

MPA NEWS



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Notes & News: 30% target for MPAs - High seas negotiations - New Caledonia - Australia - Canada - Marine Conservation Planning Database - Poaching in MPAs - MPA News vault

UK environment secretary calls for 30% of world ocean in MPAs by 2030

On 24 September, UK Environment Secretary Michael Gove called for 30% of the world ocean to be protected by 2030. The goal echoes the 30%-by-2030 target set by IUCN members two years ago. But it is rare for a politician to champion the goal specifically, particularly as most nations are still working to meet the 10%-by-2020 target for MPA coverage under Aichi Target 11. Gove's announcement was made in New York City to coincide with the current session of the United Nations General Assembly. A UK Government press release is [here](#). A UN Environment news article on Gove's call is [here](#).

First round of negotiations held for high seas biodiversity treaty

The first round of UN negotiations for an international treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of high seas biodiversity was held this month (September). The next round will be in March/April 2019. Between now and then, initial draft treaty text is expected to be prepared. That text will capture what was expressed in the first round, highlight where there is agreement, and note where more work is required.

This was the first of four intergovernmental conferences to negotiate the treaty. There will be two in 2019 and a final one in 2020. The High Seas Alliance's synopsis of the first round is [here](#). (The Alliance also has a [Treaty Tracker](#) tool that is following all developments in the treaty negotiations.) Additional analysis of the first rounds is [here](#) and [here](#).

New Caledonia strengthens protection for reefs in its Coral Sea Natural Park

In August, New Caledonia designated no-take zones around five coral reefs within its 1.3-million-km² Coral Sea Natural Park. The new no-take zones together encompass 28,000 km², increasing the park's total no-take area tenfold. The multiple-use Coral Sea Natural Park was designated in 2014 and covers the entire EEZ of New Caledonia. A government announcement of the new protections is [here](#) (in French). Other coverage of the new protections is [here](#) and [here](#).

Interesting times for Australian MPAs

As [previously reported in MPA News](#), the Australian Government's new management rules for its national system of marine parks took effect on 1 July of this year. The rules effectively reopen large areas of the marine park system to fishing. (The history of the marine parks' management status is synopsized in MPA News' reporting, linked above.) Most impacted is the 1-million-km² Coral Sea Marine Park. In its original management plan, half of the park was zoned no-take; now just 24% of it is.

An attempt by opposition politicians (in the Labor and Green parties) to block the new management rules was defeated in Parliament in mid-August. On 21 August, the ruling Government announced an AUD 35 million (USD 25 million) [Fisheries Assistance and User Engagement Package](#) to help fishers adjust to the marine park regulations.

Also in August, the Government of the Australian state of New South Wales proposed a new marine park that would comprise 25 separate sites (rather than a single large marine park) in state waters surrounding Sydney. According to [the proposal](#), some of the sites would be no-take while others would allow limited fishing. The Government initiated a [six-week public consultation process](#) on the proposal, which immediately [faced strong opposition from fishing groups](#). Before the consultation period was even concluded, the Government indicated it was [already backing away](#) from the proposed no-take protections. [Scientists](#) and [conservation groups](#) criticized the Government's reversal.

Shell relinquishes petro exploration rights in support of new MPA in Canada

The Canadian affiliate of petroleum company Royal Dutch Shell is voluntarily relinquishing 50,000 km² of exploration permits in waters surrounding a new MPA off the Pacific coast of Canada. [Shell Canada announced](#) that although petroleum resources likely exist in the area, the company preferred to support the Canadian government, provincial government (British Columbia), and First Nations groups in their protection of the MPA. The Scott Islands Marine National Wildlife Area covers 11,546 km² off the northern end of Vancouver Island and was designated by the Canadian government in June 2018. To see the geographic relationship between Shell Canada's relinquished permits and the MPA boundary, compare the [map here](#) with the [map here](#) (you'll need to scroll down for both maps).

New database has systematic conservation plans from over 150 marine projects worldwide, including MPAs

A valuable new resource is available for MPA planners and other marine conservation professionals. The [Marine Conservation Planning Database](#) compiles systematic conservation plans from marine projects around the world – MPA zoning plans, MPA network plans, regional marine spatial plans, and more. Over 150 plans are currently in the database, which seeks additional submissions. The database is produced by the [Conservation Planning Group](#) at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University (Australia). A journal article describing the database and its goals is [here](#).

Survey: Nearly half of fishers have observed poaching in MPAs

A survey of fishers in seven countries found that nearly half (48%) had observed poaching inside MPAs, but their most common response to seeing it was inaction. The primary reasons given for the inaction were (1) conflict avoidance, (2) a sense that it was not their responsibility, and (3) the perception that poaching was a survival strategy. The survey involved 2111 fishers living adjacent to MPAs in the countries of Australia, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, and Tanzania. [The study](#), led by Brock Bergseth of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University, is behind a journal paywall but a press release is [here](#).

From the MPA News vault

Features and news items from yesteryear

Five years ago: [September-October 2013](#)

- Australia's New Government to Review Boundaries, Regulations of MPAs Designated in 2012
- Perspective: Closing the knowledge gap between academics and MPA managers

Ten years ago: [September 2008](#)

- What Will MPA Planning and Management Be Like in 10 Years?: MPA Practitioners Forecast the Future
- Perspective: Managing the "Nemo Effect" of Globalization in the Reef Fish Community

Fifteen years ago: [September 2003](#)

- Biodiversity "Hotspots" Discovered for Large Ocean Predators; Can Serve as Basis for Open-Ocean MPAs, Say Researchers
- Perspective: The Diminishing Returns of MPA Science

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