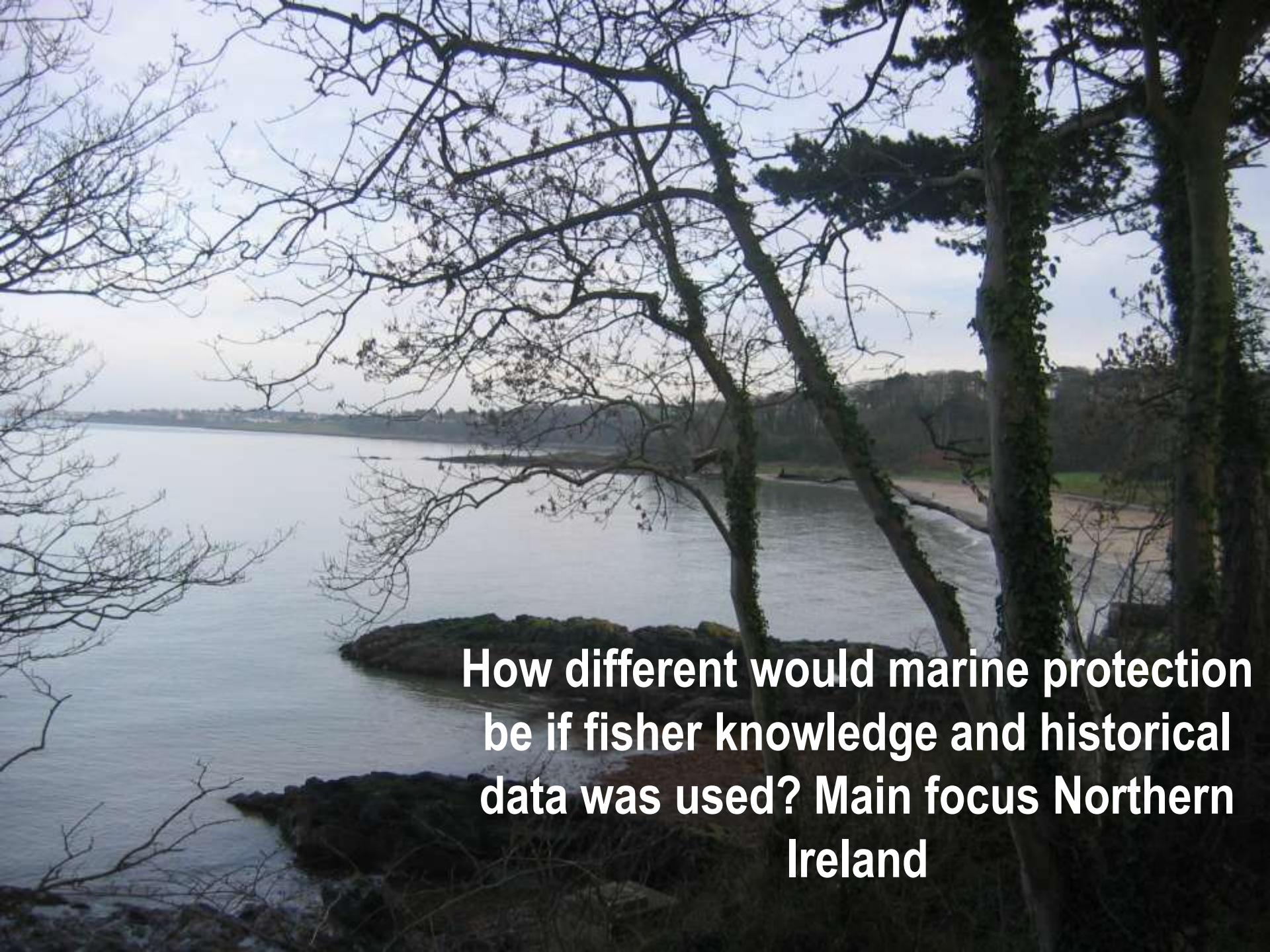




# **Northern Ireland's Marine Environment: Wildlife, Marine Protected Areas and Policy**

**Melanie Gomes**  
**PhD student**  
**University of Ulster**

**Coastal and Marine Research**  
**School of Environmental Sciences**



**How different would marine protection be if fisher knowledge and historical data was used? Main focus Northern Ireland**

A large shark is shown swimming underwater, its mouth wide open as if eating. The water is a clear, light blue color. The shark's body is dark grey or brown, and its fins are visible. The text "Plankton yum yum!" is overlaid on the image in white, bold font.

**Plankton  
yum yum!**

- **Almost 50% of the NI's marine biodiversity is in the sea**
- **Over 44,000 UK species - yet less than 0.001% is fully protected**
- **Northern Ireland is unique – special sites Rathlin and Strangford, globally unique species, basking sharks and small corals**



Rathlin  
Island

This image shows a close-up of a yellowish, porous sponge-like organism with several circular openings. It is growing on a dark, rocky substrate. The text "Rathlin Island" is overlaid in the top left corner.

