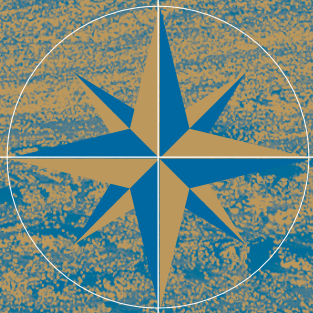


"The desire to have access to the sea, to be able to see and touch it, is an extremely strong collective feeling. The sea is certainly the only place where free access is truly a political issue."

The Piquard report, 1973



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MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉCOLOGIE,
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ET DE L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DURABLES



**Agence des
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**French Marine
Protected Areas Agency**

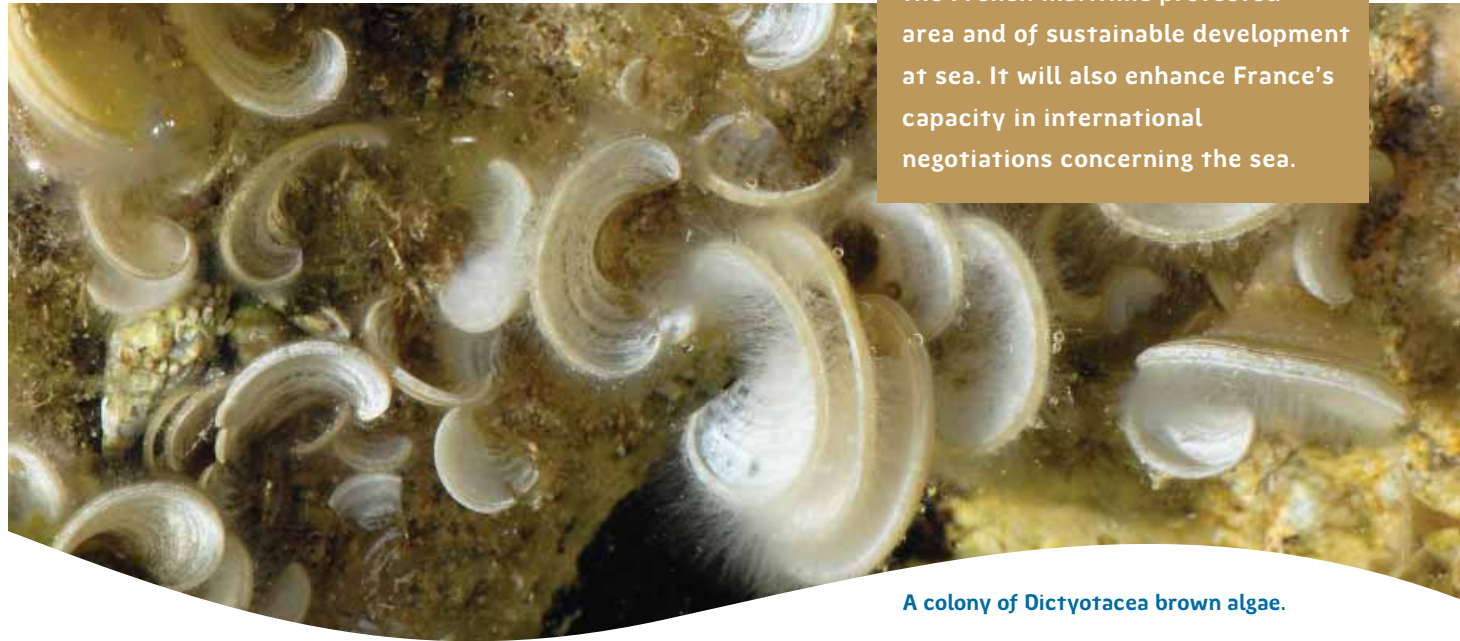
A public institution for the marine environment

Context and stakes

The marine environment covers two thirds of our planet. It provides resources for many economic activities and shelters a largely unexplored potential for biodiversity. A large proportion of the world's population lives in coastal areas, and even greater numbers use these areas for recreational and social purposes. All these social and economic functions are closely linked to the marine environment's good health and preservation status.

Marine Protected Areas, or MPAs, have boundaries determined on the basis of their natural heritage interest (remarkable habitats or species, for instance), the significant ecological functions they perform (spawning areas, nurseries, areas of high production, migratory stopovers, etc.) and the uses made of them (fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, mining, etc.). Their objective, usually combined with the aim of sustainable use, is to protect the environment, and they provide a framework for governance along with the appropriate means and measures.

France, as an economic and maritime power, is particularly concerned by these stakes. It has contributed to analyses and promoted them through a number of international agreements it has signed.



A colony of Dictyota brown algae.

A national agency

In spite of the above facts, there are very few marine protected areas worldwide. France is no exception to the rule, although it has created remarkable marine developments in terms of nature reserves (approximately 1,220 km², not to mention the recent Southern Lands or "Terres Australes" nature reserve which has over 15,000 km² of marine surface area) and Natura 2000 sites (6,970 km², as well as sites belonging to the Coastal conservatory).

A law enacted on 14 April 2006 concerning national parks, marine nature parks and regional nature parks gave rise to the French Marine Protected Areas Agency, with the following core missions:

- support public policies for both creating and managing marine protected areas,
- coordinate the network of MPA managers, and
- manage the human resources and funding provided for marine nature parks or other marine protected areas under its care.