

Winter Edition 2023

blue parks

BUILDING A GLOBAL NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Artwork by Caitlin Cordtz



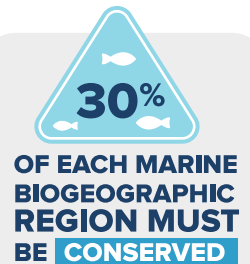
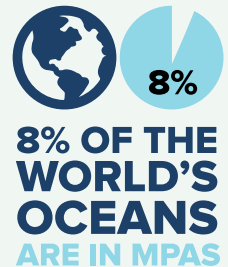
Marine
Conservation
Institute

SAVING WILD OCEAN PLACES

The ocean is the beating heart of the planet, but it currently faces unprecedented threats due to destructive practices and climate disruption. Research clearly demonstrates that marine protected areas (MPAs) are one of the simplest and strongest ways to sustain marine biodiversity and resilience. Well-managed MPAs can reverse the effects of overfishing, mitigate climate change, strengthen fragile coral communities, allow populations of whales to flourish again, and protect us and our neighbors—locally and globally—from rising sea levels and strengthening storm systems.

Today, about 8% of the world’s oceans are in MPAs, yet less than half of that area is fully or highly protected. Leading marine scientists agree that at least 30% of each marine biogeographic region must be conserved in effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative, well-connected systems of marine protected areas by 2030 if we are to safeguard biodiversity and the benefits humans derive from nature. Marine Conservation Institute has a strategy for accelerating MPA creation and strengthening MPA effectiveness worldwide – Blue Sparks.

Marine
Protected
Areas

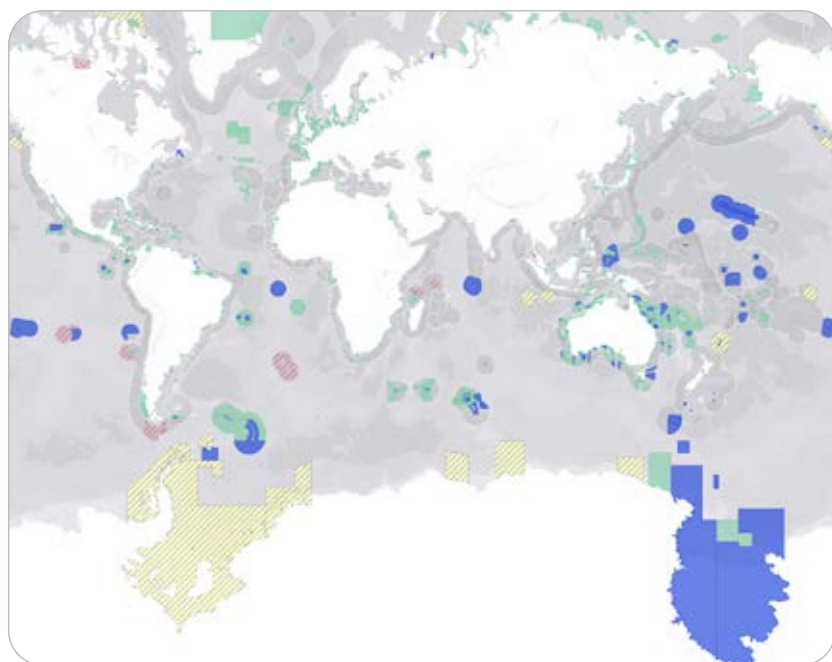


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TRACKING GLOBAL MPA IMPACT

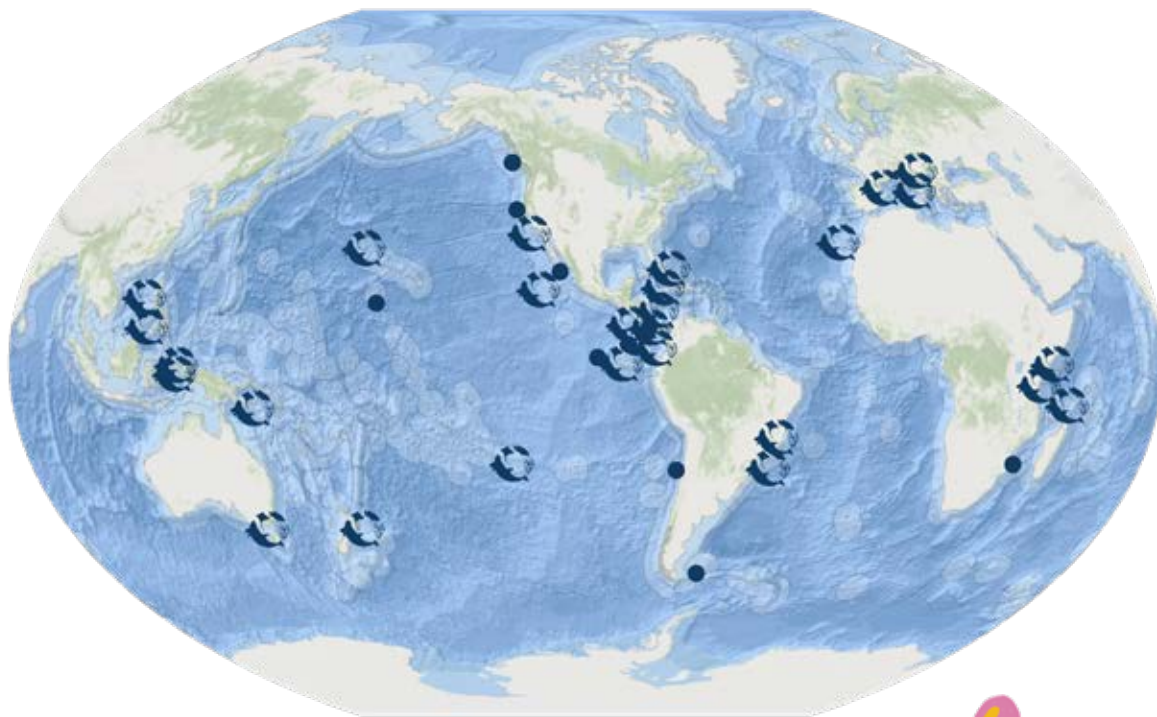
Marine Conservation Institute maintains the world's most comprehensive online MPA database, the Marine Protection Atlas (<http://mpatlas.org/>). One of the major challenges in making real strides toward achieving protection of our oceans is the prevalence of “paper parks” — places that have been set aside as marine protected areas in name but not in action. The Marine Protection Atlas lends transparency to MPA efforts around the globe. It provides us the tool for tracking and evaluating the MPAs that we work with and the ones that we hope to collaborate with in the future as we fight to safeguard our future on this blue planet. In the last year we have integrated the most authoritative accounting of MPAs – The MPA Guide – into our reporting.



