

# International Marine Protected Areas Network Agenda

*To strengthen the global MPA network by 2030 and beyond*

## Editorial

### IMPAC5 IN VANCOUVER, CANADA, FEBRUARY 2023

Canada hosted the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver, Canada in February 2023. The event brought together the largest-ever gathering of ocean conservation professionals to share their commitment, lessons learned and best practices, and to chart a course to achieve the 30% by 2030 conservation target.

Participants commented on the significant yet unprecedented level of participation from Indigenous Peoples and Young Professionals – and identified this as a model to follow for future events.

Leaders from all community and stakeholder groups recognized the need for urgent action, the necessity of maintaining open dialogue and of establishing rapid progress in protecting the global ocean and of doing so in partnership. Many commitments were made throughout the week. A call to action emerged from the closing Leadership Forum, which included encouragement towards the timely conclusion of negotiations to establish a legally binding treaty under the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea to allow for protection, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

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*This newsletter, as part of the International Marine Protected Areas Network Agenda (IMPANA), allows the dissemination of activities and shared experiences for a global and connected network of MPA managers, and of science driven processes in support of decision-making (for more information, please contact: [marine@iucn.org](mailto:marine@iucn.org)).*

**About the MPAAP** - The Marine Protected Area Agency Partnership (MPAAP) is an informal, high-level venue for senior government officials from national marine protected area (MPA) agencies to discuss common issues and explore opportunities for cooperation. MPAAP members collaborate and share information and best practices related to the management of MPAs, including science and socio-economic benefits.



## IMPAC 5

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL MARINE PROTECTED AREAS CONGRESS | CINQUIÈME CONGRÈS INTERNATIONAL SUR LES AIRES MARINES PROTÉGÉES  
VANCOUVER • CANADA

An agreement was reached on 19 June 2023 with the adoption of the United Nations “High Seas Treaty”.

For access to the congress report, including the full details of the call to action, readers are invited to visit:

[ENG-IMPAC5-Public-Summary-report-FINAL.pdf](#).

By Manon Larocque, Fisheries and Oceans Canada



### MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AGENCY PARTNERSHIP (MPAAP) MEETING AT IMPAC5



Representatives from NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuary (USA); Australia’s Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority; Parks Australia; UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee; UK Natural England; Parks Canada; the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB); Spain’s MITECO; and IUCN participated at a [Marine Protected Agency Partnership](#) (MPAAP) meeting hosted by NOAA and Parks Canada on February 3, 2023, during [IMPAC5](#) held in Vancouver, Canada.

MPAAP provides a platform for peer engagement and opportunities for multilateral and bilateral engagement among MPA national agencies. Currently, the MPAAP membership includes high officials of MPA national agencies from more than 14 countries, and observers from international organizations. The MPAAP meets in-person on the margins of international fora (such as IMPAC and the World Conservation Congress) and otherwise virtually.

The meeting at IMPAC5 highlighted the need to generate long-term and equitable conservation outcomes in marine conservation. Common concerns among participants included building trust with coastal communities (especially indigenous communities), and building capacity to strengthen MPA effectiveness, such as addressing climate change impacts. The group discussed the complex policy landscape surrounding 30x30, including the High Ambition Coalition, the Global Ocean Alliance, and the High-Level Panel on Ocean Economy, and the need to coordinate among these efforts.

A new 2023-2027 MPAAP strategic plan was presented, which contained three overarching goals. These include share knowledge by discussing common issues and exploring opportunities for cooperation; improve ocean management through innovative approaches and results-based tools to help protect marine resources and contribute to global marine conservation by enhancing the ability of each agency to meet its domestic and international MPA commitments. In the next years the MPAAP will work to increase its membership, improve geographical representation, and formalize a structure.

