

MPA NEWS

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UN report card: 10% MPA coverage target is not met yet, but could be by year's end

In 2010, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity set a series of 20 targets — the Aichi Biodiversity Targets — to protect global biodiversity by 2020, including [target for 10% MPA coverage](#) (Target 11). Now that 2020 is nearly over, the UN has [released a final report card](#) on progress toward the targets, and the main takeaway is that none of them has been met completely, including Target 11. However, the 10% MPA coverage figure may be met by the end of this year.

Aichi Target 11 requires that by 2020 "at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape."

The UN report card states that, as of August 2020, 7.5% of the world's marine area was in MPAs — including 17.2% of marine areas within national jurisdiction, and 1.2% of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. These data are from the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), managed by the UN Environment Programme. (An alternative database on MPAs, the [Marine Protection Atlas](#), notes that only 2.6% of the global ocean is in fully or highly protected zones.)

The UN report card notes the WDPA figures do not yet include many areas that could qualify as *other effective area-based conservation measures*, which are mentioned in Target 11. OECMs are geographic areas not formally defined as protected areas, but governed or managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained outcomes for biodiversity conservation. Once OECMs are more fully included in the database, the coverage figure under Target 11 will be higher.

The WDPA also does not include national commitments to designate future MPAs. "Specific commitments made by countries for new or expanded protected areas amount to...over 12.5 million km² in the oceans," states the report. "If these commitments are fulfilled, coverage would exceed 10% of the global ocean by the end of 2020."

Other parts of Target 11 may not be met by year's end, like the requirements for effective and equitable management, or that the global MPA system be ecologically representative. The report notes that just 9% of countries have assessed half or more of their protected areas for management effectiveness. And of the world's 232 marine ecoregions, less than half (46.1%) have at least 10% of their area in MPAs.

The report concludes that challenges to reaching Target 11 have included:

- A bias toward creating protected areas in remote areas rather than on making them ecologically representative and covering areas of importance for biodiversity
- Limited recognition of the ecosystem approach in protected areas management
- Limited management effectiveness, and the lack of management effectiveness assessment systems
- Limited coordination among national agencies
- The lack of protected area management and development plans
- Limited monitoring and surveillance systems
- A lack of financial and human resources

Russia designates strict MPA to protect polar bears

In July, the Government of the Russian Federation designated the 8155-km² Bear Islands national marine nature reserve in the East Siberian Sea. The new MPA comprises the uninhabited Medvedzhyi Islands archipelago, surrounding waters, and nearby mainland tundra, and provides critical birthing and denning habitat for polar bears. An average of 26 bears are born per year in the area.

Like Russia's other strict nature reserves — called *zapovedniks* (zap-o-VED-niks) — the site will allow no human activity. A *zapovednik* is the strictest conservation measure under Russian law. The marine portion of the Bear Islands *zapovednik* covers 4679 km² and was not previously protected. The terrestrial parts of the *zapovednik* were previously included in a regional protected area, with less strict protection.

The waters are also home to bearded and ringed seals, and visited by beluga whales, walrus, sea lions, and many seabird species. In addition, the waters provide nursery habitat for Arctic fish species. "The establishment of the nature reserve around the archipelago will help us not only protect its unique ecosystems but also come closer to the global environmental goal of giving 10 percent of marine areas conservation status," said Dmitry Gorshkov, Director of WWF-Russia. Including the new MPA, 2.43% of Russian waters are now considered protected.

A WWF-Russia press release on the new MPA is [here](#). The Government's official designation document (in Russian) is [here](#).

Belize expands MPA to seven times previous size

In August, Belize expanded its existing Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve to seven times its original size. Located off the country's southeastern coast, the expanded MPA now covers 1300 km² of which roughly 900 km² is strictly protected. The MPA encompasses the Corona Reef complex, considered one of the healthiest coral reef systems in the Caribbean, with 60% live coral cover.

The expansion increases Belize's national MPA coverage to 12% of its waters. An EDF press release on the expansion is [here](#). Media coverage is [here](#).

Scotland designates 100,000-km² MPA

In late September, Scotland designated a 100,000-km² MPA in deep waters off its west coast — the West of Scotland Marine Protected Area. It is the largest MPA in national waters in the northeast Atlantic.

"The designation of this site will address one of the last gaps in our MPA network and will be key in achieving the international target of 10% of the world's oceans covered by an MPA by the end of 2020," said Scotland's Natural Environment Minister, Mairi Gougeon. In fact the new MPA means that [34% of Scotland's seas](#) are now protected.

