

MPA NEWS



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Scientists invited to sign letter supporting 30x30 target for MPAs

Over 100 marine scientists have already signed a letter calling on the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to set a target to safeguard 30% of the ocean in a network of "highly or fully protected, well-managed MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures" by 2030. The letter, coordinated by Marine Conservation Institute, remains open for more signatories as of this writing (mid-June 2020). To read the letter and add your signature, [click here](#).

EU to protect 30% of waters by 2030

The European Commission has committed to [protecting 30% of EU waters in protected areas by 2030](#) and that at least one-third of these MPAs should be 'strictly protected'. The Commission expects to put forward guidance later this year for identifying, designating, and managing additional MPAs, including an official definition of strict protection. (The Commission estimates that 11% of EU waters is currently in MPAs, and less than 1% is strictly protected.)

EU Member States will be responsible for designating the additional protected and strictly protected areas. The commitment to the 30x30 target came as part of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#). The strategy also calls on the EU to use "all of its diplomatic leverage and outreach capacities" to help broker agreement on designation of three large MPAs in the Southern Ocean, two of which (East Antarctica and Weddell Sea) were co-proposed by the EU. The strategy notes, "If agreed, [the Southern Ocean MPAs] would constitute one of the biggest acts of nature protection in history."

MPA Agency Partnership invites additional members

The [Marine Protected Area Agency Partnership](#) (MPAAP) is a coalition of national MPA agencies from around the world. MPAAP provides an informal venue for senior government officials to discuss common issues and opportunities for cooperation. Membership is open to any national MPA agency, and new members are welcome.

Current MPAAP members are Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Spain, South Africa, UK, and US, as well as the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme. The partnership was [launched in 2012](#). To learn more or to request to join, contact Lauren Wenzel (Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov) or Gonzalo Cid (Gonzalo.Cid@noaa.gov) of the US National MPA Center.

Independent review calls for more no-take MPAs in English waters

An [independent review](#) led by a former UK fisheries minister has recommended that the UK implement more highly protected (no-take) areas as part of its national MPA system. Of the 355 current MPAs in English inshore and offshore waters and in Northern Ireland offshore zones, just three have no-take areas that prohibit all forms of fishing. The review was commissioned in 2019 by then-Environment Secretary Michael Gove, and was released in June 2020.

In related news, an investigation by Greenpeace UK determined that [foreign supertrawlers spent nearly 3000 hours inside UK MPAs in 2019](#). The supertrawlers were all operating legally. These vessels are over 100 meters in length and can catch hundreds of tons of fish per day. A Greenpeace statement said, "Banning supertrawlers from fishing in MPAs would be a first step towards designating a network of Highly Protected Marine Areas, as recommended in the [independent] review."

Report: 26% of US waters are in MPAs, 3% are in no-take MPAs

The US National Marine Protected Areas Center has released its 2020 report on the state of the nation's MPAs and progress the US has made toward establishing effective MPA networks. As of June 2020, 26% of US waters are in some form of MPA, while 3% are in highly protected (no-take) areas. Nearly all the highly protected areas are in two large sites in the remote Pacific Ocean: Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. Excluding those sites, less than 0.1% of US waters are in highly protected MPAs.

The report offers directions for strengthening the nation's MPA management to achieve networks that are more representative, connected, effectively managed, and integrated within the broader seascape. [Marine Protected Areas 2020: Building Effective Conservation Networks](#) is [available here](#).

President Trump reopens large MPA to fishing

US President Donald Trump has removed a ban on commercial fishing inside the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, a 12,720-km² MPA off the nation's Atlantic Coast. Trump said reopening the MPA to fishing would help fishing communities that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and financial downturn. (His [proclamation on 5 June](#) did not change the boundaries of the MPA, [nor affect its ban on drilling and mining](#).)

Conservationists said reopening the MPA to fishing would [not significantly help fishing companies](#) impacted by COVID-19: the pandemic has generally made it harder to find markets for their catch, not harder to catch fish. A US senator from the region said [Trump's trade wars with other nations](#) have placed more of a burden on the fishing sector than the MPA has. A coalition of conservation NGOs – the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Conservation Law Foundation, and the Center for Biological Diversity – [filed a lawsuit on 17 June](#) to block Trump's move, arguing that the country's Antiquities Act, under which the MPA was designated, allows only for strengthening protections not weakening them.

The MPA, with its prior ban on commercial fishing, was designated by then-President Barack Obama in 2016 to protect three underwater canyons and four seamounts, as well as the marine wildlife and habitats there.

India allows new desalination plant just outside MPA boundary

In May, India's Environment Ministry [approved a proposal to build a desalination plant](#) just 25 meters outside the boundary of the country's Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park. The plant will produce 60 million liters of freshwater per day, while being allowed to discharge up to 42 million liters per day of brine into the sea. Brine – water with high concentrations of salt – is the primary waste product of desalination.

The proposal was delayed earlier this year due to [concerns about its potential environmental impacts](#) on the adjacent MPA. But the regional water board responsible for building the plant offered to build artificial lagoons to collect some of the brine, and to explore other means of decreasing brine discharge. The Environment Ministry judged these accommodations to be adequate.