*Spongosorites calcicola*



*Phorbas punctata* Bernard Picton

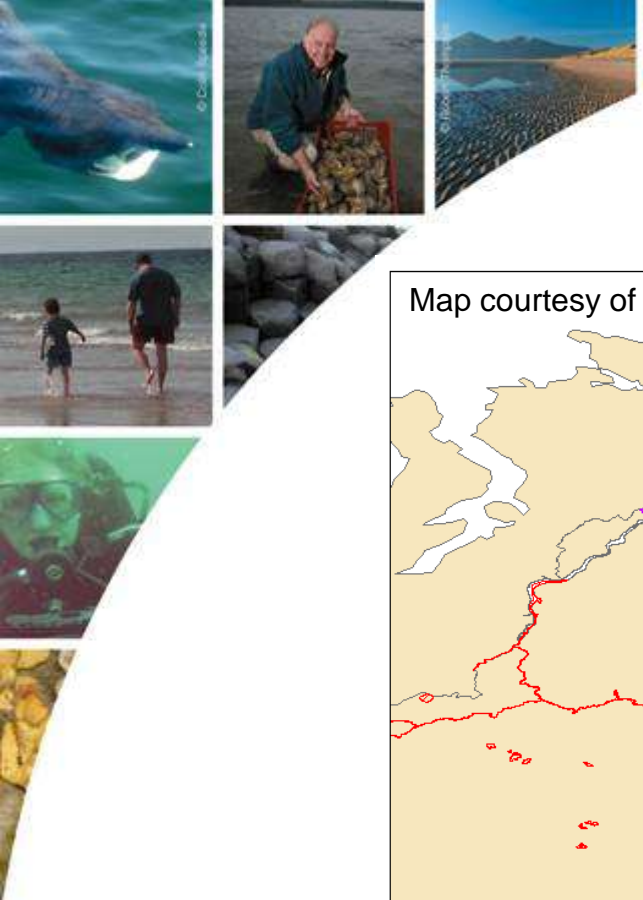


*Hymendesmia* Bernard Picton

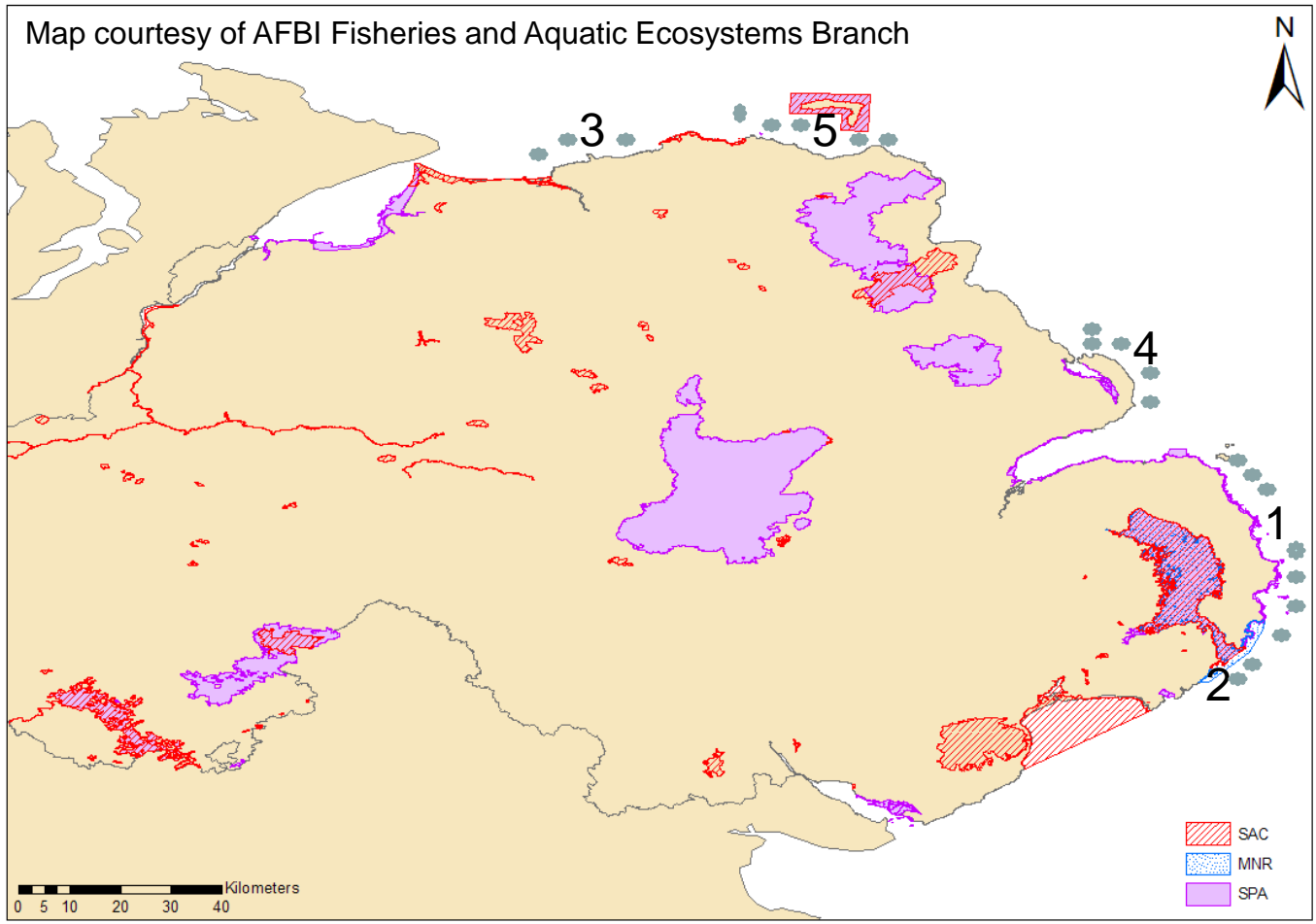


Photos Bernard Picton Ulster Museum

# Northern Ireland Marine Task Force



Map courtesy of AFBI Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch



Basking shark hotspots around Northern Ireland Ulster Wildlife Trust 2006. Kindly funded by EHS (now NIEA)

## Northern Ireland's marine environment

- Northern Ireland has species found no where else on the planet! Very rich and diverse marine environment.
- There are over 100 laws applicable to Northern Ireland's marine environment
- Management in Northern Ireland has been in a piecemeal and sectoral way - we are almost 3 years behind the UK in development of a Marine Bill
- There is a real need for a reform of the marine legislation in Northern Ireland to keep pace with the current predictions, deliver our targets for halting biodiversity loss, Marine Protected Areas and sustainable development principles