By Gonzalo Cid, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA



## SAVE THE DATE! IMPAC6 TO BE HOSTED IN SENEGAL IN 2027

**Interview with Colonel Sidibé, Director of Marine Communities Protected Areas at Senegal's Ministry of Environment.**



L- R: Bruno Oberle, Director-General (as of Feb 2023), International Union for Conservation of Nature, Mamadou Sidibé, Director of Community Marine Protected Areas, Senegal, Joyce Murray, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and Canadian Coast Guard, and Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada. Photo: [IISD](#)

### 1- How are you planning to organize IMPAC6 given what you have learned from IMPAC 5?

IMPAC5 was a great opportunity to meet and exchange as well as to develop partnerships and mobilize financial support. However, a number of observations led us to believe that IMPACs should be carefully prepared in order to take stock of experiences to guide practices, to secure greater participation from the South and to assess the progresses in implementing SDG14 and the 30x30 objectives. The issue of the Blue Economy in relation to MPAs, rarely addressed at IMPAC5, is expected to take pride of place at IMPAC6. IMPAC6 and the next congress could thus become the venue for major announcements.

### 2- What opportunities does IMPAC6 represent for Senegal and its region?

Senegal is strongly committed to a policy of setting up a network of coastal MPAs under participative governance, which will be highlighted at IMPAC6.

IMPAC6 will also be an opportunity to train Senegalese youth and raise their awareness of Blue Economy and conservation issues. With offshore oil exploitation launching the construction of the continent's largest container port, IMPAC6 will provide a platform for the involvement of economic actors in a conservation effort. The Senegalese government, with its partners, could also prepare decisions to set up MPAs, notably with Mauritania, Gambia and Guinea Bissau.

On a West African scale, we hope that IMPAC6 will enable the RAMP AO regional network to present an updated regional MPA strategy, to welcome new members and to mobilize more partners to fund projects in support of its MPAs.

### 3- What impacts will IMPAC6 have on the international community of MPAs managers in 2027?

IMPAC6 could have a major impact at different levels and geographical scales:

- Regarding IMPAC congresses, IMPAC6 could lead to a strengthening of their ambitions, mandate and governance, in order to gain a stronger position on the international agenda and accelerate decisions. IMPAC6 could serve as a forum for collaboration with the major conventions (CBD, CMS, CITES) and provide a springboard for regional decisions and plans for biodiversity.

- IMPAC6 will also be an opportunity to inventory the needs and the ways of mobilizing funds for MPAs, including to involve the private sector more strongly. Moreover, IMPAC6 could help to strengthen the role of MPA networks, as well as the understanding and recognition by major economic actors of their contribution to the upkeep of the world's natural capital.

- With regard to the effectiveness of MPA management, the principle of regular assessment, the reinforcement of protection levels, the application of intelligent zoning and the use of instruments for the resilience of coastal MPAs are already on the agenda of IMPAC6 and should continue to be themes on which progress should be made.



Photo: Joal-Fadiouth MPA in Senegal, created in 2004, 17,400 Ha. Copyright: Wirestock, freepik.com

## MPAAP Members' Experiences

### TRIPLING THE SIZE OF THE MACQUARIE ISLAND MARINE PARK, AUSTRALIA



Black albatross in flight. Photo: Tony Fleming

The subantarctic Macquarie Island Marine Park is the southernmost park in the South-east Marine Parks Network, located deep in the Southern Ocean. Macquarie Island and the surrounding region is known for its outstanding natural value. The waters provide nutrient rich feeding and breeding grounds for millions of seabirds and thousands of seals and penguins.

Following an extensive consultation and review process the Macquarie Island Marine Park was expanded on 1 July 2023 to almost triple its size. The marine park now covers 475,465 square kilometres, with 93% of this area in highly protected zoning (IUCN Ia and IUCN II) and 7% accessible to the continued operations of the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery.

This expansion is a globally significant contribution to ocean protection, increasing Australia's marine park coverage from 45 to 48 per cent of our waters. The expanded park will support important sub-Antarctic marine diversity to ensure it has a chance to prosper in the face of climate change. To find out more about the expanded Macquarie Island Marine Park, visit: <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine/parks/south-east/macquarie-island/>

By Alison Herron, Parks Australia



King Pinguin underwater. Photo: Benjamin Wallis

## Global ocean governance and MPA connectivity

### REFLECTIONS FROM CBD COP15 AND KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF) adopted by the fifteenth session of the Convention's Conference of the Parties (COP 15) is an ambitious and much needed global policy instrument aiming to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2050. The framework provides an opportunity for increasing mutual supportiveness among a myriad of multilateral environmental agreements and relevant policy instruments, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

The GBF is comprised of four goals to be achieved by 2050 centred around the three objectives of the Convention (conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources) and means of implementation including financial resources. More specifically, 23 targets to be achieved by 2030 provide further detail on actions needed to achieve the four goals.

