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Seychelles to lead new Commonwealth Blue Charter action group on MPAs

Seychelles has announced it will lead a new intergovernmental action group on marine protected areas. The action group is under the aegis of the Commonwealth Blue Charter – a coordinated push by the Commonwealth countries to protect the ocean from an array of threats, including climate change, pollution, and overfishing.

The Commonwealth (formerly the Commonwealth of Nations) comprises 53 countries, 46 of which have a marine coastline. Altogether, Commonwealth countries contain about one-third of all marine waters in national jurisdiction. As a result, coordination on sustainable management holds the potential to effect significant change for the world ocean.

Upon launch of the Blue Charter in April 2018, there were eight action groups announced – aquaculture, Blue Economy, coral reef restoration, mangrove restoration, marine plastics, ocean acidification, ocean observations, and ocean and climate change – each led by one or more Commonwealth nations. Although these groups all hold relevance to MPAs, the new Seychelles-led group is the first to focus on protected areas specifically.

The nation’s Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Charles Bastienne, said, “The government of Seychelles believes that in order to complement the adoption of the Blue Charter and also to achieve sustainable development, Seychelles – being a small island developing state – must play a pivotal role in preserving and protecting our seas and oceans at all costs.”

A week earlier, Seychelles cabinet ministers endorsed a plan to expand the boundaries of two MPAs: Aldabra Atoll (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and an area called Amirantes to Fortune Bank. Together, the expanded MPAs will account for 26% of Seychelles’ EEZ.

Argentina designates two MPAs totaling 98,000 km²

In December 2018, Argentina designated two new MPAs in its southernmost waters, protecting habitat critical to marine mammal species, penguins, and more. Together the Yaganes Marine National Park and the Namuncurá-Burdwood Bank II Marine National Park total 98,000 km² in area. Roughly 8% of Argentina’s national waters is now in MPAs. Maps and other information on the new MPAs, including background on recent expeditions to survey the sites’ biodiversity, are here and here.

In related news, the government of the nearby British overseas territory of the Falkland Islands (islands that are also claimed by Argentina) has reportedly expressed that it believes the new Argentine MPAs encroach on the Falklands’ fisheries area.

IUCN adds new MPAs to Green List

IUCN’s Green List was launched in 2014 to recognize effective protected area management. With the addition to the list of 15

sites (terrestrial and marine) in 2018, the list now has 40 sites from 14 countries. New marine additions include Egypt's Ras Mohammed National Park; France's Réserve naturelle nationale des Terres australes françaises; France's Parc marin de la Côte bleue; and Mexico's Parque Nacional Zona Marina del Archipiélago de Espiritu Santo.

Links to all 40 Green List sites [are here](#). The sites are certified by IUCN as being effectively managed and fairly governed, with a positive impact on people and nature.

Agreement reached in principle on elements of federal/indigenous co-management of Canadian MPA

In October 2018, the Government of Canada and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (an organization that represents 14,000 Inuit people in northern Canada) reached agreement in principle on elements of a collaborative management model for the forthcoming Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area, which will cover 109,000-km² of Canadian Arctic waters. The negotiations seek to help preserve the region's nature and wildlife while ensuring that Inuit rights are respected and traditional activities may continue.

Once a final Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for the MPA is agreed upon and an interim management plan is completed, the MPA will take effect. A press release on the agreement in principle [is here](#). A backgrounder with highlights from the agreement [is here](#), and more information [is here](#).

Latest meetings on Important Marine Mammal Areas address candidate sites in Southern Ocean and Andaman Islands

In October 2018, the IUCN [Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force](#) held its fourth regional workshop to identify [Important Marine Mammal Areas](#) (IMMAs) around the world. This latest workshop focused on the Southern Ocean. It was followed in November by stakeholder meetings to implement an IMMA in the Andaman Islands of India.

IMMAs are discrete areas of habitat, important to marine mammal species, that have the potential to be delineated and managed for conservation. They are intended to spotlight areas that may lead to MPAs or other conservation outcomes, like ship or noise directives or marine spatial planning.

The October workshop, co-hosted by the French Biodiversity Agency and IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme, [identified 15 candidate sites](#) for IMMA status in the Southern Ocean and Subantarctic islands. The November work, held with a team of Indian scientists and conservationists, [focused on the southern Andaman Islands IMMA](#); this was in follow-up to identification of IMMAs in the North East Indian Ocean and South East Asian Seas in March 2018 and subsequent peer review.

The Task Force is holding a series of regional workshops over the course of five years (2016-2021). Previous workshops identified candidate IMMAs in the Mediterranean Sea, Pacific Islands, and the North East Indian Ocean / South East Asian Seas region.

Apply for MPA grants in Southeast Asia

The [Blue Action Fund](#) – supported by the German, French, and Swedish governments – has issued [an open call for grant proposals](#) for MPA-related projects in Southeast Asia. The fund expects to award four to six grants from this call with a total volume of up to EUR 12 million (US\$13.7 million).

Proposed projects should focus on:

- Supporting ecologically representative and well-connected systems of MPAs through enhancing management, enlarging existing sites, or establishing new ones; and/or
- Supporting sustainable livelihoods in coastal communities dependent on MPAs and their buffer zones.

The call for proposals is open until 14 February 2019. Proposed projects should be situated in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, or Vietnam, although transboundary projects involving Malaysia or Thailand are allowed. More details

are [in the call](#).

Study: Trawling activity is higher inside European MPAs than outside of them

A study that used satellite data to track industrial fishing in EU waters has found that trawling activity is actually 38% higher *inside* MPAs than in unprotected areas. The study examined 727 European MPAs – 59% of which were found to be commercially trawled. In the EU, many MPAs do not address commercial fisheries despite biodiversity protection being an objective of the sites.

