

# Regional Action Plan for Conservation

## *Supporting a Network of Marine Protected Areas in Southeast Asia*

The establishment of Marine Protected Area networks is widely considered as the most effective way to protect the ocean's biodiversity and economic values. State-of-the-art marine conservation strategies focus on the protection of networks of Marine Protected Areas which are designed to survive, managed to last and connected like strings of pearls across the seas and ocean of Southeast Asia. In 2000 the World Commission on Protected Areas Southeast Asia (WCPA SEA) Marine Working Group was established to investigate the MPA status and needs for the region. This initiative is chaired by Rili Djohani who is also the country director of The Nature Conservancy Indonesia Program. The working group secretariat is housed at the Conservancy's Southeast Asia Center for Marine Protected Areas (SEACMPA) in Bali, Indonesia.

In 2002, a Regional Action Plan (RAP) was completed after extensive consultations with the region's marine conservation experts and key stakeholders. The RAP consolidates acknowledged areas of strength and needs of WCPA SEA marine member nations. It identifies the necessary actions to address the issues of common concern, while remaining sensitive to those unique for individual member nations. The RAP envisions a region with an effective, self sufficient and resilient represen-



Fish and anemone ©Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock/Secret Sea Visions

tative network of Marine Protected Areas, sustaining biodiversity and human uses, designed to adapt to local and global environmental change, managed by an empowered responsible citizenry.

Its long term goal is to establish an effective, functional representative network of MPAs by 2012, that is officially recognized and actively supported at all levels by governments in Southeast Asia, and implemented by a regional, national and/or local management authority.

The RAP identifies five priority issues for action (themes): 1) Planning and design, 2) Adaptive management, 3) Coordination and enforcement, 4) Community awareness and development, and 5) Sustainable financing. This action plan will work and compliment with other regional and national marine conservation programs including the

Conservancy's marine conservation programs in Indonesia.

In addition, the RAP will promote the following functions and goals of MPAs:

**Conservation of Biodiversity.** The MPA network will protect and restore marine biodiversity and provide a legal framework for sustainable development.

**Sustainable Fisheries.** The MPAs will support sustainable fishing by safeguarding against fisheries collapse and enhancing fish populations.

**Sustainable Tourism.** The MPAs will attract ecotourists and promote new partnerships in which tourism stakeholders participate in MPA management.

**Integrated Coastal Management.** The MPAs will serve as an example of integrated and participatory management and be national "building blocks" for other conservation work.