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Abstract Only

On the Need for a Global Network of Large Marine Reserves

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Abstract.—The sustainability of fisheries, historically, is largely a matter having no access to the bulk of an exploited population. Fisheries persisted when most of the targeted fishes were in deep, offshore waters or in areas adjacent to lands with low human populations. Thus, earlier fisheries had large no-take marine reserves. Modern fishing technology relies on methods that originated with submarine tracking and other forms of warfare (acoustic fish finders, radar) and preservation technology (artificial ice, blast freezing) that immensely expanded the reach of distant water fleets. Combining this with Cold War technology (geopositioning systems; detailed, real-time maps of oceanographic features; detailed maps of the sea bottom), fishing vessels now can and will catch, unless restrained, the last fish concentrations in the world ocean. Thus, marine reserves are not a new invention of armchair ecologists, designed to torment hardworking, overregulated fishers. Rather, they would only reestablish the natural structures which have enabled earlier fisheries to maintain themselves for centuries. Getting this message across to a wide public is urgent, given the hardening stance of the fishing industry against marine reserves and the fact that, presently, they cover an infinitesimally small fraction of the world ocean.

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