

**Template for Submission of Scientific Information
to Describe Areas Meeting Scientific Criteria for
Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas**

Title/Name of the area:

Rasdhoo Atoll Reef, Maldives

Presented by

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Abstract

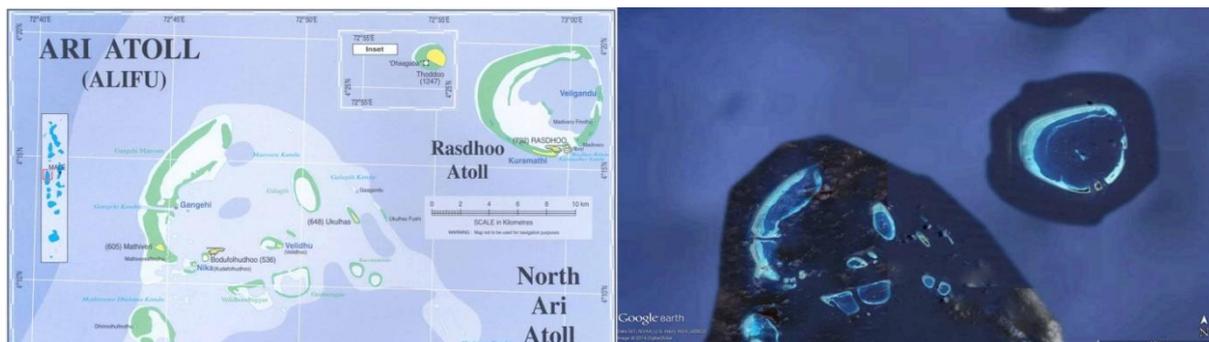
Rasdhoo Atoll located 4°15'46"N 72°59'29"E is among the few small Atolls in Maldives and have special environment features to it. The atoll has 4 islands and 3 sand banks. Of these Rasdhoo Island is the only inhabited island with a population of 867 people. The channel between Rasdhoo Island and Madivaru Island is known throughout the world as a famous diving site to spot Hammerhead Sharks. The average depth of the channel is estimated to be 400m. Hammerhead sharks can be seen in abundance throughout the year in depths of 25- 60 meters. Since the Atoll is an isolated Atoll surrounding deep sea it act as a sanctuary for the juvenile fishes to grow in safety of shallow atoll rim, for this reason the atoll is famous for large number of reef fish and frequent visits by their predators like the Hammerhead Shark. Due to its rich biodiversity value Environmental Protection Agency of Maldives has also included this Atoll in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas list of Maldives. Locals of this atoll and throughout the Maldives use these resources for different economical and personal use. The demand for these resources would be increasing as the industries boom and with the raising population.

For this reason it is important to manage the resources and conserve its beauty for the generation to come.

Introduction

A circular shaped micro atoll located at the North Eastern tip of Ari Atoll at 4°15'46"N 72°59'29"E. It is isolated from the main body of the Atoll and have 4 islands and 3 sand banks of its own. Of the 4 islands Rasdhoo Island is the only inhabited island with a population of 867 people. Of other 3 islands, Kuramathi Island and Veligandu Island is developed as a Resort while Madivaru is mostly untouched. However Madivaru with the other 3 sandbank is used by the locals and the tourist for recreational activities.

Location



Feature description of the proposed area

Rasdho Atoll is among the few micro Atolls in Maldives and have special environment features to it. The channel between Rasdho Island and Madivaru Island is known throughout the world as a famous diving site to spot Hammerhead Sharks. The average depth of the channel is estimated to be 400m. Hammerhead sharks can be seen in abundance throughout the year in depths of 25- 60 meters. At one time hammerhead sharks are seen more than 100 in number. Since the Atoll is an isolated Atoll surrounding deep sea it act as a sanctuary for the juvenile fishes to grow in safety of shallow atoll rim, for this reason the atoll is famous for large number of reef fish and frequent visits by their predators like the Hammerhead Shark. Due to its rich biodiversity value Environmental Protection Agency of Maldives had also included this Atoll in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas list of Maldives. The various type of fisheries practiced at the area includes snapper fisheries, lobster fishery, sea cucumber harvesting, bait fishery etc. Other uses include picnic, diving, harbouring tourist safari vessels, sand mining

