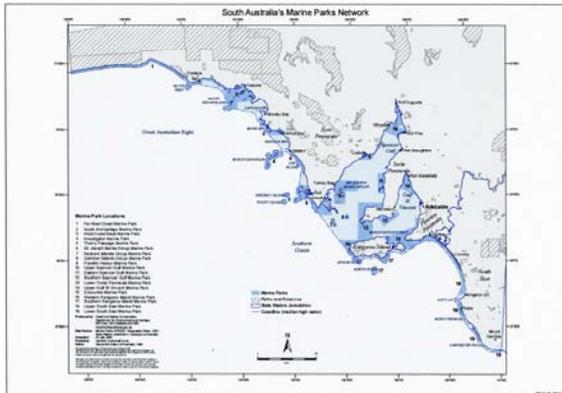


The Introduction of Marine Parks in South Australia: The Subtle Use of Misinformation

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In 2009, the South Australian Department for the Environment and Natural Resources created nineteen Marine Parks in accordance with the provisions of the South Australian Marine Parks Act of 2007. These parks are located in waters specifically under State Jurisdiction, and are exclusive of Parks like the Great Australian Bight National Park which is administered by the Australian Commonwealth Government. Exact figures are not available but a rough estimate suggests that the Parks cover around 30% of State waters and 75% of the South Australian coastline – see map below. The light blue areas are the State waters and the dark blue areas are the Marine Parks. Note the almost continuous dark blue line around the coastline and the integration of all offshore islands into Park reserves.



South Australian Marine Parks¹

The initial reaction of commercial and recreational fishers to the creation of Marine Parks was surprise and dismay. One commenter saw them as a ‘cruel hoax’ (Neil Armstrong, Fishing World March 2010²); and it did not escape the notice of week-end anglers that the reserved areas were located on the best fishing grounds. But this reaction was nothing to that which was generated in 2011 when the Department asked Parliament to designate 25% of the Parks **exclusion zones**, i.e. totally out of bounds to the fishing and boating fraternity. On the 5th April 2011 a protest meeting organized by the Liberal Party opposition attracted 1400+ people who were sufficiently riled to pass motions of no confidence in the Government and to plan radical demonstration rallies in the streets of Adelaide.

It was pointed out at the meeting that not only would the Government’s proposed action have serious implications for South Australia’s commercial fishing operators but go a long way to eliminate recreational fishing, by far the biggest and most important recreational pastime in the State. Further, a member of the Real Estate Institute of South Australia predicted that exclusion zones would sound the death

knoll for twenty nine (29) small towns located on the South Australian coast as these centres were dependent for their survival on regular visits from tourists who were drawn to them because they were good fishing sites. The economy of Kangaroo Island, which was already strained prior to the Parks being created, is expected to suffer considerably. Ten other major centres on the main land coast would also be radically impacted. And it would not only be local people who would lose equity; on York Peninsula, 45% of rate payers live in the capital city (Adelaide) but have shacks in coastal towns for weekend relaxation purposes – fishing in particular. The picture drawn was that exclusion zones would render the South Australian coastline virtually uninhabited. And not the least concern is that recreational boat fishers will be tempted to travel well out to sea, beyond the reserves, at risk of life and limb, in order to pursue their favourite pastime.

The South Australian waters are renowned for fish of high quality. Species like King George Whiting (*Sillaginodes punctatus*), Snapper (*Pagrus aratus*) and Garfish (*Hypohaniplius melanochir*) have no peer as table fish anywhere in the world. South Australia is also renowned for its Australian Rock Lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*), and the South Australian Southern Blue Fin Tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*) and abalone (*Haliotis spp.*) industries have established links with lucrative markets in Asia. Supplies of all of these species are now under threat.

South Australian fish stocks have been monitored conscientiously over many years by the South Australian Department of Fisheries. In this project the Department has had good cooperation from commercial fishing operators because the operators are interested in the long term viability of their industry. Recreational fishers have also been supportive in accepting increasingly stringent bag and fish size limits and observed closed areas and closed seasons over time without complaint. The industry as a whole is quick to argue, from good grounds, that the Australian fishing operation is the best managed in the world. And if that is true, why is the South Australian State Government bent on introducing such a socially negative policy as exclusion zones in Marine Parks? Has the Government’s case been scientifically and economically justified? For the costs in terms of State income, private equity loss, negation of food supplies and social disruption is considerable.

