

MPA NEWS



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Notes & News: More 30x30 commitments - Tristan da Cunha - EU MPAs - Seabirds and COVID - Debris cleanup - Reef restoration - Poaching - Blue Parks - Around the web - MPA News vault

Several more nations commit to the 30x30 target

The target of protecting 30% of national and global waters by 2030 (30x30) continues to gain momentum, with a growing number of national governments making commitments to it:

- As of mid-December, 35 countries have joined the [Global Ocean Alliance](#), a group that favors the 30x30 target and supports its adoption under the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021. That is up from 22 nations this past July. The group was started by the UK in 2019.
- In early December a separate group – the [High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy](#) – announced its intent to pursue the 30x30 target. The group comprises the heads of state of 14 countries. There is only partial overlap (five countries) between this panel and the Global Ocean Alliance.
- Several additional governments have committed to protecting 30% of their waters as part of agreements with the [Blue Prosperity Coalition](#), which supports those nations' work to produce comprehensive marine spatial plans, including MPAs.

Tristan da Cunha designates largest fully-protected MPA in Atlantic

In November, the government of the remote UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic Ocean [designated a 687,000-km² MPA](#) around 90% of its waters. The MPA will be off-limits to all extractive activity, and is the largest fully-protected MPA in the Atlantic Ocean. The designation was the [result of collaboration](#) among the Tristan da Cunha government, the UK government, and a number of conservation groups. Planning of the MPA has been underway for [over four years](#). About 245 people live on Tristan da Cunha.

MPAs in waters of the UK Overseas Territories – including Tristan da Cunha, Ascension Island, the British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, the Pitcairn Islands, and others – now cover a total of 4.3 million km². More media coverage of the Tristan da Cunha designation is [here](#) and [here](#).

Survey of EU MPAs finds them lacking effective protection or management

A survey of European MPAs has determined that nearly all of them allow some extractive activity, and most lack active management. The survey focused on 3449 MPAs designated under the EU Natura 2000 program, the largest network of European MPAs. The findings included:

- 96% of sites allowed at least one extractive or industrial activity, or infrastructural development, within their boundaries.
- Of a subset that included the largest Natura 2000 MPAs from each EU country, 53% of sites reported no active management.
- Where management plans existed in that subset, 80% of the plans were incomplete or failed to address major threats affecting the sites.

The survey was conducted by Oceana, an NGO. The report is [available here](#).

Population growth in seabirds in Galápagos tied to La Niña and COVID-19 pandemic

A [census of two endemic seabird species in the Galápagos Islands](#) – Galápagos penguins and flightless cormorants – found their numbers increased significantly in the past year. The penguin population rose from 1451 to 1940 individuals, and the cormorants from 1914 to 2220. According to the survey, which dates back 43 years, these are record numbers for both species. Researchers attribute the growth to the presence of La Niña – a meteorological phenomenon that causes Equatorial waters to drop in temperature, thus increasing food supply for the birds – and to the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted tourism to the area and hence reduced the disturbance of nesting areas this year.

37 metric tons of debris removed from atoll in Papahānaumokuākea

A cleanup project in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (US) in November removed 82,600 pounds (37 metric tons) of marine debris and trash from the atoll of Lalo. The atolls and islands of Papahānaumokuākea are a major sink for marine debris in the Pacific Ocean. In the case of Lalo, some of the collected trash was also the result of Hurricane Walaka in 2018, which scattered debris from former military infrastructure on the atoll. The [16-day cleanup](#) was led by Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project, an NGO, in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Lalo, also known as French Frigate Shoals, provides essential habitat for 500,000 breeding seabirds, 90% of Hawaii's population of green sea turtles, and endangered Hawaiian monk seals.

New guide for resource managers on coral reef restoration

NOAA and The Nature Conservancy have released a new guide to help resource managers begin active coral reef restoration programs or assess existing programs. The guide features a six-step, adaptive management planning process, leading to creation of a Restoration Action Plan. *A Manager's Guide to Coral Reef Restoration Planning and Design* is [available here](#).

Report offers insights on poaching operations

A report featuring interviews with 73 convicted wildlife traffickers in South Africa sheds light on the organization and activities of their criminal operations, which included poaching of abalone. Produced by TRAFFIC, an NGO, the report *Insights from the Incarcerated* is [available here](#).

Abrolhos National Marine Park is latest recipient of Blue Park Award

Abrolhos National Marine Park in Brazil is the latest MPA to receive the [Blue Park Award](#), given by the Marine Conservation Institute. Abrolhos is the 17th MPA worldwide to receive Blue Park status, designed to incentivize nations to protect important ocean areas with strong, biodiversity-focused, science-based regulations. The Blue Parks program was previously known as the Global Ocean Refuge System (GLORES). For information on the program, including award criteria and how to nominate a site, [click here](#).

MPA-related readings from around the web

[How Fishers Became Data Scientists to Strengthen Their Marine Protected Area](#)(Hakai Magazine) – A South African project that has small-scale fishers doing real science is a boon for jobs, data, and trust.

[The Number of Small Fishing Vessels Smuggling Illegal Drugs Has Tripled](#)(Smithsonian Magazine) – A lack of options for commercial fishermen in coastal communities in Mexico has led to a boom in trafficking, including inside MPAs.

[A New Generation of Autonomous Vessels Is Looking to Catch Illegal Fishers](#)(Smithsonian Magazine) – A design challenge has tech companies racing to build a robot that can police illegal fishing in marine protected areas.

[An Action Agenda to Achieve 30x30: Brian O'Donnell at Campaign for Nature Outlines the First Steps](#)(Our Shared Seas) – This interview discusses tangible actions that the marine conservation community can take to help secure an ambitious global deal for ocean protection in 2021.

From the MPA News vault

Features and news items from yesteryear

Five years ago: [December 2015 – January 2016](#)

- How MPAs can help mitigate impacts of climate change via coastal blue carbon, “fish carbon”, and more
- Seychelles project combines ocean planning, climate change adaptation, and debt restructure

Ten years ago: [November-December 2010](#)

- With Global MPA Coverage Falling Short of 10% Target, Biodiversity Summit Extends Deadline
- Views on Global MPA Coverage and the 10% Target: Interview with Kristina Gjerde and Mark Spalding

Fifteen years ago: [December 2005 – January 2006](#)

- Sacred MPAs: Where Protected Areas Hold Spiritual Value for Stakeholders, and How This Affects Management
- A Year After the Tsunami: Surin Marine National Park, Thailand

Twenty years ago: [December 2000 – January 2001](#)

- Coelacanths Discovered in S. African MPA; Tourism to Follow?
- In Galápagos, Clashes Between Fishers and Managers Jeopardize Conservation Efforts

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