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Status of coastal ecosystems and management in India

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India has a coastline of more than 7500 km. Marine resources are spread over in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal. The economic zone (EEZ) of the country has an area of 2.02 million sq km comprising 0.86 million sq km on the west coast, 0.56 million sq km on the east coast and 0.6 million sq km around the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Marine fish production has increased from 0.5 million tonnes in 1950 to 3.8 million tonnes in 2015, contributing substantially to nutritional security, income, and livelihood of a large population of the country. Available information indicates that the oceans and coastal biomes contribute substantially to the ecosystem services that make up the country's natural capital. India has opportunities to reap many economic benefits from living and non-living resources of coastal and marine areas including fisheries and biodiversity. In India, a large number of people are dependent on the coastal and marine ecosystems and their resources for survival and livelihood. For conserving and managing coastal and marine resources and ecosystems, a strong legislative framework exists in India. The acts and supporting rules and regulations directly and indirectly related to management of coastal and marine areas and biodiversity are as follows: Coast Guard Act, 1978; Merchant Shipping Act, 1958; Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and other Maritime Zones Act, 1976; Forest Conservation Act, 1980; Marine Fishing Regulation Acts, 1981 (separate acts promulgated by each coastal State/UT based on a model Bill prepared by the Union Ministry of Agriculture); Coastal Pollution Control Series, 1982; Environment Protection Act, India has established 31 Coastal & Marine Protected Areas (CMPAs). For the purpose of conserving and protecting the coastal areas and marine waters, the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) area is classified as CRZ I, CRZ II, CRZ III and CRZ IV. The areas that have been developed up to or close to the shoreline are included in CRZ II, generally referred as the area within the municipal limits, CRZ III includes areas that relatively undisturbed, less built up and rural areas, and CRZ IV includes the water area from the Low Tide Line to twelve nautical miles on the seaward side. The areas that are ecologically sensitive and the geomorphologic features which play a role in maintaining the integrity of the coast is referred to as CRZ I.

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