MARINE PARK POLICY

The motivation for Marine Park policy in Australia has come directly from UN Convention on Biological Diversity presented at the “Earth Summit” held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Australia ratified the Convention in June 1993 and since that time the National Environment Department has been active in supplying the Convention with regular National Reports on the actions taken within Australia to advance the Convention’s objectives - see Reports for 1998, 2001, 2005, 2009³.

The Earth Summit was convened by the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity appointed by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in November 1988. The Group was asked to explore the need for an international convention on **biological diversity**. It completed its work with a Conference for the Adoption of the Agreed Text on the Convention of Biological Diversity ('the Convention') held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1989 and its recommendations were accepted by the UNEP in the same year. The Convention was opened for signatures on the 5th June 1992 at the Earth Summit and remained open until the 4th of June 1993 by which time 168 countries had signed up as Parties. The first session of the Conference of the Parties was held in late 1994 in the Bahamas.

The objectives of the Convention are stated to be:

- The conservation of biological diversity
- The sustainable use of its components, and
- The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

The Australian EPBC Act 1999

In line with its Government's commitment to the Convention the Australian Parliament passed the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act in 1999. The Australian Department of the Environment describes this Act as 'the Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation'⁴. The Act aims to provide a legal framework to protect and manage 'important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places defined in the Act as (eight) matters of national environmental significance'. The important words are '**national**' and '**significant**': 'national' is included to satisfy the autonomous States that this is not a Central Government take-over; 'significant' is included to satisfy the general run of landholders that they have nothing to fear from Central Government control and 'witch-hunts'. But an important addition was the conferring on the National Department of 'jurisdiction over actions that have a significant impact on the environment outside of the eight matter of significance listed in the Act'. [This provision has seen the National Department act well outside of its normal boundaries. For example, in 2009 wood cutting was prohibited along the Murray River plains because a parrot, claimed to be a threatened species, was understood to not like to fly over open ground(!). Over 2000 people lost their employment and income.]

Since the Act has been in place, the National Department of the Environment has set up numerous committees and working groups and published a large number of reports and fact sheets. Some of the more significant reports include⁵:

- The National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan 2004-2007 (issued in 2004)
- The Implications of Climate Change for Australian Fisheries and Agriculture (issued in 2008)

- A National Approach to Addressing Marine Biodiversity Decline (issued in 2008).

The South Australian Marine Parks Acts 2007

The power of Commonwealth agencies is limited by the National Constitution so the National Department of the Environment encouraged all Australian States to pass legislation which will advance the objectives of the EPBC Act at State level. Of significance for this paper is the South Australian Marine Parks Act of 2007. The objectives of this Act are stated to be:

'To protect and conserve marine biological diversity and marine habitats by declaring and providing for the management of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine parks which will assist in:

- The maintenance of ecological processes in the marine environment
- The adaptation to the impacts of climate change in the marine environment
- Protecting and conserving features of natural or cultural significance
- Allowing ecologically sustainable development and the use of marine environments, and
- Providing opportunities for public appreciation, education and enjoyment of marine environments

The Act is purely a legislative device to establish Marine Parks; no specific park sites are listed and no specific management strategies are promoted in the Act. Those details are determined by Regulations developed by the Minister for the Environment, outside of Parliamentary control and influence.

Biodiversity

Central to the UN Convention and the Australian National Act is the concept of 'biodiversity'. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) describes biodiversity as 'a term used to describe the wide variety of ecosystems and living organisms'⁶. It is seen to be:

- The foundation of life on earth
- Extremely complex
- Dramatically influenced by human activities
- Difficult to measure precisely

Other authors have presented biodiversity as a measure of ecosystem health, the implication being that *the greater the biodiversity the better the health of the system*⁷. And yet another definition is given by the authors of the 2008 Australian National Approach to Addressing Marine Biodiversity Decline (see below)

'Biodiversity is the variation of life at all levels of biological organization. It refers to plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain, and ecosystems and ecosystem processes they form. It is

typically considered at three levels: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity'

The Australian National Biodiversity Strategy Review Task Force

In 2010, the Australian National Biodiversity Strategy Review Task Force Group provided 'an over-arching and high-level strategic national policy framework for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use'⁸. This was based on the following premises:

- Biodiversity is essential for our existence
- Biodiversity is of value in its own right
- Biodiversity is best conserved in its natural state
- The state of biodiversity reflects the state of the nation
- Natural Systems have a finite capacity to respond to changes in their biodiversity
- We should apply a precautionary approach to biodiversity conservation
- All Australians have a stake in biodiversity and should contribute to its wellbeing
- Our efforts to conserve biodiversity must respect the values of indigenous peoples
- Biodiversity should not be further degraded by the actions of the current generation.

