

Notes & News: 83 nations commit to 30x30 - Blue Action Fund call for proposals - Tripling an MPA's size - Mediterranean MPAs and fishing - Bottom trawling and UK MPAs - Finance guide - Around the web - MPA News vault

More than 80 nations have now committed to 30x30 target for MPAs

As we reported in our [last issue](#), the target of protecting 30% of national and global waters by 2030 – referred to as 30x30 – continues to gain momentum. By MPA News's count, at least 83 nations have now committed to the 30x30 target, as of early March 2021. Most of the growth has been the result of coalitions of nations making the commitment together, as indicated below (there is overlap among these coalitions, with some nations joining more than one – MPA News has accounted for the overlap in its count):

- As of early March 2021, 40 nations have now 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 34 nations this past December. The group was started by the UK in 2019.
- At the One Planet summit in Paris in January, a group of 56 nations – called the [High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People](#) – pledged to protect at least 30% of their land and oceans by 2030.
- On 27 January, his seventh day in office, US President Joe Biden [committed the US to the 30x30 target](#) (scroll to Sec. 216 in the link).
- In December, a group called 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.
- 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.

Blue Action Fund's next call for proposals will focus on MPAs on Atlantic coast of Africa

The [Blue Action Fund](#) will soon launch its next open call for grant proposals, with the upcoming call focusing on Africa's Atlantic coast, from Morocco to South Africa. The call seeks to finance NGO projects that work both to “establish, expand, or better manage MPAs” and “enhance livelihood conditions of coastal communities.” Projects should seek contributions of EUR 1-3 million (or, in well-justified cases, up to EUR 4 million) and be completed within five years. The current expectation is that the Blue Action Fund will award grants from this call with a total volume of EUR 15 million or more.

The call will be launched at a virtual event, “Marine Conservation: An urgent task for international development cooperation”, on 15 April at 4:00-5:30 pm CET. Participants will include Peter Thomson (UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean), Dixon G. Waruinge (Nairobi Convention), John Tanzer (WWF), Jorge Moreira Da Silva (OECD), and Blue Action Fund's supervisory board members. To receive information about the upcoming call for proposals, the event, and future opportunities, subscribe to Blue Action's [Funding Alerts](#).

US expands MPA to three times size to protect reefs and banks

In January the US expanded the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, located in the Gulf of Mexico, from 145 km² to 414 km². The expanded boundary protects 14 more reefs and banks, in addition to the MPA's original three banks. The newly protected features are now off-limits to bottom-contact fishing gear, ship anchoring, and petroleum exploration and production. The expansion marks the conclusion of several years of planning and public consultation on it, dating back to

2007. For more information, [click here](#).

WWF report says 30% protection of Mediterranean would enable recovery of ecosystem and fish stocks

A new report from WWF makes the case that by protecting 30% of the Mediterranean in MPAs while allowing sustainable fishing elsewhere in the basin, the biomass of commercial fish stocks would surge and the marine ecosystem could largely recover from its overfished state. The report *30 by 30: Scenarios to recover biodiversity and recover fish stocks in the Mediterranean* is [available here](#). “Protecting key areas of the Mediterranean is an effective way to rebuild the most important fish stocks and stop the dramatic loss of species and habitats that is threatening our sea,” said Marina Gomei of WWF’s Mediterranean Marine Initiative, following the report’s release.

Report: Bottom trawling is widespread in UK offshore MPAs, and has climate impact

In January, the [Marine Conservation Society](#) released a report – *Marine unProtected Areas* – showing that bottom trawling is occurring in 98% of the UK’s offshore MPAs intended to protect seabed habitats. The report is [available here](#). Among its findings:

- All but one of the UK’s offshore MPAs designated to protect the seabed experienced bottom trawling and dredging between 2015 and 2018.
- Bottom trawl and dredge vessels spent at least 89,894 hours fishing the seabed inside MPAs between 2015 and 2018.

In addition to bottom trawling’s physical impact on habitats, the report notes it also releases stored carbon from the sediment back into the water column. The Marine Conservation Society estimates the cost of mitigating the carbon released by seabed trawling in UK offshore MPAs to be roughly £980 million (US \$1.4 billion) by 2040.

Jean-Luc Solandt and Frith Dunkley of Marine Conservation Society are presenting a webinar on the carbon-related impacts of bottom trawling in UK offshore MPAs on 16 March 2021. For details and to register, [click here](#).

New guide available on MPA finance

[BlueSeeds](#), an initiative to support improved conservation finance for MPAs, has released a practical guide on finance tools and strategies for MPA managers. Titled [Financing Mechanisms: A guide for Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas](#), the document proposes a step-by-step approach to planning a financial strategy and setting up financing mechanisms adapted to each site’s needs. Although the guide targets a Mediterranean audience, its lessons are broadly applicable. (To download the document via the above link, make sure your browser allows pop-up windows.)

MPA-related readings from around the web

[Countries fall short of U.N. pledge to protect 10% of the ocean by 2020](#)(Mongabay)

[Blue carbon: how three Australian marine sites lock away 2bn tonnes of CO₂](#) (The Guardian)

[Illegal fishing: The great threat to Latin America’s marine sanctuaries](#) (Mongabay)

[Russia and NZ in 'knock out brawl' over fishing vessel in protected Antarctic waters](#)(Stuff)

[Hol Chan Marine Reserve: Preliminary audit shows millions in losses over three years](#)(Breaking Belize News)

[75% of Australia’s marine protected areas are given only 'partial' protection. Here’s why that’s a problem](#)(The Conversation)

From the MPA News vault

Features and news items from yesteryear

Five years ago: [February – March 2016](#)

- Inside Operation Phakisa, South Africa's blue growth initiative that is fast-tracking a new MPA network
- How MPAs can help address marine litter

Ten years ago: January-February 2011

- Comparing Two Methods of Building MPA Networks: One Site at a Time vs. All at Once
- Perspective | Autonomous Vessels Offer New Tool for MPA Research and Enforcement

Fifteen years ago: February 2006

- Displaced Effort, License Buyouts, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park: Interview with Stephen Oxley
- Perspective | Protecting the Least-Protected Places on Earth: The Open Oceans

Twenty years ago: February 2001

- Case Study of a Spill Response: How Galápagos Managers Handled the 'Jessica' Spill
- Is Your MPA Effective?: New Report Offers Ways to Assess Management

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