## *Northern Ireland and the UK Marine Bill*

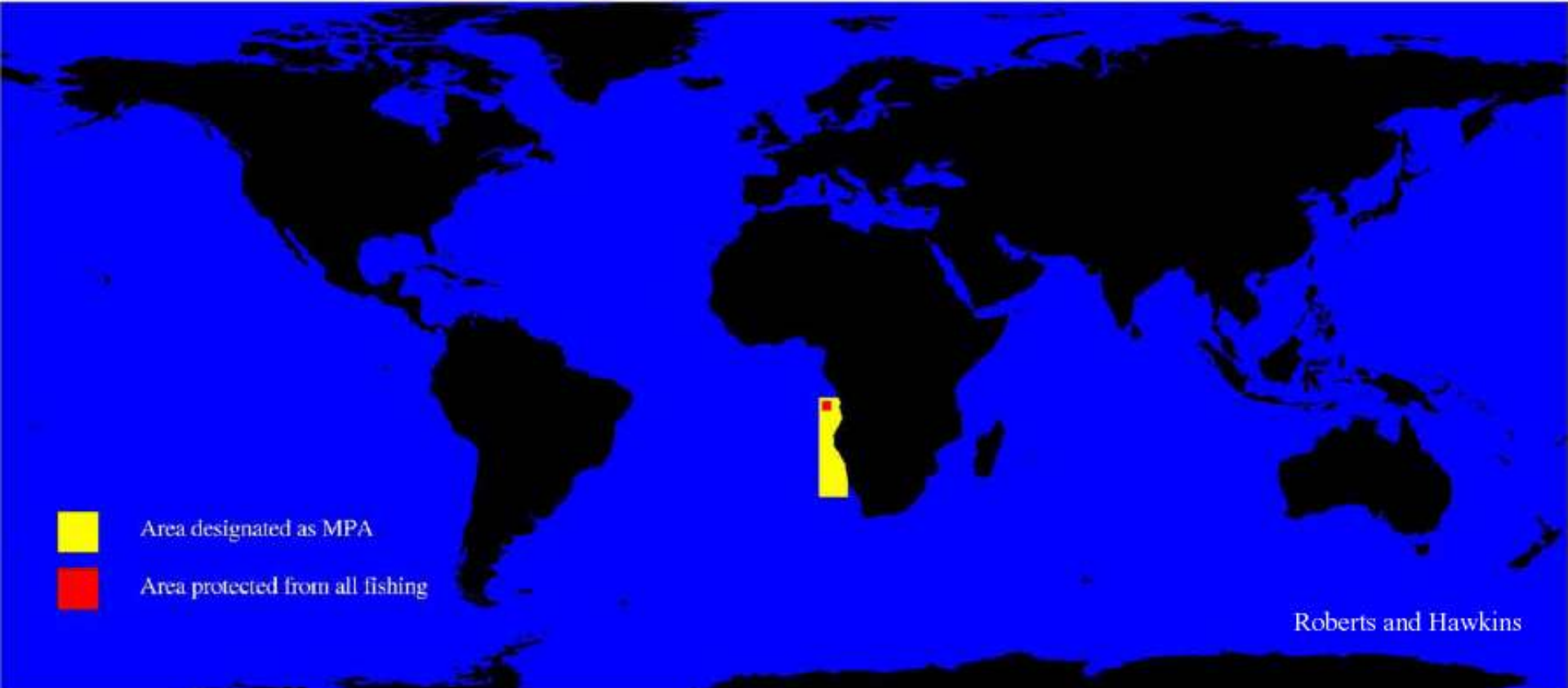
- **Northern Ireland has committed to the overarching policies of the draft UK Marine Bill (UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill)**
- **This includes commitment to:**
  - **the overarching Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and high level marine objectives,**
  - **licensing such as FEPA and aggregates**
  - **offshore planning**

## *Northern Ireland Marine Bill*

- **Northern Ireland Assembly Bill due in 2012**
- **NI Assembly Bill is proposed to cover:**
  - **Marine Nature Conservation,**
  - **Regional marine planning,**
  - **The remainder of licensing,**
  - **Governance arrangements (MMO were removed)**