The IUCN recently commissioned The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Study⁹. The foreword attributes the inspiration for this to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005)¹⁰ and the Review of Climate Change by Nicholas Stern (2006).

The National Approach to Addressing Marine Biodiversity Decline

In 2008, the Marine Biodiversity Decline Working Group provided the Australian Minister for the Environment with a Report¹¹. With regard to Trends in Australia's Marine Biodiversity' (p.7), the report is ambivalent. On one hand it insists that 'the past 200 years of human activity have had substantial impacts on marine environments' and 'expert opinion... suggests that there is continuing decline occurring in Australia's marine biodiversity and ecosystems'. On the other hand it recognizes that the lack of baseline information on the current state and trends in the marine environment makes it difficult to make definite statements' (p.7) for 'we still know very little about Australia's marine biodiversity' (p.8)! Presumably the writers have two competing objectives: (1) They wish to claim that marine biodiversity is declining; and (2) being researchers, they wish to make a case for more research funds to be provided.

The Report identifies five issues which it sees as the most significant, broad-scale threats to marine biodiversity (p.3):

- Climate change
- Resource use
- Land-based impacts

- Marine bio-security, and
- Marine pollution

Climate Change

Six possible effects of 'climate change' are listed and examples given to show that there is 'mounting evidence' of the impact of climate change on marine systems. The examples include (p.22 op cit):

- Coral bleaching
- Shifts polewards in species distribution due to warming temperatures
- Alteration in the timing of biological events like the spring phytoplankton bloom

Resource Use

The marine resource uses included were: fishing, aquaculture, dredging, mineral/oil/gas exploration and extraction, shipping and tourism. But it is fishing that is mainly addressed (p.24), e.g. 'as Australian waters are low in productivity, fishing... must be maintained at low levels to provide ongoing access to these resources'. (What does this mean? We all know that fish stocks need to be managed, and they are being managed by the Fisheries Department).

Land Based Impacts

Types of pollution listed were hydrocarbons*, pesticides, heavy metals, pathogens, nutrients, sediments*, and litter. (*What are these?)

Marine Biosecurity

Of concern here are marine pests that attach themselves to boat hulls and anchor chains. The examples mentioned were the Northern Pacific sea-star in Tasmania and Victoria (which is seen as a threat to South Australia, Western Australia and New Zealand), New Zealand screw shells (*Maoricoplus reuses*) and the black-striped mussel outbreak in Darwin.

Marine Pollution

The main pollutants listed were: oil, sewage, pesticides, industrial wastewater, antibiotics, metals and radioactive waste. The main culprits were seen to be shipping, boats, oil and gas exploration teams, storm water run-off and poor land management practices.

MARINE BIODIVERSITY DECLINE SCIENCE

The current state of scientific knowledge in relation to biodiversity decline in Australian marine environments is uncertain. The Australian State of the Environment 2006 Report concluded that:

'we cannot... even in the **rare cases where we know changes are happening**, be sure whether changes in either the extent of the selected habitats, or in populations of particular species, are indicative

of healthy or unhealthy changes...'. (author's emphasis).

The 2008 report of the Marine Biodiversity Decline Working Group (op cit) confirmed that 'large gaps exist in our knowledge of Australia's marine environment'.

Nevertheless, in response to persistent questioning in the Parliament, the South Australian Department of the Environment issued a Fact Sheet in 2010 entitled "Science shows Marine Park benefits"¹². This document assures us that:

'marine parks are internationally recognized as an effective tool to manage and conserve marine resources and biodiversity' and that 'there have been many scientific studies on the effects of sanctuary zones which show positive benefits... includ(ing): increases in overall biomass; increased ability to reproduce; a spill over of larvae and adults into unprotected areas; and improvements in ecosystem and habitats'.

Twenty eight references are provided; eight are concerned with eco-system changes, six with fish stock contributions of reserved areas to adjacent areas, one with the effects of trawling and dredging and eleven with changes in fish populations. This is not the place to conduct a review of these papers but the report on the state NSW marine park science chaired by Professor Fairbrother of Flinders University (South Australia) is informative (see Fairbrother et al 2009). Fairbrother and his colleagues saw every aspect of marine research needing upgrading.

The Fact Sheet was not universally welcomed, especially by the fishing fraternity. Professor Emeritus Bob Kearney, currently Chairman of the Board of the (Australian) Fish Centre found it 'exaggerated... and biased' (see *The Advertiser*, 8th March 2011).