Target 3 (also known as the 30x30 target) significantly increases the proportion of biologically important marine and coastal areas to be conserved through marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) (at least 30%) from the previous Aichi Target 11 (at least 10%) and from SDG14.5 (at least 10%). Importantly, Target 3 maintains essential Aichi Target 11 qualifiers such as the

need for effective and equitable governance and management, ecological representativity and connectivity, and integration into wider seascapes.

Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs), Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs), Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs), and blue carbon ecosystems (e.g., mangroves, seagrasses, saltmarshes) among other scientifically and knowledge-based identified areas can provide relevant information for the design of MPA and OECM networks. CBD decision IX/20 (2008) also provides important guidance for designing ecologically representative MPA networks (in alignment with the current CBD marine and coastal Programme of Work (PoW) Programme Element 2.4). Furthermore, CBD decision 14/8 (2018) contains important guidance that can facilitate the implementation of several elements of target 3, including on the identification of OECMs, on the integration of MPAs and OECMs into wider seascapes, and mainstreaming across sectors, and on effective and equitable governance models for management of protected areas including MPAs.

Efforts at the national and local levels, as well as at the regional and global levels through competent bodies such as Regional Seas Organisations, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in achieving this target will be crucial. Some RFMOs have started processes for the identification of OECMs in the fishing sector, especially in light of the [FAO handbook on OECMs](#). Furthermore, the BBNJ Agreement will provide a unique opportunity for the achievement of this global target with respect to areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) - an area that has been under-represented in the achievement of the previous Aichi Target 11 (see [GBO-5](#) assessment).

*By Daniela Diz*

*Associate Professor of International Ocean Governance,  
The Lyell Centre, Heriot-Watt University, UK*

## AREA-BASED MANAGEMENT TOOLS IN AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

In March 2023, delegates at the United Nations finalised negotiations on a legally binding treaty text to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) under UNCLOS and it was formally adopted by consensus on 19 June 2023. This landmark 'BBNJ Agreement', also known as the High Seas Treaty, represents the culmination of decades of work to pull together the fragmented regime of regulations and bodies that manage how humanity uses two-thirds of the world's ocean.

A two-day symposium on various aspects of the BBNJ Agreement took place in Edinburgh (U.K.) on 6-7 October 2023. The programme featured keynotes from leading authorities in each of the four pillars of the agreement:

1. Marine genetic resources, including questions on the sharing of benefits;
2. Measures such as area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas (MPAs);
3. Environmental impact assessments (EIAs);
4. Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

Panel debates and audience discussions were structured around core cross-cutting issues that will determine the effectiveness of the BBNJ Agreement.

The symposium produced a [collective statement](#) welcoming the BBNJ Agreement and recognising its importance in safeguarding the health and sustainability of our global ocean and marine biodiversity.

From the start of the BBNJ process, IUCN has been engaged in the process towards the adoption of an ambitious treaty by enabling an informed decision-making process through the development of knowledge and expertise products, the facilitation of experts' workshops and discussions, as well as decisions from its membership.



Photo: [jfdmedia.com/BBNJ Symposium 2023](https://jfdmedia.com/BBNJ_Symposium_2023) (copyright)

In June 2023, thanks to the support of the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB, Office Français de la Biodiversité), IUCN hosted the 5th IUCN ABMTs in ABNJ workshop in the Headquarters of IUCN, in Gland, Switzerland, gathering 40 experts for two days.

The workshop participants first sought to build a common understanding of text elements on ABMTs of the treaty and then examined how a proposal for an ABMT / MPA for a fictitious site in ABNJ would work. Implementation needs were discussed, including the potential use of AI technologies for the enforcement of ABMTs in ABNJ.



Photo: IUCN/Jose Hong (copyright)

The BBNJ Agreement, its rapid entry into force and effective implementation, will be instrumental in reaching political targets such as the 30 x 30 target (establishing 30 percent of protected areas on land and sea by 2030) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed upon under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022.