**A reform of fisheries is not included and an MMO is no longer proposed**

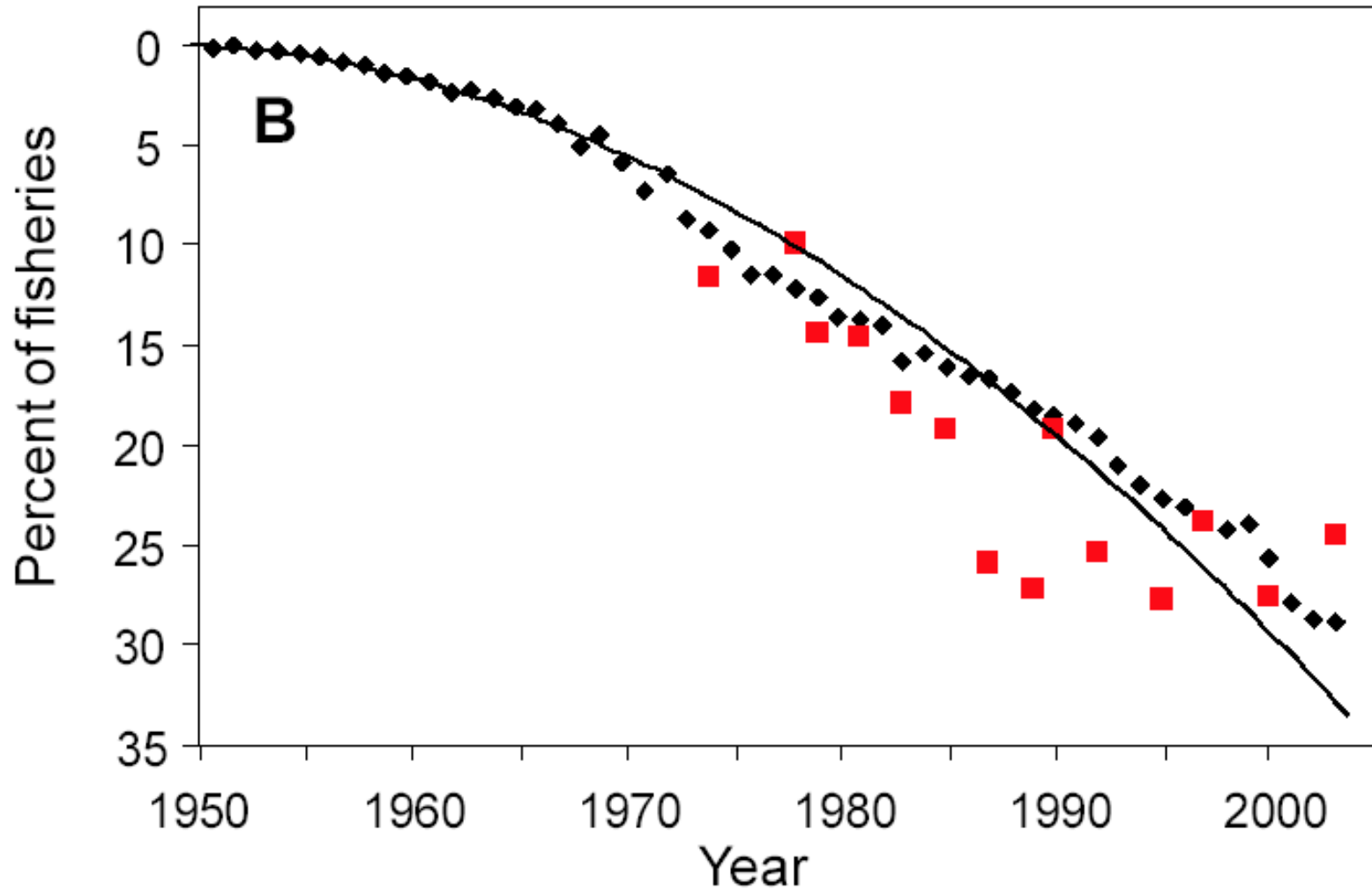
# The oceans and MPAs





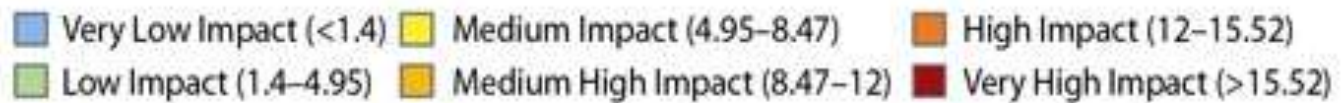