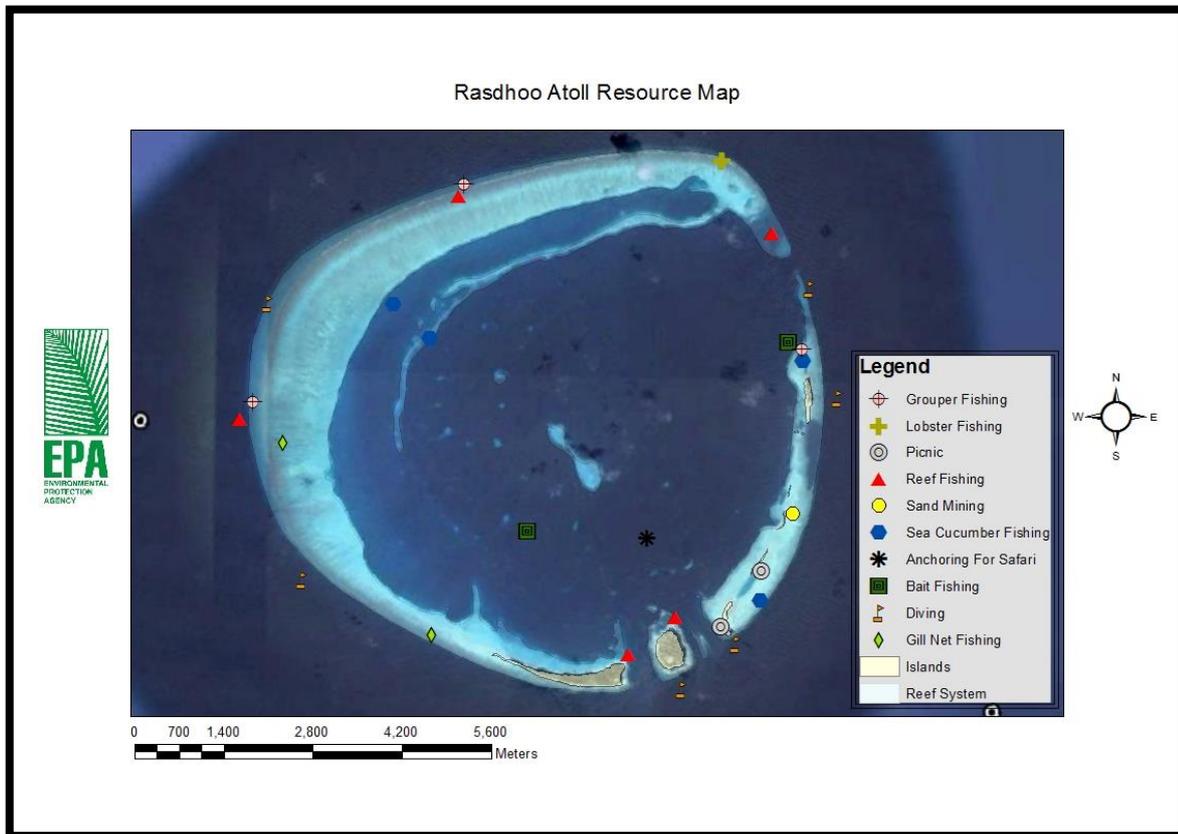
Such rich diversity of life is not only attracted by the predatory fish living in the oceans, but also by the tourists that visit the country for the sole purpose of witnessing nature's splendour such as this. Locals of this atoll and throughout the Maldives use these resources for different economical and personal use. The demand for these resources would be increasing as the industries boom and with the raising population.

For this reason it is important that we manage the resources and conserve its beauty for the generation to come.

Feature condition and future outlook of the proposed area

Resource use map developed

A Resource use map was formulated using the data collected from the community consultation. Each stake holder including Fishermen, Reef Fishermen Famers and the Resort Managements highlighted the important areas for each. A referenced map was made using Arc GIS software with the recommendations form each stakeholder.

