

Section 2: History and Status

Tracing the evolution of marine conservation from early pioneers to the global 30x30 target.

MPA Management Training

Module 1.2: Introduction to MPAs and OECMs
2026 Curriculum



Learning Objectives



Outline Key Milestones

Trace marine conservation history from early traditional practices to modern global targets.



Explain Treaties' Role

Analyze how international agreements (CBD, UNCLOS, BBNJ) shaped MPA expansion.



Describe LSMPAs Rise

Understand the shift from small sites to Large-Scale Marine Protected Areas.



Summarize Current Coverage

Evaluate global progress toward the 30x30 target and identify protection gaps.

Historical Evolution

From early recognition of marine protection needs to a global, target-driven expansion movement.

- Early Recognition (1960s)
- National Systems (1970s)
- Global Targets (1990s-2010s)
- **Large-Scale Expansion (Present)**

Early Pioneers (1962–1970s)



1962 World Congress

First World Congress on National Parks formally recognized the critical need for marine protection.



1970s National Expansion

Nations established formal systems, exemplified by the U.S. National Marine Sanctuaries Act of 1972.



Key Triggers

Designations were sparked by discoveries of unique ecological sites, shipwrecks, and coastal heritage.



The Pioneering Era of Marine Conservation

The 10% Target Era

1992 Rio Earth Summit

Set the initial momentum for global ocean protection, establishing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and prioritizing marine conservation on the international agenda.

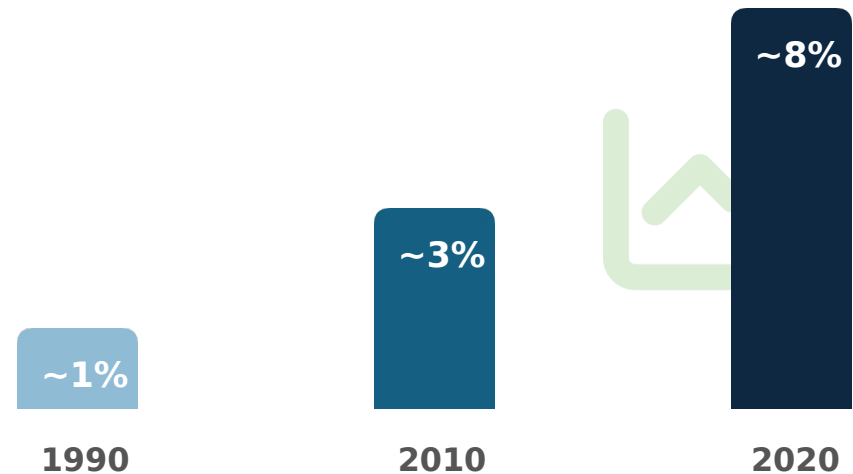
2010 Aichi Target 11

Established the specific goal to protect at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 through effectively managed, ecologically representative systems.

Result Rapid Growth

Triggered a global surge in MPA designations as nations raced to meet the numerical target, though management effectiveness often lagged behind coverage.

Global MPA Coverage Expansion



The 10% target drove an unprecedented acceleration in marine protection efforts worldwide.

Rise of Large-Scale MPAs

Global Trend

Since 2012, the creation of massive marine protected areas (LSMPAs) has transformed ocean conservation strategies worldwide.



Post-2012 Surge

Rapid increase in MPAs exceeding 100,000 km² in size.



