

World Parks Congress recommends target of 30% no-take MPA coverage worldwide

This past November in Sydney, Australia, more than 6000 protected area practitioners, scientists, heads of state, indigenous leaders, and business executives gathered for the once-a-decade World Parks Congress, hosted by IUCN. In size and importance, the WPC is a big event for the global protected areas community. The Congress recommends goals for the next 10 years of protected area practice, including targets for protected area coverage. Although these goals are non-binding on governments, they represent expert advice from practitioners, as well as a call to arms for effective protection and a gauge of current priorities in the field.

The WPC is also an opportunity to announce new projects, publications, and concepts, and the Congress featured a multitude of these. In this issue of MPA News, we walk you through the highlights of the Congress. In future issues, we will examine some of these highlights and concepts in greater detail.

A rebuke of the Convention on Biological Diversity's 10% coverage target for MPAs

The main output of the WPC was "The Promise of Sydney" - a lengthy statement that provides a roadmap for the next ten years of protected area practice. The Promise offers recommendations on a wide variety of protected area issues, from responding to climate change, to supporting human life, to respecting indigenous knowledge, and more (www.worldparkscongress.org/about/promise_of_sydney.html).

Participants in the Congress's Marine Theme provided their own specific recommendations (see the box below, "The Promise of Sydney: Official recommendations on MPAs"). Among these, the primary recommendation was this:

"Recommendation 1. Urgently increase the ocean area that is effectively and equitably managed in ecologically representative and well-connected systems of MPAs or other effective conservation measures. This network should target protection of both biodiversity and ecosystem services and should include at least 30% of each marine habitat. The ultimate aim is to create a fully sustainable ocean, at least 30% of which has no extractive activities."

The goal of 30% no-take coverage amounts to a rebuke of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Target 11, which was set in 2010. Aichi Target 11 calls for just 10% of marine areas to be conserved in MPAs or other effective area-based conservation measures by 2020. Under that target, the MPAs also don't need to be no-take ([MPA News 12:3](#)).

The WPC's 30% no-take goal is ambitious. Current no-take coverage still amounts to less than 1% of the world ocean. (Notably the Promise of Sydney sets no deadline for meeting the 30% target.) That being said, it reinforces a goal set at the last World Parks Congress, held in 2003 in Durban, South Africa, where participants recommended that 20-30% of the world's oceans be placed in no-take areas. (In Sydney, the 30% no-take figure was somewhat of a midway point between Aichi Target 11, on the low end of MPA coverage goals, and calls for "Nature Needs Half" on the high end. The latter is a campaign among several conservation NGOs to protect at least half of the world ecosystem as wild nature space - www.natureneedshalf.org.)

The Promise of Sydney emphasizes that it is not enough to plan no-take MPAs amid otherwise un-conserved ocean space. As stated in Recommendation 1 above, the ultimate aim is to create a fully sustainable ocean. In his presentation of the Marine Theme recommendations at WPC, Dan Laffoley, marine vice-chair for the World Commission on Protected Areas, said, "The danger is creating islands of hope in a sea of despair. There needs to be strong protection for habitats throughout the oceans."

BOX: The Promise of Sydney: Recommendations on MPAs

Participants in the Marine Theme at the 6th IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, delivered the following official recommendations for the coming decade:

1. Urgently increase the ocean area that is effectively and equitably managed in ecologically representative and well-connected systems of MPAs or other effective conservation measures. This network should target protection of both biodiversity and ecosystem services and should include at least 30% of each marine habitat. The ultimate aim is to create a fully sustainable ocean, at least 30% of which has no extractive activities.
2. Renew and expand our commitment to management effectiveness of all MPAs, based on best available scientific and other information and partnerships with stakeholders, including communities and resource users, to fulfill the potential of these areas.
3. Integrate marine protected areas into the broader seascape and landscape through large-scale marine management initiatives which strengthen networks of marine protected areas, tackle threats that emerge from outside these areas, and combine protected areas with other management tools to pursue a long-term vision for the area.
4. Include MPAs in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Post-Hyogo framework, recognizing them as cost-effective solutions for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction.
5. Take steps to protect and manage biodiversity in the high seas, including the seabed, by developing, adopting and bringing into force an international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and through regional efforts in Antarctica, the Arctic, the Sargasso Sea and elsewhere.
6. Within the post-2015 UN development agenda, include smart ocean targets under the proposed Sustainable Development Goals such as food security, poverty alleviation, sustainable consumption and production and climate change as well as a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for the global ocean.
7. Collaborate to detect and prevent illegal fishing and other illegal activities at sea, with a focus on MPAs as the front line in this effort, which will apply existing and new technology and surveillance information and support collaborative learning among fisheries and MPA managers.
8. Design and manage MPAs for human as well as ecological benefits, through committed partnerships and engagement with indigenous and local coastal communities, resource users and other stakeholders, as well as new partnerships with humanitarian, development and human rights organizations.
9. Strengthen support for marine conservation actions by (a) scaling up the many effective and inspiring solutions being undertaken by coastal communities and resource user groups around the world; and (b) using new technology, social media and learning networks to reach new audiences.
10. Develop innovative partnerships to (a) accelerate and secure new long-term funding for sustainable ocean management through creative financing and other tools; (b) apply and improve environmental standards and transparency in supply chains that influence the oceans; (c) harness the unique skill set of the business and private sector to help tackle marine conservation challenges (e.g., technology, facilities, business skills, engineering, marketing, and communications) and (d) facilitate the sharing of data.

Source: www.worldparkscongress.org/downloads/approaches/ThemeM.pdf

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