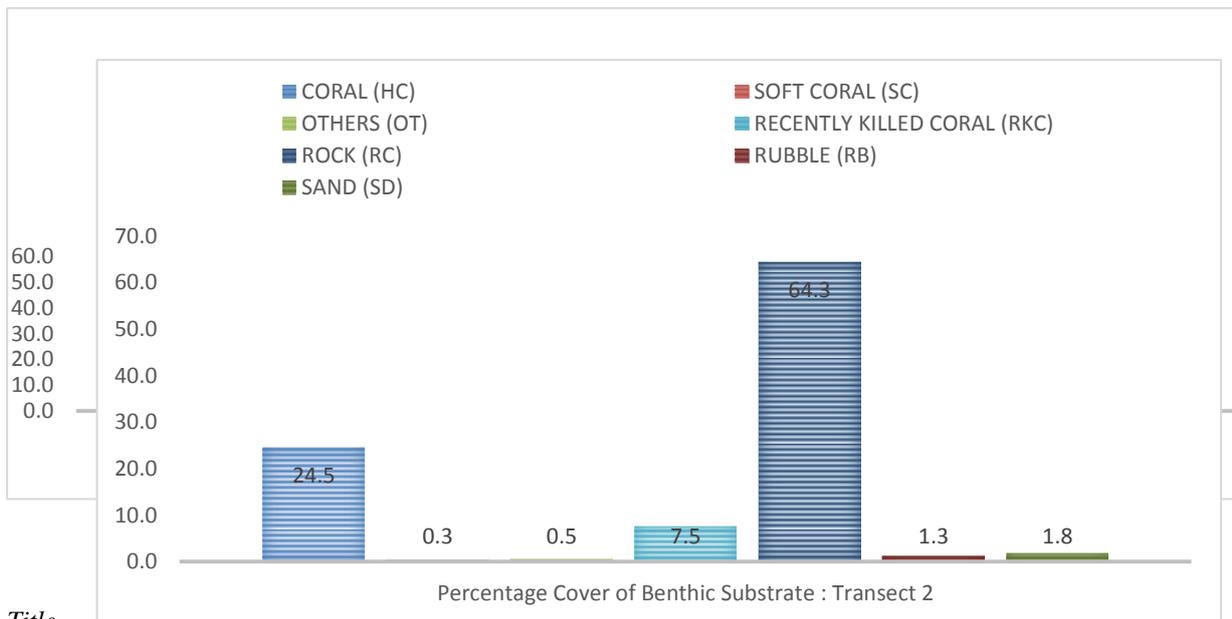
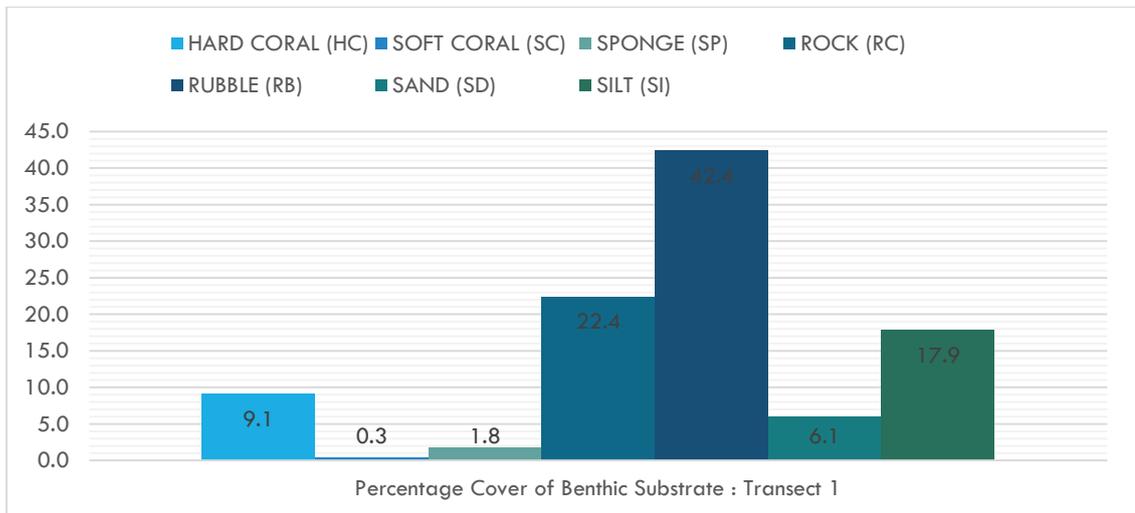
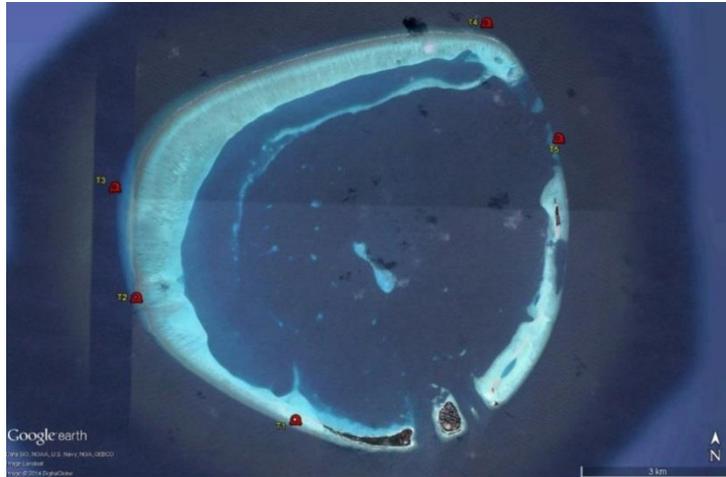