## SYNERGIES BETWEEN SCIENCE-DRIVEN PROCESSES FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES IMPORTANT AREAS

To ensure important marine areas are appropriately taken into account in policy considerations and decision-making processes, the different initiatives will need to work together and ensure consistency in their messaging. With this in mind, BirdLife International convened a workshop on important marine area initiatives and ways forward together in Vancouver in February 2023, in the margin of IMPAC5.

An overview of the various single and multi-taxa initiatives and platforms was provided, including [Key Biodiversity Areas](#); [Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas](#); [Important Marine Mammal Areas](#); [Important Shark and Ray Areas](#); [Important Marine Turtle Areas](#); [Ecologically and Biologically Significant marine Areas](#); and the [Migratory Connectivity in the Ocean system](#).

Workshop participants agreed that the benefits of the nuances in the different taxa approaches were the ability to (1.) accommodate the data nuances for different taxa, (2.) to mobilize a network of experts and access to data and (3.) to facilitate communication. The drafting of a policy brief summarising the different approaches and criteria was proposed.

It was also recommended that important marine areas should be used in Marine Spatial Planning alongside information on species vulnerability and occurrence of pressures within sites. Two separate processes and their different scientific and communication needs were recognised: firstly, the identification of important marine areas to describe the scientific value of sites and communication to promote the value of the site, secondly, the implementation of site information on pressures in order to inform management actions at the site. The suggested opportunities that were identified are pressure-based assessment of common threats and horizon scan of new and emerging threats to focal marine taxa/regions.

Ongoing MPA-related policy mechanisms, such as the BBNJ Treaty, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources were also discussed with the focus on messaging, identifying champions, and identifying opportunities within processes we are already engaging in. The workshop noted that there are existing platforms that facilitate the important marine areas data being used by decision makers, e.g., the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool ([IBAT](#)), which could be used to further channel information to financial agencies. The opportunities for stakeholder

mapping of our collaborative networks and known champions as well as the horizon scan of timing within policy processes were recognised, including combining these two to identify strategic wins.

Participants agreed to continue this work and suggested that using an umbrella term across initiatives, such as “important marine areas partnership” could be a useful banner for funding and harmonising messaging going forward.

See more details in the report [here](#).



**New ISRAs** – On a related note, 85 Important Shark and Ray Areas, protected places for rare and endangered species, have been officially delineated in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, thanks to the participants of an ISRA workshop in May 2023.

**New IMMAs** – In September 2023, 33 new Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) have been identified and put on the map in the South-West Atlantic Ocean, as a result of a year-long process assessing candidate IMMAs. In addition, 5 areas have been assigned Area of Interest status. 72% of the world ocean has been examined for IMMAs, with IMMAs comprising 13% of the examined area. There are 242 IMMAs globally, mostly in the southern hemisphere, all with portfolios, maps and other background information on the IMMA e-Atlas.

## UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE MARINE SITES MEETING



Every three years, managers of 50 marine sites get together to share best practices in MPA conservation, collectively think about solutions and determine the way forward. This 5th edition celebrated the conservation achievements of the entire global network of marine World Heritage sites. Network representatives and experts discussed topics such as adaptation to climate change and building community resilience, eradicating invasive species, sustainable finance and engaging local businesses, youth and volunteers.

The results of the conference will be published in early 2024 and will set the priorities for World Marine Heritage in the years to come.

More information [here](#).



## Cooperation in Regional Seas

### SPAW COP12: SHARKS, RAYS AND WHALES REQUIRE HIGHER LEVEL OF PROTECTION

The Twelfth Conference of Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Wider Caribbean Region was held in Aruba on 3 October 2023. SPAW Parties recognize that the creation or establishment of additional protected areas in the Wider Caribbean Region may contribute to achieving Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Especially, regarding “the protection, preservation and sustainable management of threatened or endangered wild species as well as their habitats”, the SPAW COP decided:

- To list the **Oceanic Whitetip Shark** and **Lesser Antillean Iguana, Whale Shark, and the Giant Manta Ray** on the list of flora and fauna species which require the highest level of protection (“annex I & II” of the SPAW Protocol).
- To list all **Parrotfishes** and the **Caribbean reef shark** on the list of species for which the exploitation is authorized but regulated so as to ensure and maintain population at an optimal level (“Annex III” of the SPAW Protocol).

