

Caribbean Coral Reef Fisheries Management Theme

Natural Reserves in Puerto Rico and USVI

Puerto Rico

BACKGROUND

Natural Reserves are areas of ecological importance and natural value that are designated for conservation and where possible, restored, through the Coastal Zone Management Program and/or the Natural Patrimony Program Law of Puerto Rico.

These important areas are divided into two categories: Areas of Special Planification and Natural Reserves. Areas of Special Planification contain natural resources with multiple users that are subject to present and future conflict, and thus requiring detailed management plans. Natural Reserves only permit use that is sustainable and compatible with the local natural environment. Natural Reserves go through a series of administrative processes to become designated, including: identification, analysis of qualifications, establishment of boundaries, and finally recommended to the Territorial Planning Board (responsible agency for official designation of the Natural Reserves) or the Territorial Congress.

NATURAL RESERVES AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS in Puerto Rico

1. Reserva Natural Cabezas de San Juan
 - Located in the northeast coast between Cabos de San Juan and Fajardo
 - Designated January 29, 1986
 - Contains coral reefs, mangroves, bioluminescent areas and seagrass beds
2. Reserva Natural Caja de Muertos
 - Located 8.6 nms south of Ponce
 - Designated January 2, 1980
 - Contains three keys including Caja de Muertos, Cayo Morrillito Cayo Berberia and their surrounding waters. This reserve contains coral reefs and mangroves.
3. Reserva Natural La Cordillera
 - Located 1.5 nms northeast of Fajardo, in the outskirts of the northeast coast of Puerto Rico.
 - Designated January 2, 1980
 - Contains small islands (keys??), rocky inlets, and coral reefs that serve as an important bird habitat. The coral reefs are considered as one of the most diversified and extensive in the northeastern coast of Puerto Rico. This area provides critical habitat for commercially important marine species and is a forage area for sea turtles and manatis.

4. Reserva Natural La Parguera

- Located in the coastal zones of Lajas, Cabo Rojo and Guánica in the southwestern region of the island.
- Designated on September 20, 1979
- The area is considered of great ecological importance in the Caribbean region. The reserve contains coral reefs, mangroves, and bioluminescent bays, seagrass beds, among others.

5. Reserva Natural Bosque de Guánica

- Located in Puerto Rico's southern coast, west of Ponce.
- Designated on October 16, 1985, and later amended to add more area on August 4, 1988
- Contains coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds

6. Reserva Natural Boquerón

- Located between Punto Pitahaya and Punta Guaniquilla at the end of the municipality of Cabo Rojo in the southwestern region of the island
- Designated on January 2, 1980, and later amplified on May 14 1998.
- Contains coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds



Photo of Reserva Natural La Cordillera
Courtesy of PRDNER

7. Reserva Natural Arrecife Tourmaline

- Located approximately 7.5 nms west of the municipality of Mayagüez.
- Designated on May 14, 1998.
- The coral colonies in this area represent 95% of the coral species found in Puerto Rico. Contains corals and reef fish and bioluminescent invertebrates, echinoderms, mollusks, crustaceans, and annelids.

8. Reserva Natural Islas de Mona y Monito

- Located 50 nms west of Mayagüez.
- Designated on October 15, 1997
- Contains coral reefs, seagrass beds, and sandy beaches. This area has been identified to contain critical habitat for various endangered species, and contains archeological artifacts.

9. Reserva Natural Canal Luis Peña

- Located in Culebra
- Designated on June 1, 1999
- Sustains extensive relatively healthy communities of coral reefs of various species.

10. Reserva Natural Punta Petrona

- Located in Santa Isabel
- Designated on September 20, 1979
- Contains coral reefs, mangroves, keys ("cayos"??), and seagrass. This is a productive area for commercial and recreationally important fisheries.

11. Reserva Arrecifes de Guayama

- Located in Arroyo, in the south of Puerto Rico, and west of Ponce
- Designated on January 2, 1980
- This area is known for its large coral reef and fish diversity.