Socio-economic survey conducted

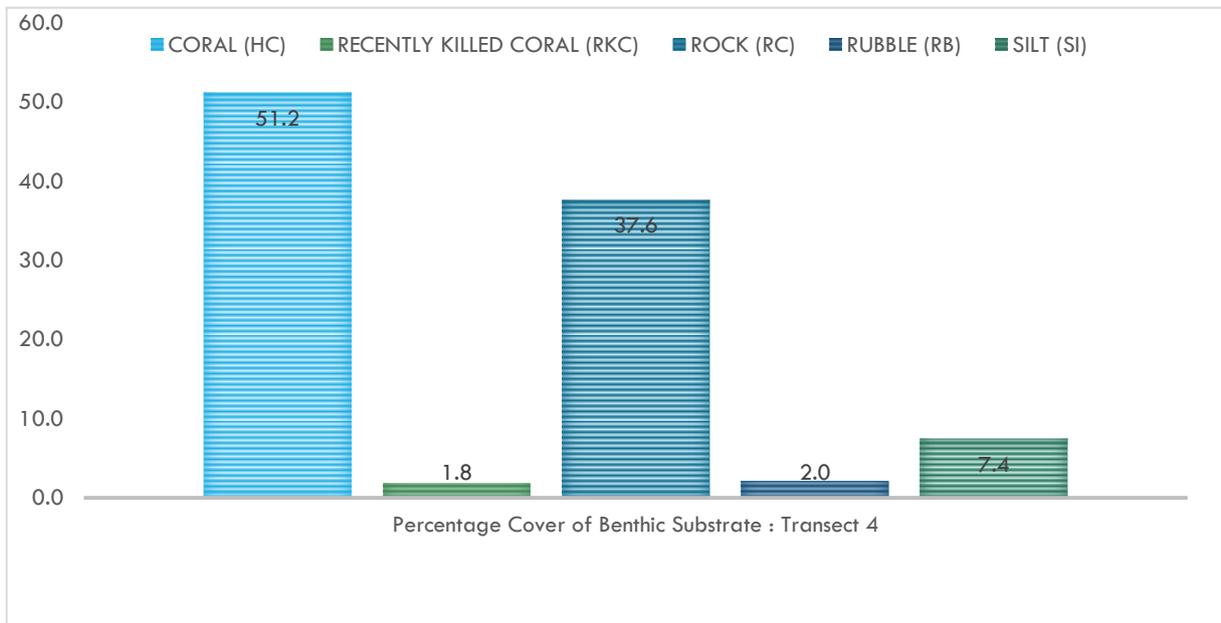
Survey questionnaires were prepared to get people's opinion regarding 3 major areas. The areas which are addressed in the survey are based on how and for what purpose they utilize the natural resources and their opinion regarding the conservation and protection of the habitats, and the conservation efforts that had previously taken place at the atoll/island level to utilize the resources in a sustainable manner. Meanwhile, the rich biodiversity of the atoll and people's opinion regarding the protection of the habitats and the changes that could bring about to their income were also addressed in the survey.

90 people including resort management, Fishermen, Famers, Atoll council, Island council and NGO participated in the workshop.