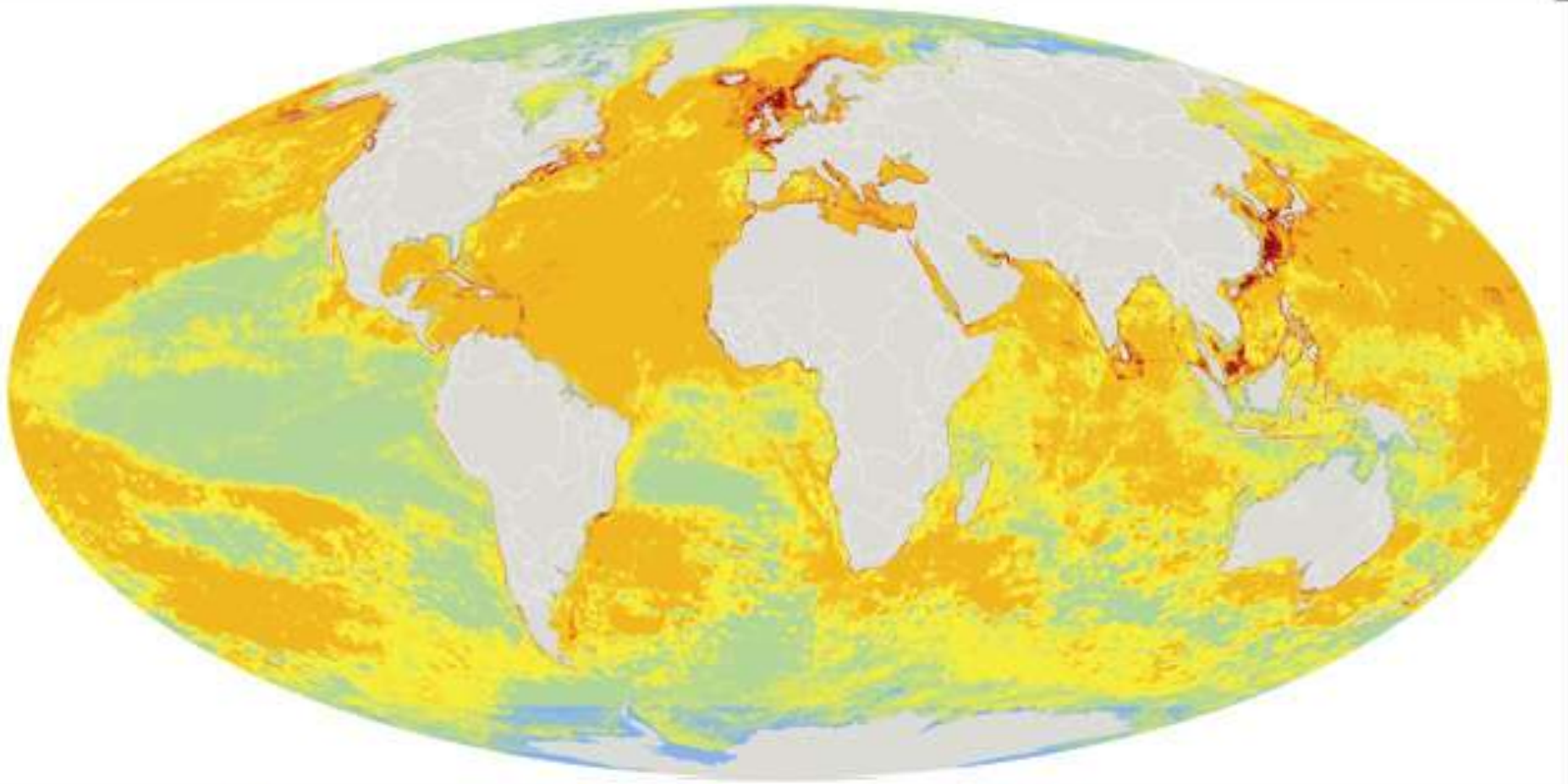
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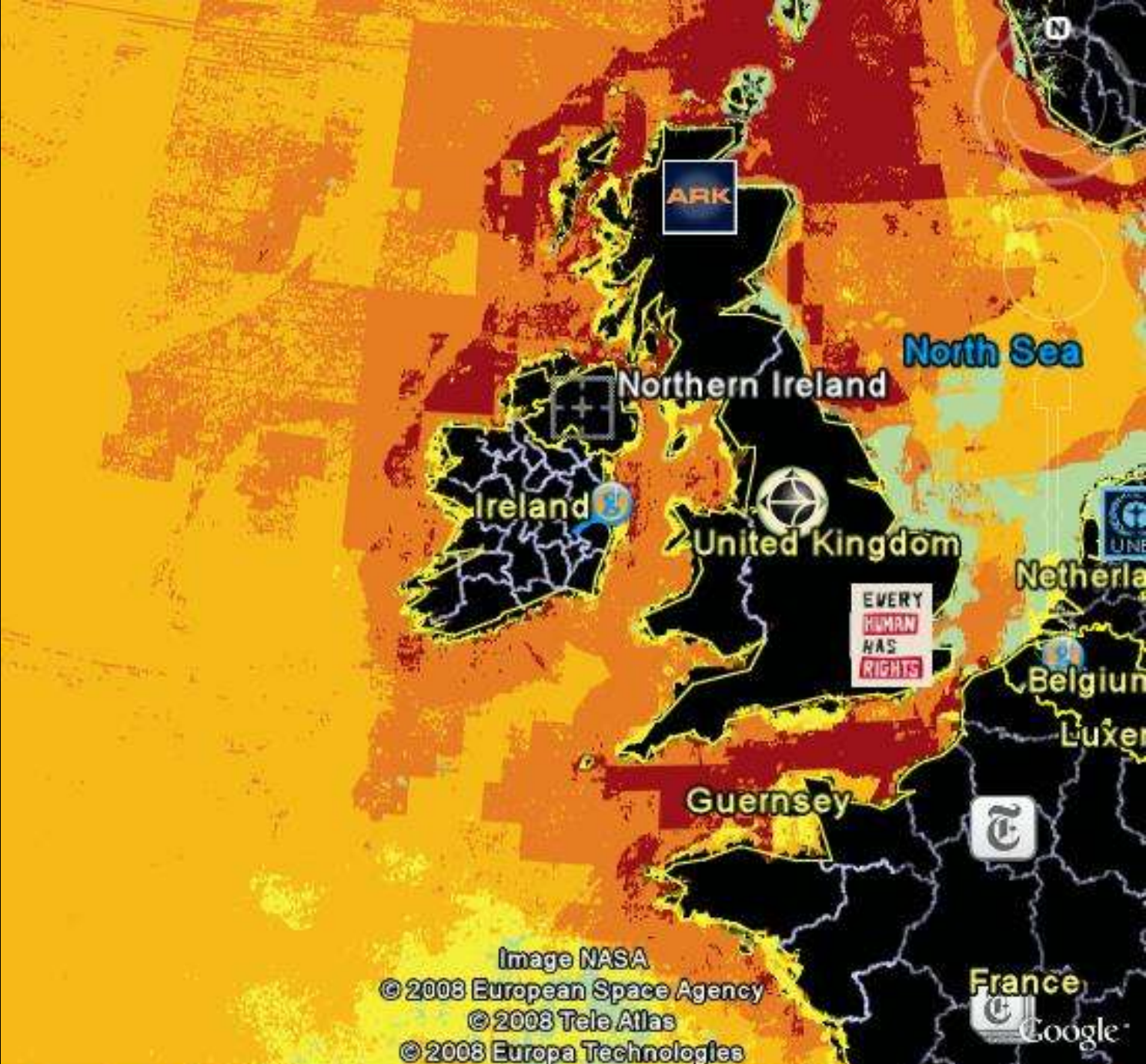
# Global trajectories - Fisheries



