

MPA NEWS



Published on *MPA News* (<https://mpanews.openchannels.org>)

‘Our Ocean’ Conference Results in Many New National Commitments On Marine Conservation

The IUCN World Conservation Congress wasn't the only conference in September with significant implications for marine conservation. The [‘Our Ocean’ conference](#), hosted by the US Department of State on 15-16 September, elicited its own slate of commitments by nations' leaders to conserve their marine waters. Additionally, multiple foundations and NGOs offered their own commitments to support marine conservation in various ways.

These commitments have become a hallmark of the annual Our Ocean conference: it exists largely for nations and institutions to declare what they plan to do, or in some cases what they have already done, to conserve the oceans. The US Department of State claims that, to date, the three Our Ocean conferences have generated commitments to protect 9.9 million km² of ocean.

The 2016 commitments are listed [on the conference website](#). It is worth reading the entire list. A few of the highlights:

- **The US** announced the designation of the 12,725-km² Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, the first US marine monument in the Atlantic Ocean. It protects three underwater canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon and four seamounts. Much more on this designation is [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- **The UK** designated two large MPAs and announced plans for designating two more in coming years. These are profiled [here](#).
- **Morocco** announced the designation of three MPAs covering 775 km² on the nation's Atlantic and Mediterranean shores, as well as plans for a fourth along the Mediterranean by 2018.
- **Colombia** announced it will quadruple the size of the Malpelo Flora and Fauna Sanctuary to cover an additional 20,237 km². Similarly, **Costa Rica** announced it will expand the protected waters of the Cocos Island National Park by almost 10,000 km². More information on these expansions, which are part of a coordinated effort between the two countries and **Ecuador** to conserve shared resources, is [here](#).
- **Malta** announced the designation of nine new MPAs comprising 3,450 km², covering an area significantly larger than the country itself (316 km²).

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