Photo of Reserva Natural La Cordillera
Courtesy of PRDNER

12. Reserva Nacional de Investigación Estuarines Bahía de Jobos

- Located from the sanding point of Salinas to the southern end of the Barrancas sector, in the southern region of the island.
- Designated by the Federal law on Coastal Zone Management as a National Estuarine Research Reserve.
- This area contains coral reefs, mangroves, salt flats (?), seagrass beds, and other estuarine systems.

13. Reserva Natural Desecheo

- Located Northeast of the main land. [distance?]
- Designated in August 2000.
- Fishing is prohibited [???]. This reserve contains the best quality of coral reefs in Puerto Rico.

NATURAL RESERVE DESIGNATION PROCESS in Puerto Rico

Main Process: By way of the Planification Board:

1. Idea developed by an individual, non-governmental organization, government agencies, and private groups.
2. The Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA) receives proposal.
3. DRNA notifies NOAA of their intention to designate a National Protected Area.
4. Designation document is drafted.
5. Draft is sent to Planification Board (has authority to designate reserves)
6. 2nd draft designation written, incorporating the Planification Board's comments
7. Public comment period
8. 3rd draft designation written, incorporating public concerns
9. The Planification Board designates the chosen area as Natural Reserve through a Resolution (made effective 30 days from the official resolution).
10. A public notice is issued and citizens have a last chance to make comments.
11. DRNA is required to produce a management plan.

Special Process: By way of the Legislator:

1. The idea for an area to be designated as a Natural Reserve originates in DRNA or the legislator.

2. An Act is drafted making the focal area a Natural Reserve.
3. Public comment period (for how long??)
4. The Act is approved by the legislator.
5. The Governor ratifies the Act.
6. The Act sites DRNA to manage the Natural Reserve.
7. DRNA produces a management plan, while at the same time- (step 7)
8. The Governor directs the Planning Board to incorporate that designation in the land use plans of Puerto Rico.
9. The Planning Board drafts a Resolution making the designation official.

The main difference in this process is that the idea originates within the territorial governing bodies and there is no Federal coordination.

U.S. Virgin Islands

BACKGROUND

Management plans do not exist for the listed Marine Reserves and Sanctuaries, nor does the law require them. The authority to enforce the rules and regulations is given to DPNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife.

LIST OF MARINE RESERVES AND SANCTUARIES:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compass Point Pond Marine Reserve and Sanctuary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in St. Thomas. • No Take 2. Cas Cay Mangrove Lagoon Marine Reserve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in St. Thomas. • No Take 3. St. James Marine Reserve and Wildlife Refuge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in St. Thomas. • No Take 4. Redhook Pond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in St. Thomas • Designated in 2002. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Small Pond at Frank's Bay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in St. John • Designated in March 24, 2000. • No take and anchor restrictions. 6. Salt River Bay Marine Reserve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in St. Croix |
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FRANK BAY POND WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
Picture: Virgin Islands Audubon Society

7. St. Croix East End Marine Park

- Located in St. Croix
- **This is a proposed park**, which has not yet been made official.
- It would encompass approximately 60 snm (less the area encompassing Buck Island)
- The proposal contains a management plan that would allow multiple uses via zoning restrictions. The management plan also requests a formation of an office within CZM to administer the plan.

MARINE RESERVE AND SANCTURAY DESIGNATION PROCESS

1. Idea is generated from a public or private agency or individual citizen and is proposed to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) of USVI. The Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is then generally assigned the task of following up on the idea.
2. DPNR/DFW conducts an environmental assessment (biological census) of the area and resources of interest. This may already be in documents on file in the Division, but field visits usually occur.
3. DPNR drafts a designation document.
4. Public hearings are not required by law, however other government agencies are generally given an opportunity to comment, out of courtesy. Comment period is usually from 1 to 4 weeks. DPNR often asks the Coastal Zone Management Program to become involved in this process.
5. The designation document is signed by the Commissioner of DPNR and the area is officially designated.
6. The Coastal Zone Management program assists the Fish and Wildlife Division to draft rules and regulations for the newly designated area.
7. Public hearings are held locally.
8. Draft rules and regulations are edited to incorporate legitimate public concerns.
9. The revised rules and regulations are sent to the Commissioner for approval.
10. The approved rules and regulations are sent to the Governor for approval.