Overall it would appear that there is limited scientific evidence of marine biodiversity decline. (This is not surprising as prior to the year 2000 most marine parks were simply unique amenity areas set aside for the use of tourists and the scuba diving fraternity). This being so, advocates of marine parks are obliged to call on the opinions of so-called 'experts', pro-Marine Parks people who tell us they have seen '**some** evidence of decline in **some** places' and argue that this is sufficient evidence to support the view that there is a serious decline in Australian's marine biodiversity'. A large conceptual jump indeed!

DISCUSSION

Since the early 1980s, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the term '**biodiversity**' and a variety of definitions have been given for the term. The IUCN says it is the foundation all life, complex, influenced by humans and difficult to measure (above). There is nothing startlingly new in this, of

course. We all know that we live on Planet Earth and are obliged to live 'off the land', and we all know that the biological world shows some variability. We also know that humans manage the ecosystems - sometimes to their advantage and sometimes not. And as for measurement, we have sophisticated tools and instruments for measuring of a wide range of parameters with sufficient accuracy for most purposes, so what is the issue here?

Some authors have implied that the greater the degree of biodiversity the greater the health of the system, and that a return to pristine conditions is a move in the right direction. In fact most pristine eco-systems had a limited number of plant species and associated animal life was similarly limited to species adapted to those plant species. Much of South Australia was covered with Mallee trees (*Eucalyptus* spp.) and anyone familiar with a Mallee scrub will know that there is not much else present under these trees with their gigantic ligno-tubers. Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) and Myall (*Acacia pendula*) eco-communities are similarly simple with regard to biological composition, presumably because the mean rainfall is very low (150mm) and the soil is deficient in nitrogen and phosphorus, two of the major elements essential for growth. With regard to general health, any pathologist will tell you that pristine eco-systems always evidence plant and animal diseases, parasites and predators. Animals in Africa survive, despite blood sucking ticks and liver flukes, but do not tell us that pristine conditions are the most healthy state that can be achieved. Smallpox was also a natural phenomenon until medical practitioners undertook to eliminate it from the planet.

The more we look into biodiversity the more it becomes evident that it is smoke screen, a 'commonsense' concept invented to justify an extreme conservation position. In the face of opposition the concept has had to shift ground over the years to a more extreme position, with the result that some of the most recent statements are becoming farcical. For instance, in 2003, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment insisted that 'the total number of species on the Earth is somewhere between 5 and 30 million (quite a range!) but only 1.7 to 2 million species have been formally identified'¹³ How do we know how many unidentified species there are if we have not identified them? Informed people will tell you that the statement is untrue for most classes of animals and plants. Ornithologists will tell you that at least 99.9% of bird species have been identified, and in South Australia, over the past century no one has found a plant species that is not listed Black's Flora (Black 1960). There are undoubtedly **a few** organisms at the bottom of the oceans that have not been fully identified, but there are certainly not millions. The MEA statement is mischievous, made to impress the ill-informed masses.

So who is pushing this agenda? To discover that we must look behind the Convention developed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and when we do this we discover that it was the International Union for

Conservation of Nature (IUCN), formed at Fontainebleau, France in 1948, that has played the key on-going role in developing both the Climate Change dogma and its offshoot, biodiversity.

The IUCN was the 'brain child' of Sir Julian Huxley, the first Director General of UNESCO and a key player in the 1940s in the ongoing neo-Malthusian project, that project by which an elite economic group aims to reduce the human population by any and every means (see Potter, 2009 and 2010 and Bolton 2010).

The influence of the IUCN on UN policy on the environment is evidenced by its principal role in the following UN developments:

- The UN's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
- The Convention on World Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1974)
- The Convention on Wetlands (1975), and
- The World Conservation Project (1980), and
- The World Charter for Nature (1982)

The IUCN's current priority areas are stated to be:

- Conserving biodiversity and ensuring that any use of biological resources is sustainable
- Demonstrate how biodiversity is fundamental to addressing some of the world's greatest challenges
- Tackling global warming (climate change)
- Achieving sustainable energy
- Improving human well-being, and
- Building a green economy

Most of the objectives listed above are controversial and the IUCN has adopted sophisticated methods for gaining public support for concepts which radically confront established practices. Not the least important project has been the IUCN's effort to get its 'scientific' position established in the school curriculum. In this it has been remarkably successful; masses of younger people now hold to IUCN propositions without question.

On close inspection, Marine Park ideology is found to be based on the same arguments as those driving the Global Warming/Climate Change social manipulation agenda, which is not surprising as they are both creations of the IUCN. As with Global Warming, the case for Marine Parks has been built on misinformation presented with calculated stealth to achieve a given end, i.e. the reduction of human food supplies – in this case a reduction in sea-food - and dependence on a free market economy

Stealth

The process leading up to the Earth Summit is marked by three ideological shifts.