**Worm *et al.* 2007 response and FAO 2005**

# *Human activity in the oceans*





ARK

North Sea

Northern Ireland

Ireland

United Kingdom

Netherlands

Belgium

Luxembourg

Guernsey

France

Image NASA  
© 2008 European Space Agency  
© 2008 Tele Atlas  
© 2008 Europa Technologies

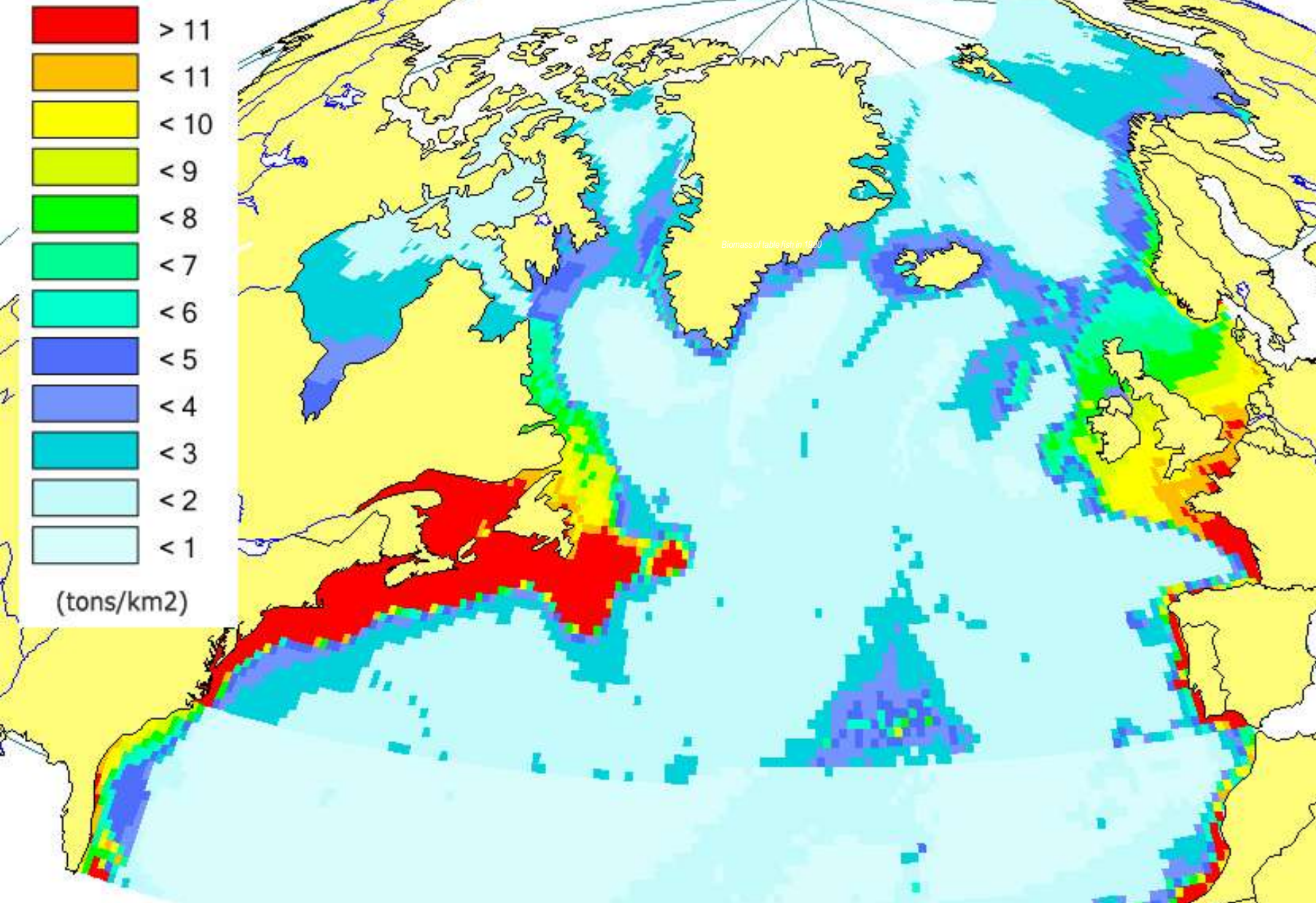
EVERY  
HUMAN  
HAS  
RIGHTS

52°43'03.83" N

6°51'28.46" W

Eye alt 1460.80 km

Google

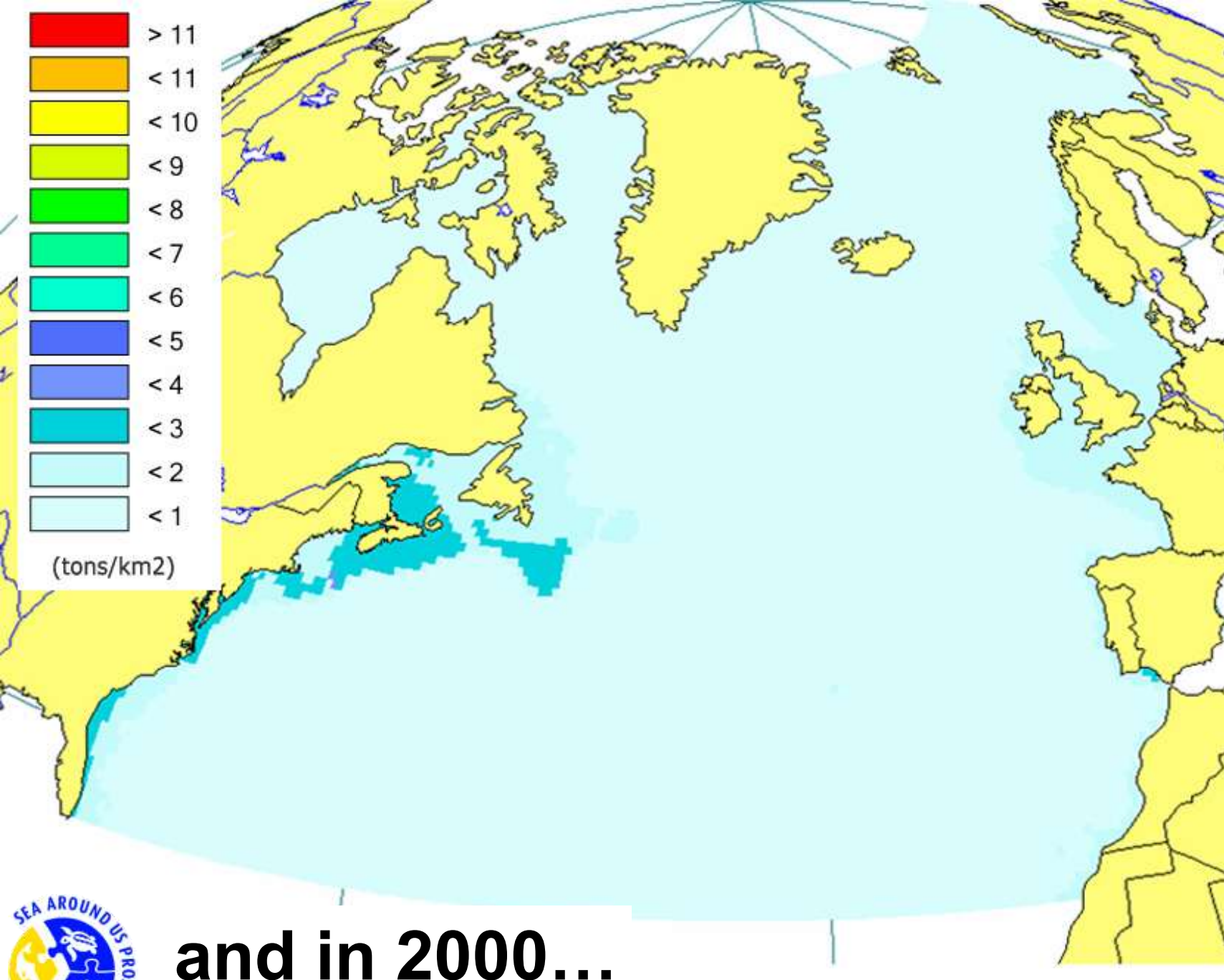


World Wildlife Fund  
 Friends of Earth  
 Northern Ireland



# Biomass of table fish in 1900

Christensen *et al.* 2003, *Fish & Fisheries Slide from Professor Jeremy Jackson Scripps UCSB*

