

TITLE 2: NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION 1: MARITIME AND COASTAL RESOURCES

§ 1111. Legislative Findings.

The legislature finds that:

(a) The people of the Northern Mariana Islands have traditionally been a seafaring people, sailing hundreds of miles from their home islands in order to provide for their needs by utilizing the resources of the sea.

(b) The people of the Northern Mariana Islands are dependent on the resources of the sea for their economic, social, and political survival and growth.

(c) Foreign interests have been exploiting these resources at an increasing rate without benefit to the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and without regard to the conservation, environmental protection, and scientific management necessary to ensure continued availability of such resources.

(d) In order to effectively utilize and conserve such resources, it is necessary to establish a regime to control the exploitation thereof.

(e) The revised Informal Composite Negotiating Text of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (hereafter referred to in this chapter as the "ICNT," which term shall include any amendment, further revision, or successor thereto) embodies and represents generally accepted principles and practices of customary international law regarding the rights of coastal states in their surrounding waters.

(f) The ICNT provides that the rights recognized or established therein to the resources of a territory such as the Commonwealth shall be vested in the inhabitants of that territory, to be exercised by them for their own benefit and in accordance with their own needs and requirements.

(g) The Northern Mariana Islands is constituted wholly by a single archipelago, being a group of islands, interconnecting waters, and other natural features which are so closely interrelated that they form an intrinsic geographical, economic, and political entity, and have been historically recognized as such, thus qualifying as an archipelagic state under the ICNT.

(h) The Northern Mariana Islands has a water to land ratio not greater than nine to one and, pursuant to the ICNT, may draw straight archipelagic baselines joining the outermost points of the outermost islands and drying reefs of the archipelago and enclosing its archipelagic waters.

(i) Pursuant to the ICNT, the Commonwealth, as an archipelagic state, may establish a territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and contiguous zone, each of which may be measured from its archipelagic baselines.

Source: PL 2-7, § 2.