



## Defining Canada's Maritime Zones

In addition to its land territory, Canada encompasses approximately 7.1-million square kilometres of ocean environment – an area equal to about 70 percent of its land mass. Canada's ocean estate is divided into six maritime zones that encircle the country from the Pacific to the Arctic and to the Atlantic oceans. Like all coastal states, Canada has rights and responsibilities related to each of these zones.

### The Maritime Zones of Canada

Maritime zones are measured from lines called territorial sea baselines. Where a coastline such as Canada's is very irregular, baselines are drawn between the tips of the coastline. The six zones, which are defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and outlined in the *Oceans Act*, are:

**Internal Waters:** includes all waters landward of the baseline. As with land territory, Canada has sovereignty over these waters.

**Territorial Sea:** extends up to 12 nautical miles out to sea from the baseline. Countries have sovereignty over the airspace, water, seafloor and subsoil in this zone. Ships from other countries have the "right of innocent passage" through this zone as long as they operate under certain conditions.

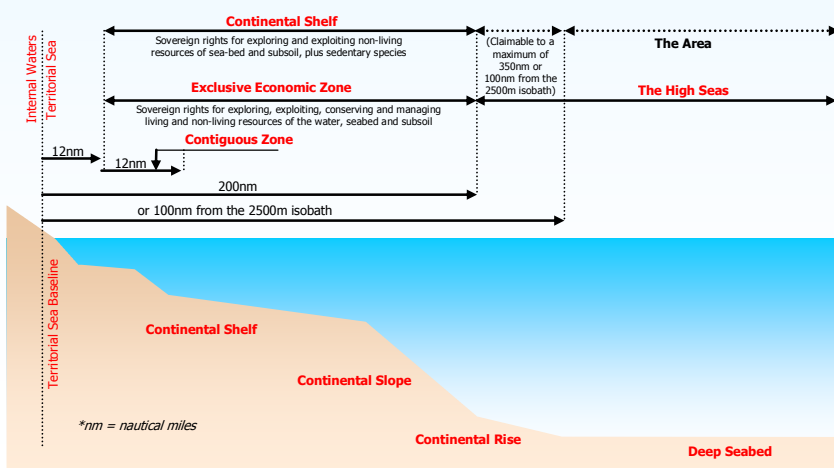
**Contiguous Zone:** starts where the territorial sea ends and extends from baselines out to a maximum of 24 nautical miles. Canada can enforce laws relating to pollution, customs, immigration and taxation in this zone.

**Exclusive Economic Zone:** ranges from 12 to a maximum of 200 nautical miles from baselines. Within this zone, a country has sovereign rights over the exploration, exploitation, management and conservation of resources in the water, on the seabed and under the seafloor. A country also has jurisdiction over certain activities like marine scientific research and protecting the marine environment.

**Continental Shelf:** comprises the seabed and subsoil to a maximum of 200 nautical miles from baselines or, where the natural prolongation of the continent extends beyond 200 nautical miles, to a distance defined in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). A country has sovereign rights over the resources of the seabed and the subsoil of the continental shelf.

**High Seas:** the water beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone. No state has sovereignty over the high seas.

**The Area:** the seabed beyond the Continental Shelf. No state has sovereignty over the Area.



With far-reaching and diverse safety, environmental, economic, political and sovereignty implications, maritime boundaries need to be clearly defined. All coastal states are required to delineate their maritime zones, which are defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In Canada, the Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS) of Fisheries and Oceans Canada is responsible for the delineation of these maritime boundaries on navigation products, including nautical charts.

Maritime delineation is as important as defining terrestrial provincial or national boundaries since establishing maritime limits and boundaries determines where the rights and responsibilities of Canada and other countries apply. Canada shares maritime boundaries with three other countries: France (Saint Pierre and Miquelon), the United States and Denmark (Greenland).

Defining these maritime zones also aids in the enforcement of Canadian marine laws and regulations by a variety of federal government departments, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, Transport Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Citizenship and Immigration and the Canada Revenue Agency. For example, laws relating to fishing, customs, shipping, taxation, safety, pollution and other environmental issues apply in these zones.

The Hydrography Division of the Canadian Hydrographic Service lends its expertise to compile, analyze and organize scientific and technical information and advice to assist in the delineation of Canada's maritime limits and boundaries.





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The surveying of Canada's coastline and marine waters and updating of nautical charts and other information products is an ongoing process, and the coastline is constantly changing due to erosion, deposition and water level changes. In collaboration with Natural Resources Canada and Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, the Canadian Hydrographic Service is also in the process of delineating the outer limits of Canada's continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.



### Defining Canada's Extended Continental Shelf

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides that coastal states have sovereign rights over the nonliving and living sedentary resources of the seabed and subsoil of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from baselines. The Convention sets out a process for states to determine with precision where they may exercise those rights and gain international recognition for those limits. Canada is preparing its submission to the Commission on the limits of the Continental Shelf and intends to file it in December 2013. A provisional analysis using the rules of article 76 of UNCLOS suggests that Canada has a large extended continental shelf in both the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.

**For more information on Canada's Extended Continental Shelf, please visit:** [www.international.gc.ca/continental](http://www.international.gc.ca/continental)



*During Arctic winters, Canadian Hydrographic Services hydrographers settle in, manage and work from ice camps for months at a time, using through-the-ice sonar techniques and other methods to gather data. The base camp seen above is part of the Canadian Forces Base on Ellesmere Island located in Alert, Nunavut. Canada and Denmark are collaborating to develop a joint interpretation of the information collected.*

*To learn more about how the Canadian Hydrographic Service supports the protection of Canada's territorial waters, contact the Canadian Hydrographic Service National Director of Hydrography at [chsinfo@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:chsinfo@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) or visit [www.charts.gc.ca](http://www.charts.gc.ca) for more information about Canadian Hydrographic Service programs, services, data and products.*

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