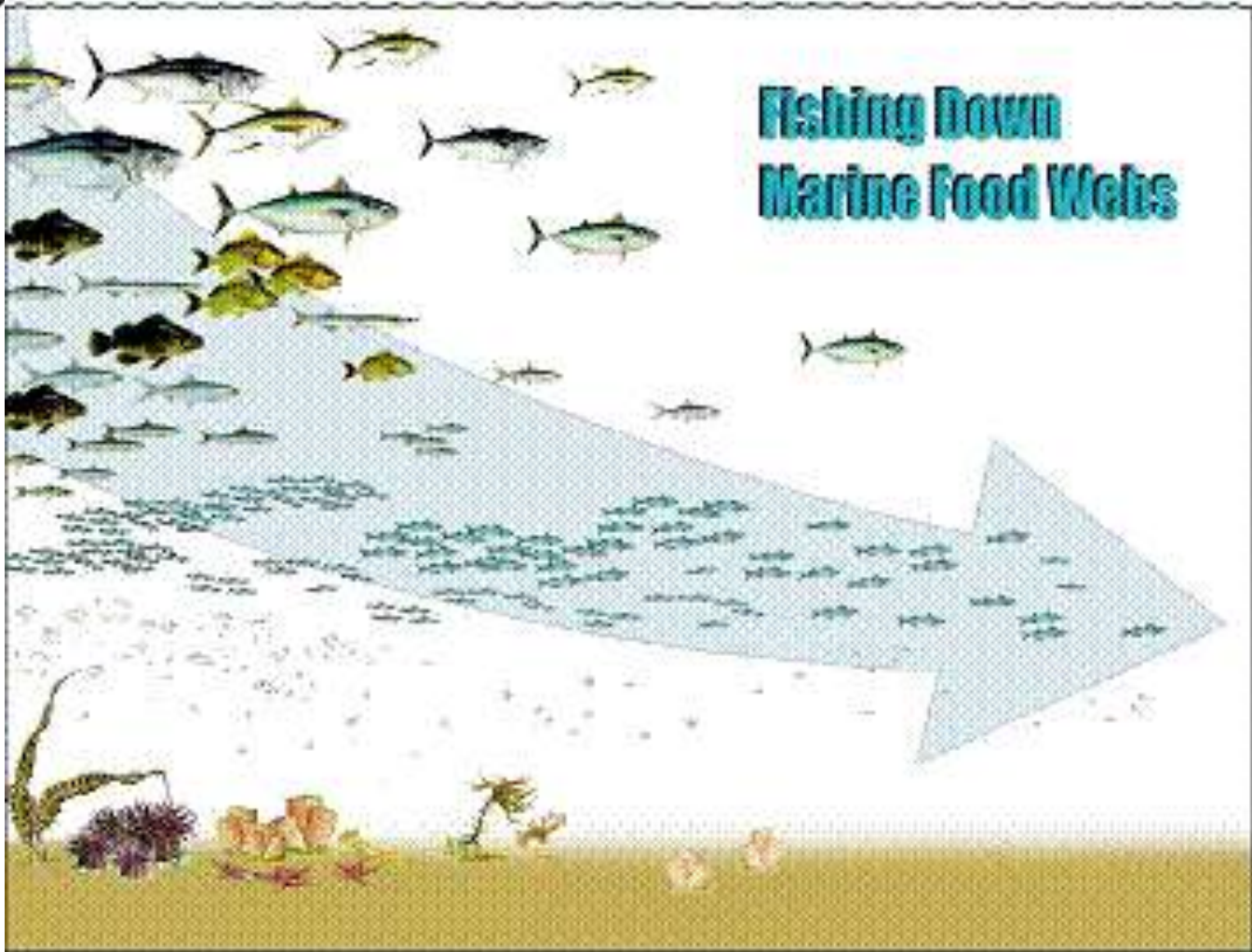


# and in 2000...

Christensen *et al.* 2003, *Fish & Fisheries* Slide from Professor Jeremy Jackson Scripps UCSB



*Northern Ireland  
Marine Task Force*



**Dr Daniel Pauly UBC Fisheries Centre**

# Why are we so behind?

- **Northern Ireland politics: from climate sceptic Sammy to flat earth Poots**



- **Government commitment and will**
- **Lack of understanding, awareness and appreciation of that which is beneath the water - lack of resources**

An underwater photograph showing a diverse marine ecosystem. In the foreground, a large, five-armed orange sea star is prominent. The seabed is covered with various species of sea anemones, some with long, thin tentacles and others with shorter, thicker ones. The water is clear, and the overall scene is vibrant and detailed.

## *What needs to happen now?*

- Northern Ireland to keep pace?
- No more delays with the NI Marine Bill
- Marine Protected Areas and marine reserves urgently
- Government commitment and will?
- People need to wake up

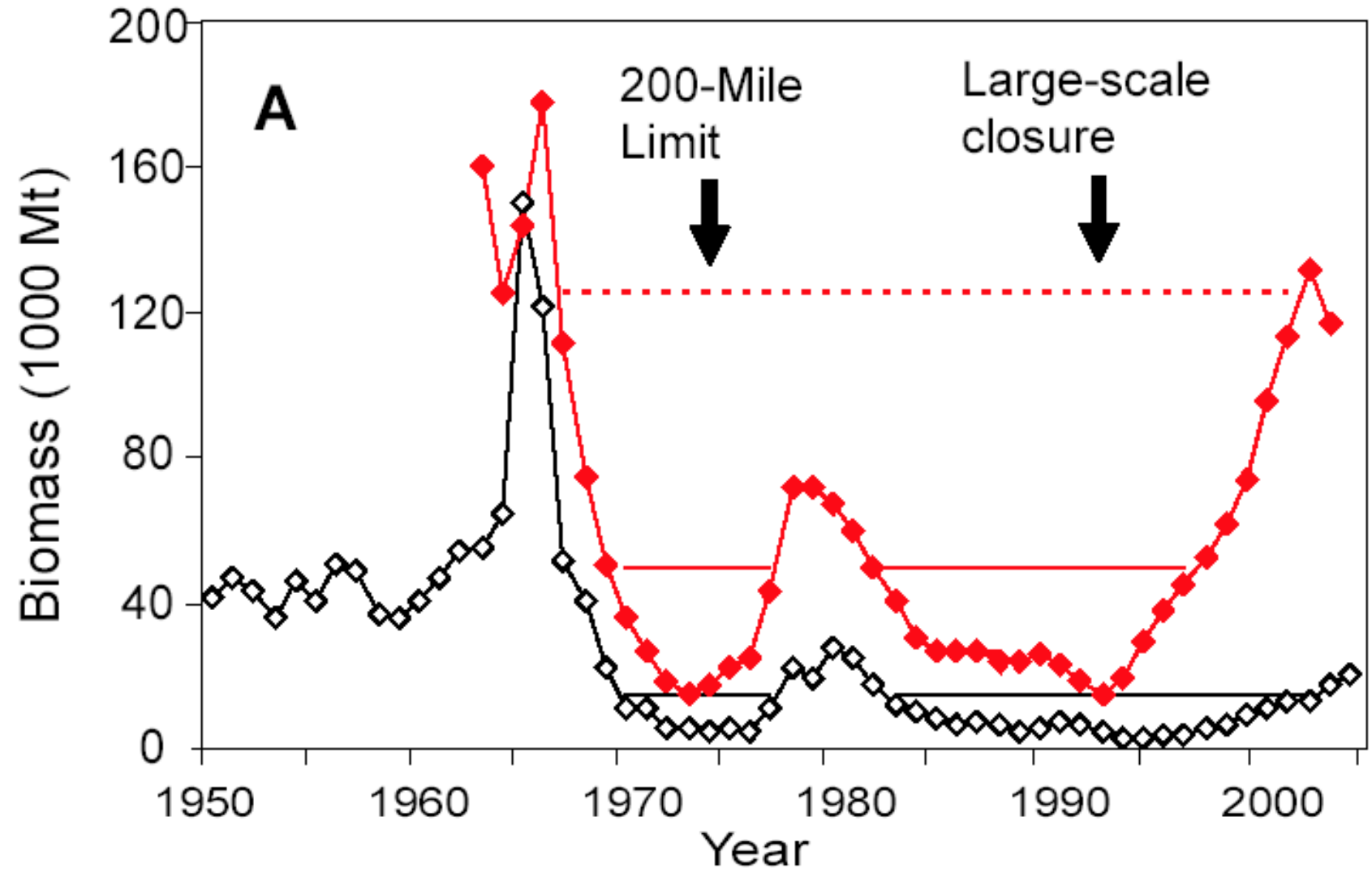
# Marine Reserves Report

The report specifically focuses on the need for a network of marine reserves in Northern Ireland as an essential core in the MPA network and sets out the beginnings of a process to implement this.

