Summary Report for MPAs in Japan

Japan has a coastline of 29,020 km and a total coral reef area of 2,900 km². Japan is on the edge of a delicate mix of biology, climate, and chemistry that allows coral reefs to form (Burke et al. 2002). The seas around Japan range from sub-tropical to sub-arctic conditions, with hard corals distributed from the Southern Ryukyus, northward to Tokyo Bay along the east mainland Pacific coast and to Sado Island in the Sea of Japan (Wilkinson 2004).

Japan has suffered declines in coral reef health due to Crown-of-Thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*) infestations, sedimentation, pollution, overfishing, dredging, trawling, poorly managed tourism, port and seawall construction, and other threats caused by human activities, which are pervasive and damaging (Burke et al. 2002). The RRSEA analysis showed that nearly 80% of the reefs were at risk from human activities and there has been no change since 2002 (Wilkinson 2004).
Japan has established 78 MPAs, 18 of which contain coral reefs as the dominant habitat. The majority of these parks are well-established, having been implemented over 20 years ago (Figure 1). Only 4 were established within the last decade.

The MPAs are managed at national level (31 MPAs), state/provincial level (11 MPAs), region/county level (8 MPAs) and city/municipality level (24 MPAs). Administration is primarily at the national level, although there are 24 MPAs managed at municipality level (Figure 2). The no-take area of MPAs in Japan was reported as only 118,487 km², or less than 1% of the total MPA area, but this is likely a gross underestimation.

Although various measures have been introduced to conserve the coral reefs in Japan, these are insufficient, especially the lack of coordinated conservation of adjacent land and the sea areas. Conservation of the natural environment is virtually ignored outside of the protected areas, and development always has priority over conservation. (Wilkinson 2002).

Figure 1. Time (years) since establishment of MPAs in Japan.
Figure 2. Management scale of MPAs in Japan.
References