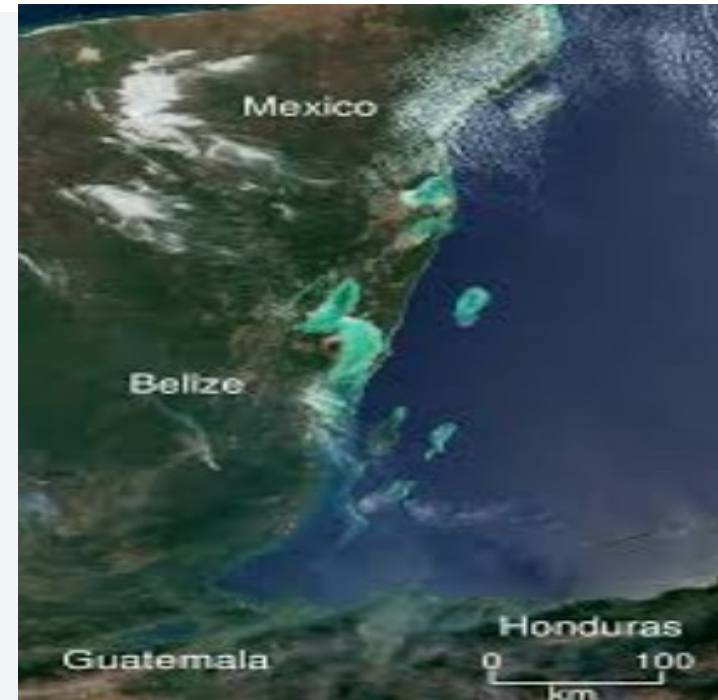
Coverage Driver

Primary contributor to recent gains in global ocean protection statistics.



Ongoing Debates

Discussions continue regarding and management quality.



Scale of Protection

Satellite perspective showing vast ocean territory under protection

Timeline: Key Milestones

Evolution of Marine Conservation Commitments



Current Status

Moving from the 10% Target
to the Global 30x30 Goal

The 30x30 Target (GBF 2022)



Global Biodiversity Framework Target 3

"Ensure that at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed by 2030."



Effective Management

Not just coverage on paper; emphasizes effective, representative, and well-connected systems.