Documentary series seeks MPA stories and practitioners in Azores

OceanX is producing a companion digital documentary series project within a larger TV documentary series project, to be filmed in the Azores. Lindsay Blatt of OceanX writes: "We're currently researching potential stories and characters who are working in the Azores region and would like to hear from you! Some themes we are especially interested in featuring include Coral, MPAs, Megafauna, Fisheries/Food Sustainability, Human Impact, and Technology. We're also looking for topside stories that are connected to marine science. Please contact lindsay.blatt@oceanx.org with a brief summary of your work and what we might be able to film together."

Comic-style guide on MPAs shows importance of protection level and stage of establishment

A brief, comic-style booklet is now available to educate public groups about MPAs. Specifically, the guide explains the importance of an MPA's level of protection (from minimal to full) and stage of establishment (from proposed to actively managed) to understand its likely conservation outcomes.

The five-page "[Graphic Guide to Marine Protected Areas](#)" draws from "[An Introduction to the MPA Guide](#)", which was published in 2019. It also complements the forthcoming MPA Guide, which will provide a detailed framework for classifying MPAs according to their level of protection and stage of establishment. These MPA Guide materials are developed by a coalition of partners: Oregon State University, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, Marine Conservation Institute, National Geographic Society, and UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

New online tool tracks spread of stony coral disease in Caribbean

As stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) spreads in the Caribbean region, a new online tool is tracking its progression and recording efforts to control and respond to the threat. SCTLD spreads rapidly and affects some of the slowest-growing and longest-lived reef-building corals, including brain, star, and pillar corals.

The tool, called the [Caribbean SCTLD Dashboard](#), provides data from in-water coral reef monitoring to help managers shape their response to the disease. Maps show the presence of SCTLD around the region, a time lapse of its progression, which coral species have been most affected, and the geographies that are most susceptible. The tool was developed by MPACoast (a learning network of Caribbean MPA managers) and the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment Program (AGRRA). For more information, contact mpacoast@gcfl.org or info@agrara.org.

Book offers lessons from California's MPA planning process

A new book details the successful effort by the US state of California to establish a large network of MPAs last decade. The book [Beyond Polarization: Public Process and the Unlikely Story of California's Marine Protected Areas](#), by Steven Yaffee, focuses on California's political leadership and the inclusive process to plan the first science-based, statewide MPA network in the US. Its lessons are designed to be applicable to similar collaborative processes worldwide. The book costs US \$45 and [is available here](#). OCTO is hosting a [webinar with Steven Yaffee](#) about his book on 15 July.

New ocean finance handbook for decision-makers

A new guide provides an introduction to concepts in marine conservation finance, including recent tools like impact investment, parametric insurance, and carbon credit schemes. Published by Friends of Ocean Action, [The Ocean Finance Handbook](#) serves as an overview of the current landscape of ocean finance. Its target audience is decision-makers within governments, NGOs, the private sector, and communities.

MPA-related readings from around the web

[Conservation Leadership More Important than Ever](#) (Resources Legacy Fund) – The success of California's Marine Life Protection Act initiative during the 2007-2009 global recession shows that, even in difficult times, good leadership can help ensure environmental progress.

[Will fish boom amid pandemic-driven fishing bust?](#) (Mongabay) – Experts say it is difficult to tell whether the global fishing slowdown will allow marine life to recover; factors include the duration and timing of the slowdown, as well as whether illegal fishing will increase in the absence of enforcement.

[Scientists agree on the need to protect 30% of the seas. But which 30%?](#) (Mongabay) – Two recent studies feature areas of overlap and divergence on how best to protect 30% of the ocean.

[Protecting 30% of ocean is easier said than done](#) (China Dialogue Ocean) – The 30x30 target is in an early draft of the post-2020 framework for the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, but the pace of MPA progress in the past decade suggests meeting that target could be a challenge.

[From 10% to 30x30 – no time to waste for marine biodiversity](#) (EURACTIV) – The EU's new Biodiversity Strategy will increase Europe's network of MPAs, writes Virgilius Sinkevicius, the EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans, and Fisheries.

[In Tanintharyi, an indigenous alternative to Big Conservation](#) (Frontier Myanmar) – Communities in Myanmar's Tanintharyi region are spurring large, top-down projects and seeking recognition for their own approach of indigenous stewardship.

From the MPA News vault

Features and news items from yesteryear

Five years ago: May-June 2015

- [A brief examination of "other effective area-based conservation measures" and what they mean for MPAs](#)
- [New group aims to engage young professionals in MPA field, involve them in high-level decisions](#)

Ten years ago: May-June 2010

- [UK Designates MPA around Chagos Archipelago, But No Decision Yet on How Much Will Be No-Take](#)
- [Experiences in MPA Enforcement, Part II: More Tools and Strategies](#)

Fifteen years ago: June 2005

- [Applying Lessons from Rainforest Protected Areas to MPA Management: Interview with Tom Struhsaker](#)
- [Perspective: Science, Participation, and Politics in MPA Management](#)

Twenty years ago: June 2000

- [President Clinton Calls for Representative Network of MPAs in US Waters](#)
- [Representative Systems of Protected Areas: A Short Guide for Planners](#)

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