A global commitment to at least 30% of our ocean
Policy recommendation from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

Our conservation challenge, and policy opportunity

As detailed by the IPBES Global Assessment and the IPCC Special Report on the Oceans and Cryosphere, we are witnessing the steady decline of marine ecosystems due to climate change and other anthropogenic impacts. A third of the world’s coral reefs have been lost, and up to 90 percent may be lost in the next several decades. Unsustainable fishing practices have depleted populations of apex predators, and up to two-thirds of global fisheries are overfished.

Fortunately, there is an upcoming opportunity to change course. The 196 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are negotiating a post-2020 global biodiversity framework to replace the UN Strategic Plan on Biodiversity and the Aichi Targets. This post-2020 framework will provide the momentum for national and international action to retain and restore the ecological integrity that underpins biological diversity and human wellbeing. One stepping stone to broader goals on ecological integrity should include ambitious targets on area-based conservation measures.

A commitment to protect and conserve at least 30% of our ocean

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) recommends that Parties to the CBD commit to protecting or conserving at least 30% of the entire ocean by 2030 through area-based conservation measures, including highly and fully protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)\(^1\) that demonstrate comparable outcomes. To make this commitment feasible and effective, we urge Parties to:

- Identify and prioritize conservation of critical areas for biodiversity -- including areas beyond national jurisdiction -- to meet an ocean-wide target of 30% through domestic and international actions;
- Improve tools to report on the equitable and effective management, as well as ecological and biological outcomes,\(^2\) to consistently measure progress and improve global implementation;
- Ensure complementarity between area-based measures and other targets on sustainable fisheries, climate, coral reefs, etc. to protect the entire ocean;
- Recognize the need for community consultation and area-based measures most relevant to local context, which should include recognition of effective traditional and indigenous management systems; and
- Set shared global goals on biodiversity finance that reflect the ambition of post-2020 conservation targets and assist with implementation of the commitment above.

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1. OECMs are explicitly included in Aichi Target 11. Information on identifying and reporting on OECMs, can be found [here](#).
2. WCS is part of a SNAPP working group on “Coastal Outcomes” that examines outcomes and trade-offs of MPAs & OECMs.
The justification for protecting/conserving at least 30%

The CBD Aichi Targets and the UN Sustainable Development Goals already set targets to conserve 10% of marine and coastal habitats through area-based measures, but there is growing consensus that this will need to be higher to achieve both environmental and sustainable development objectives. IUCN Members, including over 80% of government agency Members, adopted Resolution 50 at the 2016 World Conservation Congress, which called on governments to place “at least 30% of each marine habitat in a network of highly protected MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures.” Governments are already announcing that they will support a global commitment to protecting and conserving 30% of the ocean, including the United Kingdom, Belize, Costa Rica, Finland, Gabon, Kenya, Portugal, Belgium, Seychelles and others. Several of these governments have also made 30% commitments at the national level.

30% protection is a good target for the next decade, and is supported by a 2016 study, but more recent studies demonstrate that far more of the ocean must be protected. Even this figure does not fully account for the wide variety of ecological and evolutionary processes that underpin marine biodiversity. Conserving 30% of the ocean through protected areas and OECMs must be the minimum goal for 2030 to ensure the health of the entire ocean.

About WCS

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is a conservation NGO that has been working for more than 120 years (in 60+ countries) to save wildlife and wild places. In the marine realm, WCS works with our partners in 25 countries to safeguard global coral species, reverse the decline of sharks and rays, and steward the recovery of marine mammals, rebuild coastal fisheries, and create, expand and support management of marine protected areas and other area-based tools. For more information, see our website.

WCS and our partners in the 30x30 Marine Alliance looks forward to further conversation at the following meetings:

- Thematic workshop on marine and coastal biodiversity (11-13 Nov. 2019, Montreal)
- Thematic workshop on area-based conservation measures (1-3 Dec. 2019, Montreal)
- 2nd meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (24-28 February 2020, Kunming)