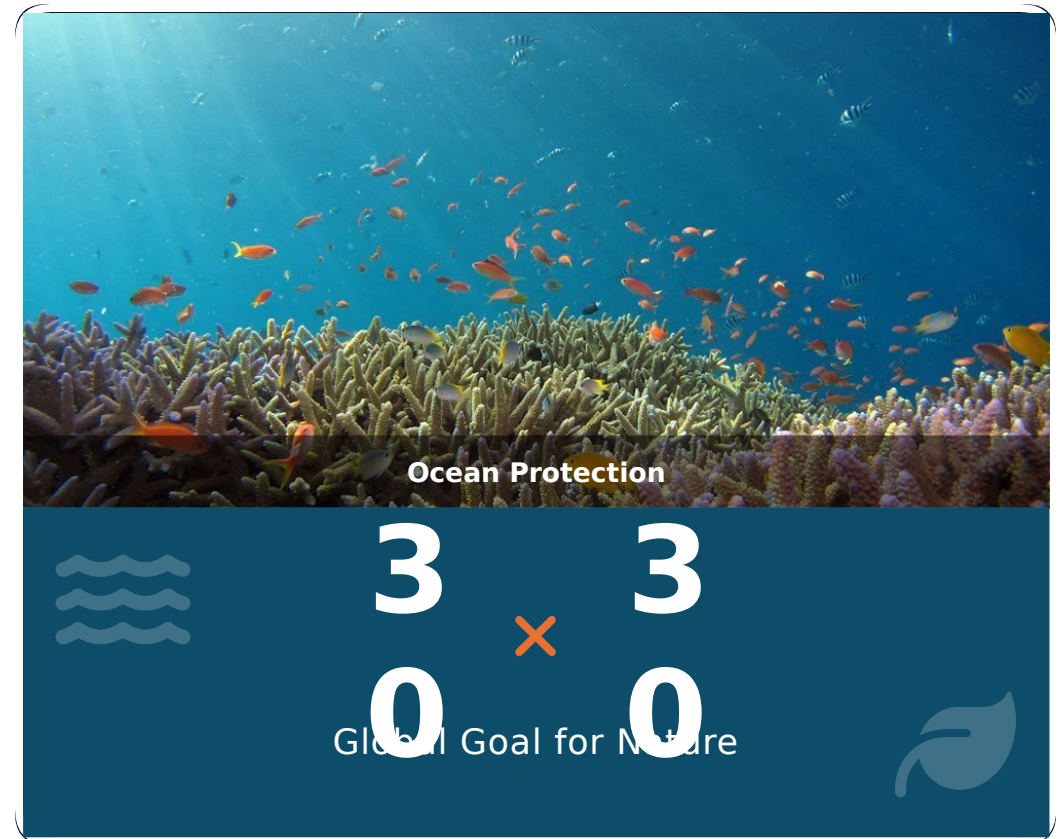
Equity & Indigenous Rights

Recognizes territories of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as key to success.



Holistic Application

Applies to both land and ocean conservation into wider lands



Global Ocean Protection Coverage



Total Ocean Protected

Current global coverage of MPAs and OECMs combined as of mid-2025.



Highly Protected

Areas designated as fully or highly protected from extractive activities.



Uneven Global Progress

Protection is concentrated in national waters (EEZs), leaving the High Seas under-represented.

The OECM Contribution



Recognition Beyond PAs

Recognizes effective conservation occurring outside formal Protected Areas.



Global Impact

Over 1.9 million km² already counted globally towards conservation targets.



Community Pathway

Provides a vital pathway for indigenous and community-managed areas.



✓ Effective



Community-Led Conservation

Sustainable management delivering biodiversity outcomes

The Jurisdiction Gap

The imbalance between protected coastal waters and the vast open ocean



National Waters (EEZs)

Most conservation efforts are concentrated here, within national boundaries where countries have legal authority.



High Seas Gap

The vast majority of the ocean remains unprotected, creating a critical gap in global marine conservation.

National Waters vs. High Seas

National Waters (EEZs)



22.9
%
Protected

Covers 39% of the global ocean. Most conservation progress has occurred within these national boundaries (0-200 nm).

**National
Jurisdiction**

High Seas (ABNJ)



<1.5
%
Protected

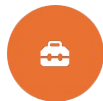
Makes up 61% of the ocean. Historically neglected due to lack of legal mechanism, now addressed by BBNJ Agreement.

**International
Waters**

The BBNJ Agreement (2023)

Historic Treaty

The first international legal mechanism to establish Marine Protected Areas in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).



Key Tools

Area-based measures, EIAs, capacity building.