Reef survey

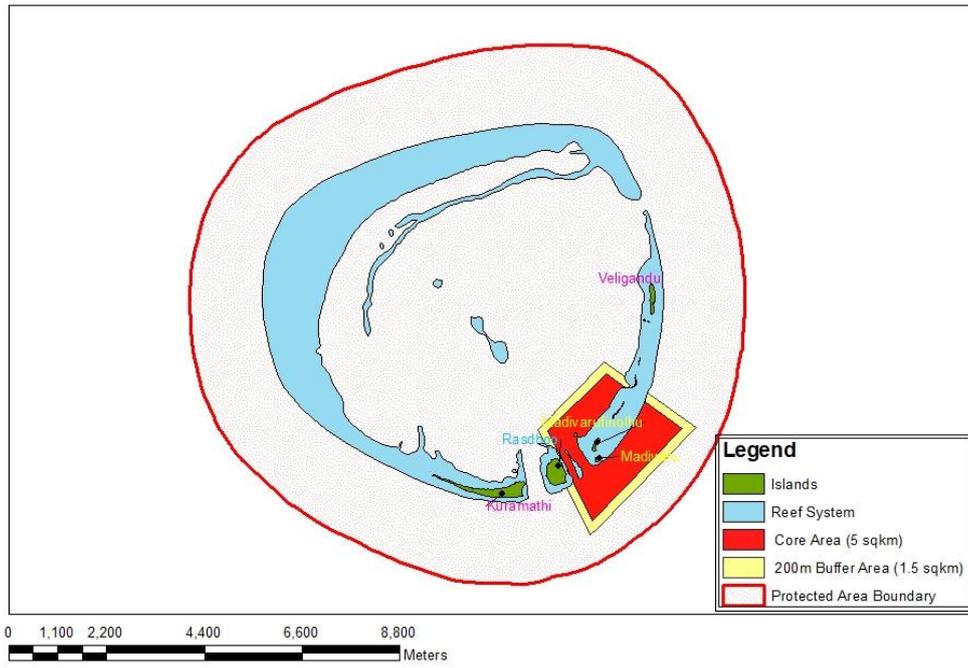


Title



Zonation map done

Rasdhoo Atoll Protected Boundary



Assessment of the area against CBD EBSA Criteria

(Discuss the area in relation to each of the CBD criteria and relate the best available science. Note that a proposed area for EBSA description may qualify on the basis of one or more of the criteria, and that the polygons of the EBSA need not be defined with exact precision. And modeling may be used to estimate the presence of EBSA attributes. Please note where there are significant information gaps)

CBD EBSA Criteria (Annex I to decision IX/20)	Description (Annex I to decision IX/20)	Ranking of criterion relevance (please mark one column with an X)			
		No information	Low	Medium	High
Uniqueness or rarity	Area contains either (i) unique (“the only one of its kind”), rare (occurs only in few locations) or endemic species, populations or communities, and/or (ii) unique, rare or distinct, habitats or ecosystems; and/or (iii) unique or unusual geomorphological or oceanographic features.				X
<i>Explanation for ranking: One of the few known sites in Maldives where hammerhead sharks are seen abundance eg 100s</i>					
Special importance for life-history stages of species	Areas that are required for a population to survive and thrive.	X			
<i>Explanation for ranking: Such study has not been carried out on this site</i>					
Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats	Area containing habitat for the survival and recovery of endangered, threatened, declining species or area with significant assemblages of such species.			X	
<i>Explanation for ranking:</i>					
Vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, or slow recovery	Areas that contain a relatively high proportion of sensitive habitats, biotopes or species that are functionally fragile (highly susceptible to degradation or depletion by human activity or by natural events) or with slow recovery.		X		
<i>Explanation for ranking: Since 2012 shark fishing has been banned in Maldives</i>					
Biological productivity	Area containing species, populations or communities with comparatively higher natural biological productivity.	X			
<i>Explanation for ranking: No information available</i>					
Biological	Area contains comparatively higher diversity of				X

diversity	ecosystems, habitats, communities, or species, or has higher genetic diversity.				
<i>Explanation for ranking: The area is with diverse varieties of fish and rich ecological system</i>					
Naturalness	Area with a comparatively higher degree of naturalness as a result of the lack of or low level of human-induced disturbance or degradation.			X	
<i>Explanation for ranking: Excessive fishing by local fisherman and tourist encounter happens to negatively impact the biodiversity.</i>					

Sharing experiences and information applying other criteria (Optional)

Other Criteria	Description	Ranking of criterion relevance (please mark one column with an X)			
		Don't Know	Low	Medium	High
<i>Add relevant criteria</i>					
<i>Explanation for ranking</i>					

References

1. EPA (2014), Technical Report for Rasdhoo Atoll Protection, Government of Maldives
2. www.epa.gov.mv

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