The study recommends developing and enforcing minimum standards for MPA designation and classification, along with stronger and more transparent regulations and management. The study "[Elevated trawling inside protected areas undermines conservation outcomes in a global fishing hot spot](#)" is unfortunately hidden behind a journal paywall, but a press release [is here](#) and media coverage [is here](#).

US MPA Federal Advisory Committee issues publications on sustaining MPA benefits in a changing ocean

In November 2018, the US Marine Protected Area Federal Advisory Committee [issued a series](#) of publications on the services that MPAs provide the nation, and how these services can be sustained amid multiple threats, including climate change. The publications were prepared for the US Departments of Commerce and Interior.

Noting "significant and far-reaching benefits from US MPAs," the committee identified five priority action areas to meet the challenges MPAs face. [These priorities include](#):

- Fully supporting the nation's MPAs in funding and effective management;
- Evaluating emerging ocean uses within MPAs to ensure compatibility with sites' long-term goals;
- Supporting innovative approaches to outreach, monitoring, and enforcement;
- Supporting and funding local community engagement; and
- Addressing the effects of climate change.

The committee also provided an update to its online [Cultural Resources Toolkit](#).

US MPA Federal Advisory Committee seeks new members (deadline: 8 January)

The US Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee [is seeking nominations](#) for 11 highly qualified new members. The committee provides advice to the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior on important and timely MPA issues. Members of the Committee represent diverse perspectives on issues affecting MPAs in ocean, coastal, estuarine, and Great Lakes environments. Members serve a four-year term.

The deadline for nominations is 8 January 2019. Directions for submitting a nomination [are available here](#).

New IUCN report on tourism and protected areas

IUCN has released new guidelines on sustainable management of tourism and visitors in protected areas. The report walks readers through the potential impacts of protected area tourism, how to design management with such impacts in mind, and how to manage tourism revenues and costs, among related subjects. Best practices are featured throughout the publication.

"Protected area managers are under growing pressure to provide meaningful and educational visitor experiences and revenue for conservation management, while not allowing tourism to compromise the ecological integrity and associated conservation values of protected areas," write the authors. "This document advocates only sustainable tourism that contributes to the conservation of nature over the long term, with the goal of making protected area tourism a strong positive force for conservation at both global and local scales." The report *Tourism and visitor management in protected areas* [is available here](#).

Coral reef restoration toolkit provides guidance on ‘coral gardening’ strategy

A new toolkit on coral reef restoration has been released by Nature Seychelles, an NGO. The guidance is based on a large-scale coral reef restoration project – called Reef Rescuers – carried out by Nature Seychelles over the past eight years.

The toolkit describes how to complete a coral reef restoration project using ‘[coral gardening](#)’. This technique takes fragments of corals that have withstood bleaching events and cultivates them for several months before transplanting them to restoration sites. The toolkit describes the protocol for this, and offers guidance on appropriate design, logistics, and execution, based on experience and field-tested methods.

The Reef Rescuers project has raised over 40,000 coral fragments in underwater nurseries and transplanted over 24,000 of them onto a 5225-m² area of degraded reef in Cousin Island Special Reserve, an MPA managed by Nature Seychelles.

The Coral Reef Restoration Toolkit [is available here](#). A press release [is here](#).

New tool for gaining access to paywalled journal papers

Is there a journal paper you would like to access but it is hidden behind a paywall? One solution is to use the new [bookmarklet](#) from MarXiv. (MarXiv is the free research archive for marine conservation science and marine climate science. It is a service of OCTO, which also publishes MPA News.) The bookmarklet is a tiny bookmark that you can add to your browser. When you are on a journal website and encounter a paywalled paper, just click the bookmark and MarXiv will be alerted. MarXiv will then reach out to the author and ask that they share their paper.

For more information, including directions on installing the bookmarklet and which journal publishers are compatible (most of the large ones), [click here](#).

MPA-related readings from around the web

[The female park rangers protecting turtles from traffickers in Nicaragua](#) (Mongabay) – Female rangers in Nicaragua’s La Flor Wildlife Refuge patrol the beaches against the theft of eggs from endangered sea turtles.

[Climate change is turning these sea turtles female](#) (Earther) – A study of sea turtles in the João Vieira and Poilão Marine National Park in Guinea-Bissau concludes that a warmer future is likely to cause the turtle populations to skew heavily female.

[Exclusive photos show deep-sea canyon in US waters teeming with life](#) (National Geographic) – An expedition to the depths of the (US) Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument finds a remarkable array of biodiversity that could be threatened if President Trump reopens the MPA to fishing and mining.

[Deep-sea survey of Australian marine parks reveals striking species](#) (Mongabay) – A survey of seamounts in and around Australia’s Huon and Tasman Fracture marine parks has revealed a spectacular range of species, as well as healthy deep-sea coral communities.

From the MPA News vault

Features and news items from yesteryear

Five years ago: [November-December 2013](#)

- The coming age of MPA certification? Two programs — Green List and GLORES — take shape at IMPAC3
- Building credible, effective MPA enforcement in the Caribbean: An interview with Jayson Horadam

Ten years ago: [December 2008 – January 2009](#)

- Ocean Acidification: What It Could Mean for MPAs
- Applying Conservation and Management Lessons from the Great Barrier Reef to the Baltic Sea Region: Interview with Åsa Andersson

Fifteen years ago: December 2003 – January 2004

- Seeking the Win-Win Situation: A Brief Guide to Balancing Conservation and Fisheries Yields in Reserve Design
- MPA Perspective: The Science of Marine Reserves: How Much of It Is Science?

For these and all other issues of MPA News, go to <https://mpanews.openchannels.org/mpanews/archives>

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