Preface

The great seas are gigantic. They provide essential fisheries and a central source of our recreation. They are beautiful. They are places of a marvelous and complex biodiversity. The seas contain one-quarter of the world’s oil and gas reserves and rich untapped resources such as manganese, cobalt, nickel and copper. They are home for other resources about which we remain ignorant as we have explored less than 1 per cent of them. They are immensely important to the transportation of people and their goods.

Yet there is an alarming ignorance about the vital role of the oceans and the seas, about the extent of the threats to them, and about society’s ability to manage their environments.

This book is about how we govern the seas. Its core is analysis of programs specifically created to protect and manage the regional seas. More broadly it presents the great range of policy and regulatory activity which affects the environmental quality of seas.

Case studies employed are the Baltic, the Black, the Caribbean, the East Asian, the Mediterranean, and the West African regions where environmental governance has had varying degrees of success, failure, and promise.

We describe the clusters of initiatives, laws and policies – national, regional, international – in place to govern the seas. We evaluate the effectiveness of those clusters, looking to the physical conditions of the seas, the law and policy adopted to better their environment, and international cooperation linked to sound management. We offer recommendations for improving governance of these global resources.