

MPA NEWS



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UK Formally Designates Two Large MPAs and Announces Other Protection Plans

On 15 September, the UK Government [announced progress](#) on protecting four remote overseas UK territories:

- **Pitcairn:** The enormous and long-anticipated MPA around the Pitcairn Islands in the south Pacific is now formally designated. Covering 840,000 km², or 99% of Pitcairn's EEZ, the MPA is closed to all commercial extractive activity. Subsistence fishing by locals is still allowed. For background on this MPA and the campaign by Pitcairn islanders for its designation (dating back to 2013), see MPA News articles [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Additional information from the Pew Charitable Trusts, which supported the Pitcairners on their campaign, is [here](#).
- **St Helena:** A 445,000-km² MPA around the island of St. Helena in the south Atlantic is now also formally designated. Fishing will be allowed in this MPA but oil exploitation will not. A spokesperson with the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) told MPA News, "Around St Helena, the focus is to ensure that only activities compliant with the MPA are undertaken. St Helena fishing was predominantly, but not fully, aligned already with a Category VI MPA [or 'Sustainable Use' in IUCN terms]. The new MPA means that St Helena now has a very clear direction in how it will develop its sustainable fishing industry." More information on the new MPA is [here](#) and [here](#).
- **Ascension Island:** An MPA around Ascension Island in the mid-Atlantic is on course to be designated in 2019, allowing time for research to scope potential boundaries for the eventual MPA. The UK Government first announced its intent to designate an MPA around Ascension [in early 2016](#). In support of the boundary research, the UK and Ascension Island Governments closed roughly half of the island's waters to commercial fishing earlier this year. The eventual MPA is likely to feature a mix of fished and closed areas.
- **Tristan da Cunha:** A protection regime for the entire maritime zone of the island group of Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic — more than 750,000 km² — is on course to be designated in 2020. The local Tristan community will lead the science-based planning of the protection regime, with the goal of meeting "both local economic and community needs," said FCO Minister Alan Duncan. The Tristan da Cunha Government has already banned commercial fishing, other than its lobster fishery, from a 50-nm exclusion zone around each of the islands.

Handling the challenge of enforcing large, remote areas

With the newly designated MPAs (Pitcairn, St Helena), the forthcoming protection plans (Ascension and Tristan), and pre-existing MPAs around the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos) and the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, the UK will oversee 4 million km² of MPAs across its overseas territories by 2020, according to Minister Duncan.

Enforcing such a large and remote expanse of ocean is no easy task. The UK Government has committed £20 million (US \$24 million) over the next four years to support the development of expertise in surveillance and enforcement, which will be apportioned and applied across its overseas territories. This is a continuation of joint work by the UK Government, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Bertarelli Foundation, which recently [completed a one-year satellite monitoring trial](#) around Pitcairn. The trial used Pew's Project Eyes on the Seas, which was [profiled by MPA News](#) this year.

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