

Abstract

Regulation and management of marine protected areas in Japan

Author: Naoki Amako

Address: Ministry of the Environment, 1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8975, Japan

Email: NAOKI_AMAKO@env.go.jp

Keywords: MPAs, regulation, scenery, environment, habitat, fishery

1- Background

In response to the global movement for establishing MPAs and MPA networks, such as the CBD COP Decisions, Japan defined the MPAs and decided to promote the establishment thereof.

2- Process of defining “Marine Protected Areas” in Japan

The Ministry of the Environment formulated its “Marine Biodiversity Conservation Strategy” in 2011, which specified the definition of MPAs in Japan, along with the existing systems that can be regarded as MPAs. Later, this definition was adopted on the cabinet level.

The purposes of the existing systems can be categorized into three groups: 1) protection of natural scenery, 2) protection of natural environment or habitats, 3) protection and cultivation of fishery resources. The regulations imposed in each area depends on the purpose, but they regulate either development activities, taking designated species (e.g., endangered species), or fishery activities.

One distinctive character of MPAs in Japan that regulate fishery activities is that the fishery is managed by the resource users themselves (Makino, 2011). Accordingly, local fishers are engaged not only in fishery operations, but also in resource management (e.g., resource assessment and setting Individual Catch Quota) and ecosystem conservation (e.g., maintaining seaweed beds and coral reefs).

3- Criticism and the possible way forward

There is a controversy as to whether some MPAs can really be regarded as MPAs. As stated in the “National Biodiversity Strategy of Japan 2012-2020,” it is important to consider standards and methods for evaluating the effects of marine protected areas from the biodiversity standpoint.