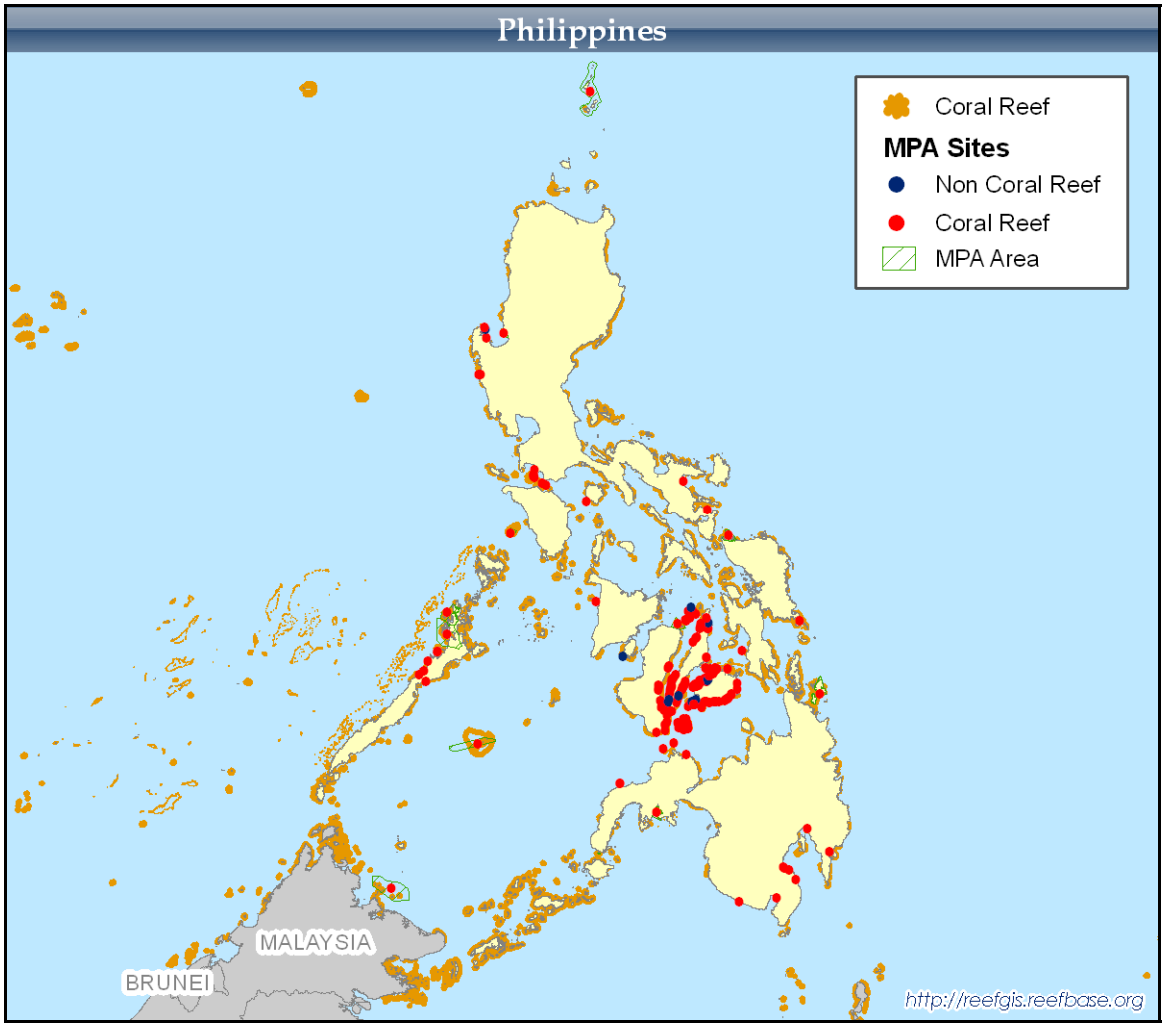
Summary Report for MPAs in the Philippines



The **Philippines** is an archipelago of over 7000 islands and has a coastline of 33,900 km. The Philippines has an extensive reef system covering 25,060 km^2. Like Indonesia, the Philippines lie within the Coral Triangle, the area of highest marine biodiversity on Earth. A total of 464 reef-building coral species are found in the Philippines, nearly half of all known species. The highest coral and fish diversity in the Philippines occurs in the Sulu-Sulawesi Large Marine Ecosystem, which is bordered by Palawan to the northwest, Mindanao to the northeast, Sabah (Malaysia) to the southwest, and Sulawesi (Indonesia) to the south.

The **Philippines** have suffered severe declines in coral reef health, due to poor land-use practices, rapid coastal development, overfishing and destructive fishing (dynamite and cyanide). As the population of the country continues to rise, so does the threat to coral reefs. The only remaining areas of high fish diversity and biomass are in large MPAs such as the Tubbataha National Park or in remote areas of the South China Sea, such as the Spratly Islands (Wilkinson 2004).

Over the past 20 years, the **Philippines** have seen a rapid proliferation of MPAs. Current estimates exceed 600 MPAs. However, many of these are non-functioning “paper parks”. This study found 339 actively managed MPAs, of which 294 were dominated by coral reef habitat. The great majority of MPAs (309) are managed at the municipal level. There are also 29 national level MPAs and one that is managed as an individual site. Approximately 90% of MPAs are “no-take”.

Monitoring of MPAs by The Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation, Inc. indicates that most MPAs in the **Philippines** are poorly managed. A survey of 212 MPAs gave only 5 MPAs a rating of “excellent” (management institutionalized with consistent enforcement and legal support). The majority of MPAs (54%) had not progressed past the implementation phase. However, there are a number of Philippine MPAs that are well-known for their success in enhancing fish biomass and providing increased yields to adjacent fisheries. These include the Apo Island MPA, often considered the “poster child” for coral reef MPAs.

References

Wilkinson, C., 2004, Status of coral reefs of the world: 2004. Volume 1. Australian Institute of Marine Science, Townsville, Queensland, Australia. 301 p.