The [designation order](#) does not include the regulations for the new MPA. However, an [official consultation by the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#) released this past March, recommended restrictions on various fishing gears and a ban on deep sea mining within the new MPA.

Côte D'Ivoire designates five MPAs, including a transboundary management site

In September, the West African nation of Côte D'Ivoire (formerly Ivory Coast) [designated five MPAs](#) — the country's first marine protected areas. The five sites are all in coastal waters. One of the sites includes the coastal zone along Côte D'Ivoire's border with Ghana, an area that is part of transboundary management planning by the two nations. A formal transboundary MPA — one of just a few in the world — [is the goal](#), agreed upon by the two nations' environment ministers this past July.

Analysis of Chinese fishing fleet's activity around Galápagos in August

In late July and August of this year, a fleet of 300 Chinese fishing vessels was observed [on the edge of Ecuador's EEZ](#) around the Galápagos Islands. Amid international concern that the vessels might be entering protected waters of the Galápagos Marine Reserve, the Government of China [announced in early August](#) that its vessels would not fish near Galápagos waters from September through November. Left unsaid was that the vessels would continue fishing there through the remainder of August.

[An analysis of fishing vessel data](#) from August near the Galápagos Islands has documented that the Chinese fleet, which was primarily fishing for squid, logged more than 73,000 total hours of apparent fishing there. The data were from automatic identification systems (AIS) on the vessels. The analysis was conducted by Oceana, Google, and SkyTruth using Global Fishing Watch data.

As seen on [this map](#), the boundary of the Galápagos Marine Reserve extends only part way to the edge of the EEZ, so there is a gap between the reserve boundary and the EEZ boundary. According to Marla Valentine of Oceana, who co-led the analysis, there is no evidence from the AIS data that the fleet entered the Galápagos Marine Reserve. "However, there were 43 instances in which vessels appeared to switch off their AIS," she says. "It is possible that the vessels traversed into the EEZ at this point, but we cannot say for certain."

Big new fund is launched for coral reef conservation

A new global fund to protect coral reefs was launched in September. The [Global Fund for Coral Reefs](#) (GFCR) seeks to raise and invest US \$500 million in coral reef conservation over the next 10 years, from 2020-2030. It blends private and public funding.

The GFCR has a dual focus:

- To facilitate the uptake of innovative financing mechanisms, including private market-based investments focused on coral reef conservation and restoration.
- To unlock financing for coral reef-related climate adaptation through the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, and multilateral development banks.

The GFCR is requesting information on potential business models and sites that the Fund could support. To submit information, go to [the GFCR website](#). The deadline for submissions is 21 October.

The Fund's core partners include private philanthropies (Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation), financial institutions (BNP Paribas, Althelia Funds), and UN agencies (UN Environment Programme, UN Development Programme, and UN Capital Development Fund).

MPA-related readings from around the web

[How to Save the Sea: Lessons From an Italian Fishing Community](#) (EcoWatch) — A rights-based fishing scheme in Italy's Torre Guaceto Marine Reserve has helped restore biodiversity in waters previously plagued by overfishing and organized crime.

[In this Philippine community, women guard a marine protected area](#) (Mongabay) — On the island of Siquijor in the central Philippines, women in kayaks lead the local sea patrol to protect one of the country's most well-managed MPAs.

[The Great Wall of Fiji](#) (Oceanographic Magazine) — Fiji's customary management of ocean resources is in some ways a blueprint of the modern MPA approach. But fishing pressure, including poaching in closed areas, is increasing.

[As waters warm, these species are stuck going the wrong way](#) (Ars Technica) — As the world warms, mobile marine species are altering their ranges to stay at a comfortable temperature. However, the larvae of some less-mobile species have been observed drifting to even-warmer waters, due to an unfortunate combination of factors.

From the MPA News vault

Features and news items from yesteryear

Five years ago: [October-November 2015](#)

- Assessing the state of the art in training and certifying MPA professionals – Part II
- The MPA Agency Partnership: An update on the international group of senior MPA leaders

Ten years ago: [September-October 2010](#)

- MPAs and Indigenous Peoples: Co-Management as a Means of Respecting Traditional Culture and Strengthening Conservation
- Perspective | Reflections on Resource Management, Native Hawaiian Culture, and Papahānaumokuākea

Fifteen years ago: [October 2005](#)

- MPA News Poll: The Coming Challenges for MPAs, and How to Address Them
- Perspective | Conservation Incentive Agreements As a Tool for Developing and Managing MPAs

Twenty years ago: [October 2000](#)

- New Edition of IUCN "Orange Book" Reflects Changes, Challenges in MPA Field
- Reader Feedback on the Re-opening of Closed Areas

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