

Marine Provinces Encyclopedia Article

Marine Provinces

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Marine Provinces

Marine provinces are specific geographic areas of the ocean delineated by common landform (i.e., coastal geology and position of the continental shelf) and water conditions (i.e., temperature, currents, wind patterns, and **salinity**). In addition, marine provinces may be categorized by the unique **flora** and **fauna** (or biota) they support.

With less than five percent of the ocean mapped as of early 2002, the exact number of marine provinces worldwide is unknown. The United States **Geological Survey** (USGS) specifies ten coastal marine and estuarine provinces bordering on the United States—the Acadian, Arctic, Californian, Carolinian, Columbian, Fjord, Louisianian, Pacific Insular, Virginian, and West Indian provinces. The U.S. **Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) also uses these classifications for its **Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program** (EMAP), but further divides the Arctic marine province surrounding Alaska into the Arctic, Bering, Aleutian, and Alaskan Provinces.

Marine provinces may be subdivided into marine biogeographical regions or ecoregions. In their classification system for marine ecosystems and habitats, the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA) defines marine provinces as benthic (bottom floor) or pelagic (water column) zones of the ocean. These zones are then categorized by depth (i.e., intertidal, sublittoral, bathyal, abyssal, hadal, neritic, and oceanic) and ocean floor topographical features (e.g., reef, sandbar, crevice, etc.).

Resources

Books

Gibson, G.R., M.L. Bowman, J. Gerritsen, and B.D. Snyder. *Estuarine and Coastal Marine Waters: Bioassessment and biocriteria technical guidance*-Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, EPA 822-B-00-024, 2000. Available online at <http://www.epa.gov/ost/biocriteria/States/estuaries/estbiogd.html>. Accessed May 15, 2002.

Sullivan Sealey, K. and G. Bustamante. *Setting Geographic Priorities for Marine Conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Arlington, VA: The Nature Conservancy, 1999. Available online at <http://www.bsponline.org/bsp/publications/lac/marine/Titlepage.htm> Accessed May 15, 2002.

Other

Allee, Rebecca, et al. National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). *Marine and Estuarine Ecosystem and Habitat Classification*. Technical Memorandum, July 2000, NMFS-F/SPO-43.

Organizations

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