Stage 1: Nature Conservation

Nature conservation was a popular theme at the end of the Second World War; thanks to the USA dust bowl and city pollution in Europe. (Australia also had its soil erosion problems, e.g. see Potter 1964). It was not difficult for Julian Huxley to get 18 governments and 107 Nature Conservation Organisations to back the formation of the IUCN in 1948 and for the next 32 years to focus on legitimate projects like soil conservation.

Stage 2: Sustainable Development

A shift came in 1980 when the IUCN was successful in getting the UN to formulate the World Conservation Policy (**WCP**). This emphasized the need to 'work with local people to achieve **sustainable development**', again, at first glance, a legitimate project. To provide funding for this strategy, the IUCN formed the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and received donations from bodies such as the Ford Foundation – a body demonstrated to be in the forefront of social manipulation in our time (see Bolton 2011). The WCP fitted nicely with the aspirations of aid organizations like the World Bank, the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the UN Environment Program (UNEP). Large sums of money were provided for development programs, although much of it was spent on paying consultants and trainers rather than being spent 'on the ground'. (Of course, developing countries were left with the total debt!) This policy had another outcome; it led to investors seeking ownership of things like water and genetic resources, commodities formerly regarded as 'privileged rights'¹⁴. This was the first evidence within the environmental movement of economic interests operating behind the scenes.

Stage 3: Biodiversity

A further shift came in 1982 with the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the World Charter for Nature. From this time forward 'biodiversity' became the watchword and policy and UN actions moved inevitably towards the 1992 Earth Summit..

Misinformation

The South Australian Environment Department Science Fact Sheet (above) assures us that Marine Parks are 'internationally recognized as an effective tool to manage and conserve marine resources and biodiversity'. But even a superficial examination shows that Marine Parks will have little and in some case no effect on the five threats to Marine biodiversity listed by the Australian Conservation Department in The National Approach to Addressing Marine Diversity document. For instance:

- Climate change is listed as a major threat yet it is clear that Marine Parks are incapable of influencing sea temperatures. Further, Marine Parks do not have walls and shifts of species

southwards, due to warming seas, will not be prevented by drawing lines in the ocean.

- The second threat listed is resource use; mineral exploration and extraction is mentioned along with shipping as a major problem. How is it then that the Government granted an exploratory licence for a company to drill for oil in the middle of the Great Australian Bight National Park recently? Further, two ports have been approved in South Australian waters over the past twelve months, one for the export of iron ore and the other to service a new explosives factory at the head of the St Vincent's Gulf; in both cases ships will be required to pass through Marine Parks to access them.
- Pollution from land based activities is the third threat listed. There are many current reports of inadequate waste water management along the South Australian coast, particularly near the City of Adelaide. Why is the South Australian Government suggesting that the solution is Marine Parks when it is obvious that Parks will have a nil impact on such problems.
- A fourth threat, Marine bio-security, is mainly concerned with pests being introduced from other areas. Clearly, the main threat is from international shipping, not local recreational and commercial fishing boats. Ships destined for Adelaide must pass through a Marine Park, either that located between York Peninsula and Kangaroo Island or that between Cape Jervis and Kangaroo Island but there has been no suggestion that international and interstate shipping operations should cease. Exclusion zones are aimed at local commercial and recreational boat holders, not for bio-security reasons but to meet an entirely different agenda.
- The Marine pollution threat seems to be a repeat of threats 2-4. Shipping and mineral exploration are again mentioned as the main culprits so the points mentioned above are relevant for this threat also.

In summary, we may say that the case for Marine Parks to conserve marine biodiversity in South Australia is not established. Firstly, there is no substantial evidence of any wide-scale biodiversity decline; fish stocks are well managed by commercial operators and recreational fishers under the direction of the Fisheries Department. Secondly, Marine Parks are a mis-match, incapable of averting the defined threats. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that the real aim is the elimination of fish supplies to South Australian and international markets. One fishing community, well known for its good management of the local marine environment, asked the Department of the Environment what people were going to do if they could not fish on weekends. They were advised to set up a Whale Watching Club! Clearly there is a social dichotomy in South Australia,

being created by vested interests with no regard for the economic and social consequences.

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NOTE

¹⁴The connection between this kind of ideology/financial interest with the South Australian Environment Department could not be plainer. In March 2011, the Department advised farmers in South Australia that they were intending to charge them for rainwater collected on their farms!

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