In addition, regarding “the protection, preservation and sustainable management of the zones that present particular ecological value”, the SPAW COP decided:

- To approve the inclusion of **Parc Naturel Marin de Martinique**, proposed by the Government of France, in the list of protected areas under the SPAW Protocol.
- To develop a proposal for the **creation of a network for SPAW-listed protected areas** with the purpose of understanding and addressing the needs of protected area managers to improve protected area effectiveness. More information [here](#).

### The SPAW Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife

Aware of the vital stakes of biodiversity preservation in the Caribbean and of the need for collective action, the States of the Wider Caribbean Region gathered under the auspices of the UN to launch the Caribbean Environment Program and elaborate the Convention for the protection and development of marine environment in the Wider Caribbean Region, also called the Cartagena Convention. Among the three protocols that divide the Cartagena Convention, the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol is dedicated to biodiversity protection and provides a unique legal framework for the conservation of regional biodiversity in order to protect, conserve and sustainably manage the zones and the animal or plant threatened species. Signed in January 1990, the SPAW Protocol came into effect on June 2000 and is currently endorsed by 18 countries of the Wider Caribbean Region.

### BARCELONA CONVENTION COP23: PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2025 TOWARDS A GREEN TRANSITION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA



The Parties to the Barcelona Convention met from 4 to 8 December 2023 in Portorož. On this occasion, Slovenia has taken over the two-year Presidency of the Convention for the period 2024-2025. Priority was given to promote an ecosystem approach to development planning by reinforcing the importance of blue and green corridors in spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, marine protected areas, updates of emergency plans and increasing resilience to climate change.

In addition, the Sustainable Development Mediterranean Committee made a recommendation for a Flagship Initiative to protect and restore *Posidonia oceanica*, which is an endemic species. The Mediterranean *Posidonia* Network (MPN) and its members, OFB, RAC/SPA Secretariat, IUCN Med, WWF MMI, and MedPAN, presented the MPN 2030 Roadmap aiming at protecting 100% of *Posidonia*, as a contribution to the implementation of this *Posidonia* Flagship Initiative.

### The Barcelona Convention

The Barcelona Convention, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean is a Regional Sea Convention signed by 14 States and the European Union which came into force in 1978. Its main objectives are the fight against marine pollution, the sustainable management of seas and coasts, the integration of the environment into social and economic development, and the protection of the marine environment and coastal zones through the prevention and reduction of pollution.



Photo: Shutterstock



## Upcoming events

19-21 February 2024, Athens, Greece – [UfM 2nd Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy](#)

16-18 April 2024, Tromsø, Norway – [Third International Conference on Ecosystem Approach to Management in the Arctic Large Marine Ecosystems](#)

22-26 April 2024, Bissau – [PRCM Forum for coastal and marine stakeholders in Western Africa](#)

12-18 May 2024, Mexico – [NW Atlantic Ocean and Wider Caribbean IMMA regional workshop](#)

9-15 October 2025, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates – [IUCN World Conservation Congress](#)

12-17 February 2024, Samarkand, Uzbekistan – [CMS COP14](#)

08-12 April 2024, Barcelona, Spain – [Ocean Decade Conference](#)

15-17 April 2024, Greece – [Our Ocean Conference](#)

7-8 June 2024, San José, Costa Rica – [Immersed in Change, High-Level Event on Ocean Action](#)

15 October – November 2024, [CBD CoP16](#), Columbia

5-15 June 2025, Nice, France – [UN Ocean Conference \(UNOC\)](#) co-organised by France & Costa Rica

## Have a look at the MPAAP Member country profiles!

Webpage housed by IUCN: <https://www.iucn.org/mpaap>

MPAAP members are regularly exchanging information on their MPA Program(s) including main challenges and key priorities. More information can be found on the link above.

The current MPAAP Secretariat is represented by NOAA (USA). For further information or to request to join, please contact: [Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov](mailto:Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov) and/or [Gonzalo.Cid@noaa.gov](mailto:Gonzalo.Cid@noaa.gov).