Examples of benefits from marine reserves include:

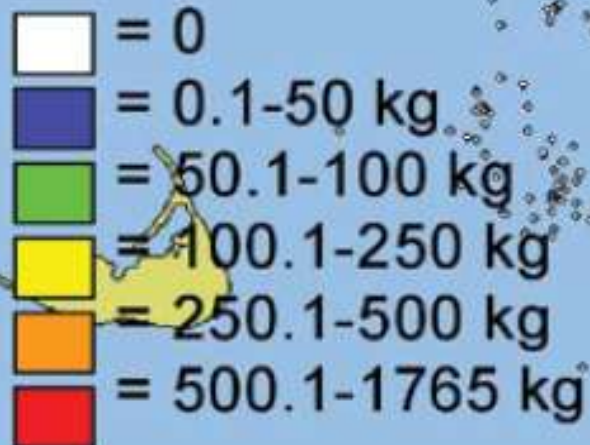
- A 7-fold increase, since 2003, in the abundance of large lobsters within the Lundy Island No Take Zone (marine reserve) off the North Devon Coast, with evidence of 'spill over' of juvenile lobsters from within the reserve to surrounding areas.
- Following the closure of George's Bank fishing area off the American East coast, scallop numbers increased approximately 10-fold and haddock catches were between 2 to 15 times greater at the reserve boundary than elsewhere.
- Increases of up to 100% of commercial scallops from the Isle of Man mobile gear closure of 2 km<sup>2</sup> in 1989 as well as a greater abundance in upright seabed fauna that has been linked to increases in the collection of scallop spat (juvenile scallops).
- Marine reserves can have a very positive effect on local tourism, for example, the 5.5 km<sup>2</sup> Leigh Marine Reserve, in New Zealand, attracts over 100,000 visitors per year. This brings approximately NZ \$20 million to the local economy each year.

# Grand Banks closure

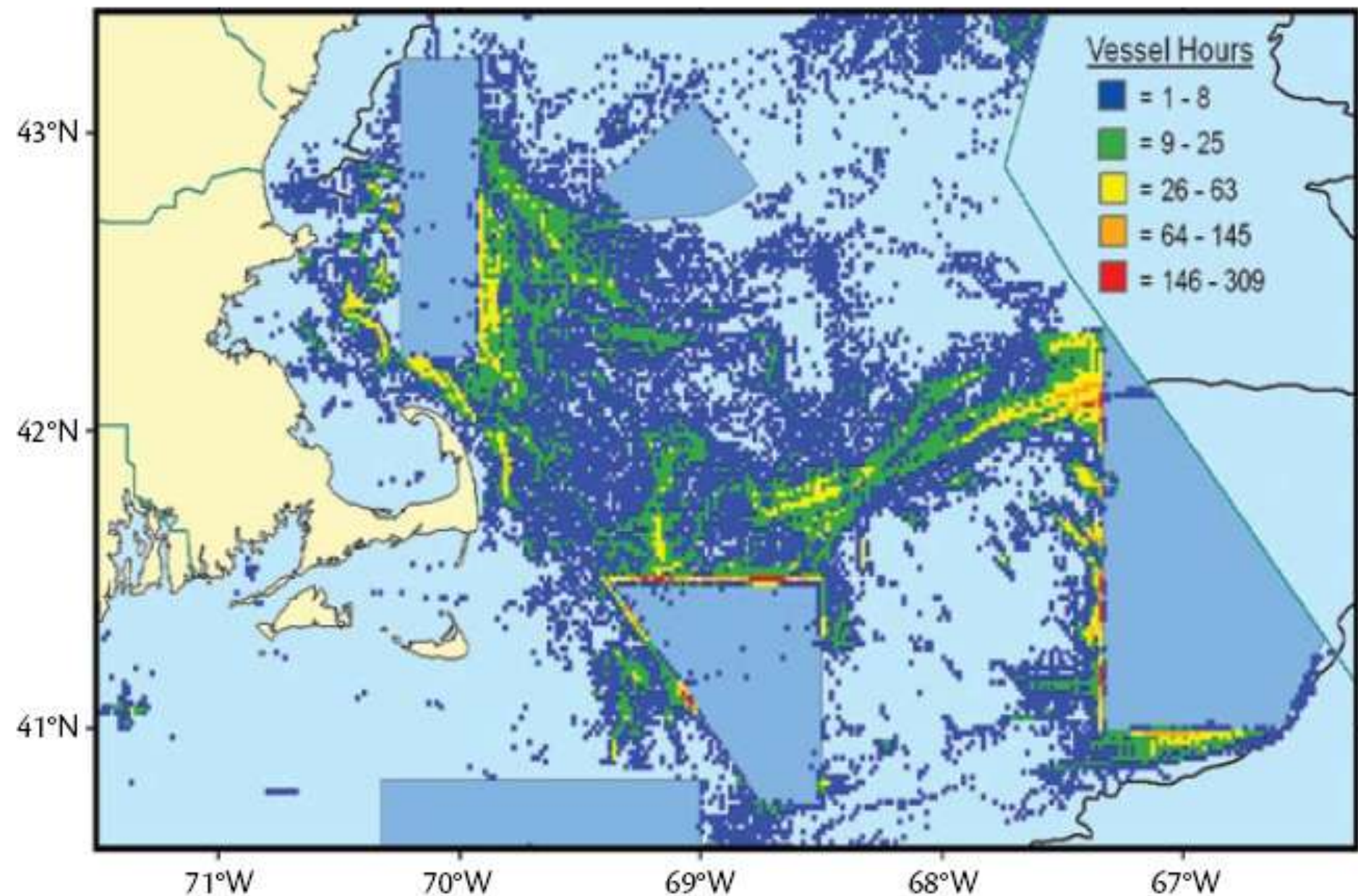


**Worm et al. 2007 response**

## Haddock catch



73% of the United States Haddock catch is now taken within 5km of the closed area boundaries



Distribution of fishing effort around Georges Bank closed areas  
 Source: Fogarty et al. (2007) Slide from Prof Steve Gaines

## *Summary*

- **Need to remember the ultimate foundation is marine biodiversity and healthy natural ecosystems**
- **Northern Ireland needs to speed up the delivery of an ecological network of Marine Protected Areas with highly protected sites**
- **Need a Marine Bill to deliver the legislation - Marine Nature Conservation, Marine Management Organisation, marine planning and integration of fisheries**
- **Northern Ireland's marine environment is worth protecting and we need to do it now**

together as they pledge to share power in Northern Ireland



AFP/PAUL FAITH

# THE MIRACLE OF BELFAST

DAVID MCKITTRICK WITNESSES AN EXTRAORDINARY DAY, PAGES 2-3



*Thank you*

**Gomes-M@email.ulster.ac.uk**