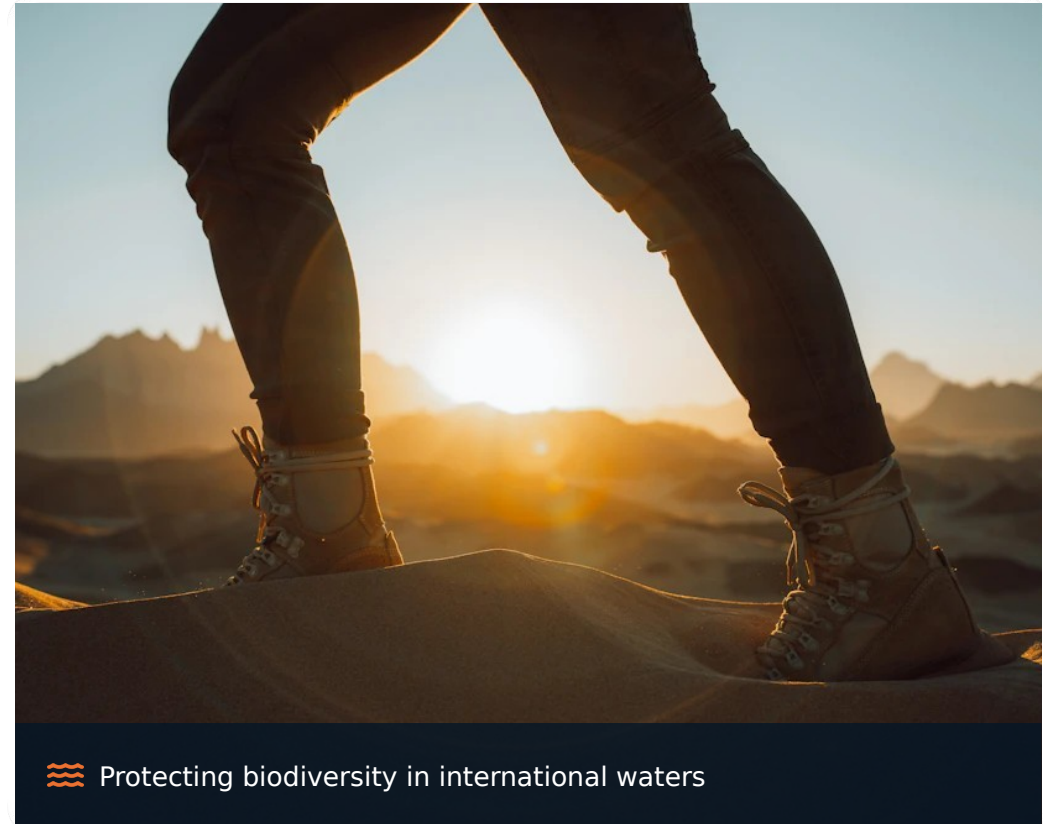
Essential for 30x30

Critical to protecting the High Seas (61% of ocean).



Benefit Sharing

Equitable sharing of marine genetic resources.



 Protecting biodiversity in international waters

Caribbean Evolution

From pioneering parks to regional
networks

Exuma Cays Land & Sea Park



1958: A World First

Established as the world's first land-and-sea park, setting a global precedent for integrated coastal management.



1986: No-Take Zone

Transitioned to a full no-take marine reserve, prohibiting all fishing to allow ecosystem recovery.



Documented Success

Proven replenishment of Queen Conch and Nassau Grouper populations, with spillover benefits to adjacent areas.

★ Conservation Pioneer



 **Exuma Cays, Bahamas**
Pioneering Caribbean Conservation Since 1958

SPAW Protocol & CaMPAM



SPAW Protocol

Ecosystem Standards

1990



- **Regional Legal Framework**

First regional treaty requiring ecosystem-based approach, standardizing protection across the Wider Caribbean.

- **Standardized Management**

Established clear criteria for MPA designation, management effectiveness, and species protection lists.



CaMPAM Network

Capacity Building

1997



- **Professional Network**

Connected isolated MPAs into a professional community sharing resources, data, and best practices.

- **Training of Trainers (ToT)**

Since 1999, shifted focus from "paper parks" to participatory management involving local stakeholders.

Key Takeaways



MPA Evolution History

From early pioneering parks in the 1960s to the rise of large-scale MPAs (LSMPAs), global marine protection has evolved from isolated sites to interconnected networks.



30x30 Demands Quality

Reaching the 30% target by 2030 requires not just coverage, but effective management, equity, and substantial protection of the High Seas through the BBNJ Agreement.



OECMs Accelerate Progress

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) provide a crucial pathway to recognize diverse governance types and achieve legitimate conservation outcomes beyond formal PAs.



Caribbean Leadership

The Caribbean has been a global leader, from the first land-and-sea park (Exuma Cays) to regional cooperation through the SPAW Protocol and CaMPAM network.

Further Reading and Resources

Global Evolution

Protected Planet Report 2024

Official global evaluation of progress toward Target 3 (30x30).

A Critical History of MPAs

Academic overview from 1962 World Congress to current era.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

UN Sustainable Development Goals context for marine protection.

High Seas & BBNJ

The BBNJ Agreement Text

Primary source document for the 2023 High Seas Treaty.

Charting the Course: 30x30

Analysis of protection gaps between national waters and High Seas.

Caribbean Cases

The SPAW Protocol

Details on the unique legal framework for Wider Caribbean protection.

CaMPAM Network

History of regional management network and professionalization.

Exuma Cays Evaluation

NOAA/CRCP analysis of long-term effectiveness since 1958.