

MPA NEWS



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Seychelles, Brazil, and Chile announce significant new MPA designations

February and March were busy months for announcing large new MPAs. Seychelles, Brazil, and Chile all reported significant new sites.

Seychelles: Two new MPAs as part of debt-for-conservation swap

On 21 February, Seychelles announced two new MPAs covering a total of 210,000 km² as part of a debt-for-conservation deal designed by The Nature Conservancy. The debt swap converts a portion of Seychelles' debt owed to other countries (UK, Italy, Belgium, and France) into more manageable debt held by a local entity. As part of the agreement, Seychelles has committed to increasing its marine protection from 0.04% of its EEZ currently to 30% by 2022. With the two new MPAs, Seychelles will be over halfway (16%) to that goal.

Both MPAs are no-take. They include a 74,400-km² MPA around the remote islands of the Aldabra Group: the archipelago includes the world's second-largest raised coral atoll — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — that is home to the endangered dugong and over 100,000 rare giant tortoises. The second MPA covers 136,000 km² of deep waters stretching between the Amirantes Group and Fortune Bank, a swath of Seychelles' central ocean that includes areas important to both the tourism and fishing industries. Here, some human activities — research and closely regulated tourism — will be allowed but under strict new conditions.

For more information:

The Nature Conservancy [press release](#)

The Guardian: [Seychelles creates huge marine parks in world-first finance scheme](#)

Oceans Deeply: [Debt-for-Ocean a New Tool for Marine Conservation](#)

Brazil announces MPAs covering 900,000 km² of area

In March, the Brazilian government announced the designation of new offshore MPAs covering a combined area of 900,000 km². As a result, the country's MPA coverage is jumping from 1.5% to over 20% of its EEZ.

One of the MPAs will be around the São Pedro and São Paulo archipelagos, 900 km off the northeast coast of Brazil. It will consist of two parts. One (407,052 km² in area) will allow some sustainable fishing under a plan that is in development. The other part (42,498 km²) will be no-take.

The second MPA will cover waters around the islands of Trindade and Martin Vaz, 1000 km east of the Brazilian mainland. Similarly, this MPA will have two parts: one (402,377 km² in area) will allow sustainable fishing, and the other (69,155 km²) will be no-take.

Both archipelagos are biodiversity hotspots. Their surrounding waters harbor many endemic, vulnerable, and endangered species, including the critically endangered Atlantic goliath grouper and the endangered scalloped hammerhead shark.

For more information:

UN Environment [press release](#)

Mongabay: [Brazil creates four massive marine protected areas](#)

Thomson Reuters Foundation: [Brazil protecting vast sea areas in bid to safeguard biodiversity](#)

Three new MPAs become official for Chile, including Rapa Nui

In February, Chile's President Michelle Bachelet signed into law three MPAs that were first announced at last September's Fourth International Marine Protected Areas Congress, held in Chile. The sites of the new MPAs are around Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island; around Juan Fernández Archipelago; and around the remote Diego Ramírez Islands, Chile's southernmost lands. (When MPA News reported on this last September, the Diego Ramírez MPA was also going to include Cape Horn [Cabo de Hornos] but opposition from commercial fishing interests led to that plan being scaled back.)

Together the three MPAs total over 1 million km². The largest is Rapa Nui at 720,000 km², nearly equal to the land area of Chile. The MPA bans industrial fishing and mining, but traditional artisanal fishing by the Rapa Nui community will continue. The marine park's creation was enabled by a 73% vote in favor from the Rapa Nui community in a referendum, following five years of consultations.

Tempering the news was a study in February that found that most of the 20-plus MPAs in Chile — which now cover over 40% of the country's waters — lack management plans, and that no Chilean MPAs are effectively managed, as that term is defined by IUCN. The study "Protected areas in Chile: are we managing them?" led by Ignacio Pettit of Chile's Catholic University of the North, is [available here](#).

For more information:

Smithsonian Magazine: [Chile Announces Protections for Massive Swath of Ocean With Three New Marine Parks](#)

The Santiago Times: [Chile creates new marine protected areas](#)

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