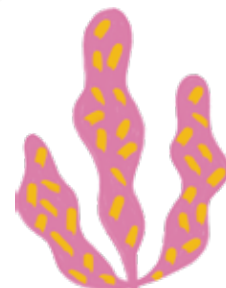
OPPORTUNITY HAS NO BORDERS

Building on 25 years of conservation experience, Marine Conservation Institute is assembling a global network of Blue Parks to secure the outcomes that effective MPAs can deliver: healthy oceans, abundant and diverse wildlife, restored habitats, and strong coastal economies. By setting a science-based standard for MPAs, Blue Parks ensure design, regulations, management and community engagement work together to return conservation benefits. Blue Park Awards recognize exemplary MPAs that deliver true and measurable conservation benefits. They incentivize conservation success and provide a powerful psychological motivator; in accepting the Blue Park Award, communities, managers and governments own the responsibility to safeguard marine biodiversity.

Twenty one MPAs now carry the Blue Park “mark-of-excellence” honoring their outstanding conservation efforts. These Blue Parks cover roughly 1.8 million sq. km. of ocean. We need your help to grow the Blue Parks network.

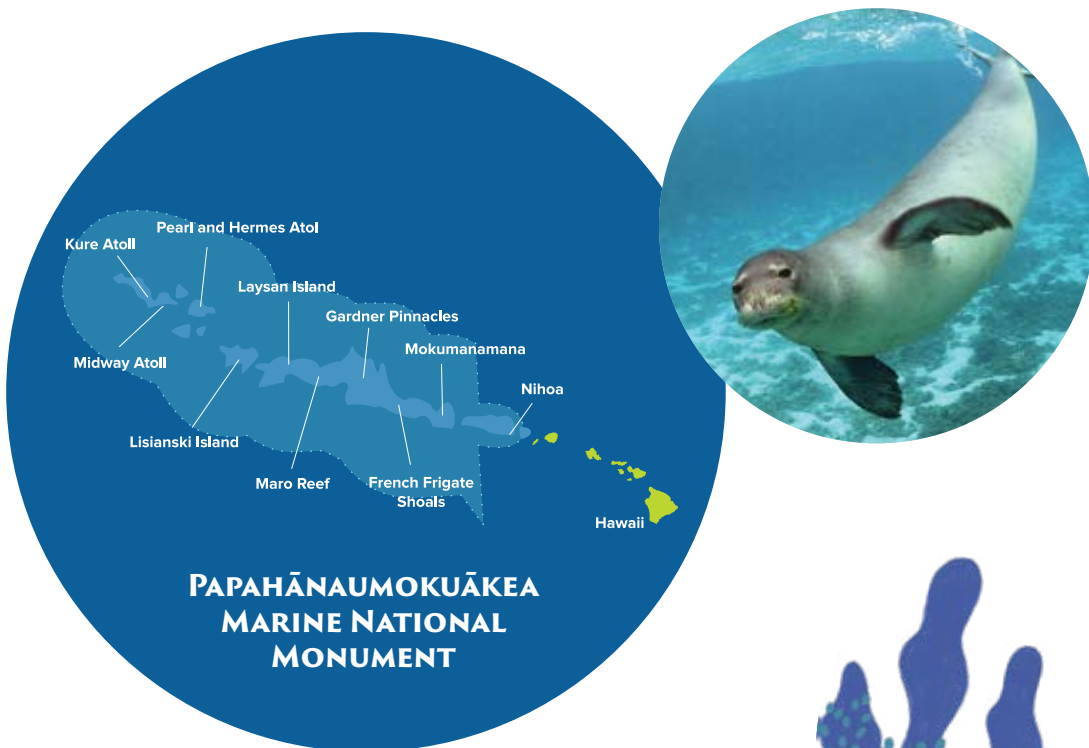


 Blue Park  Blue Spark



MARINE CONSERVATION INSTITUTE LEADING THE WAY

Our strength lies in rigorous science and in building collaborative relationships. In the years since we successfully advocated for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (2006), large marine protected areas have grown steadily. Our efforts and those of a global coalition of marine conservationists are securing protections for places deemed critical to the ocean's health—places that are home to rare species, rich ecosystems, migration corridors and significant cultural history. Many of these places need support and scientific guidance to become marine protected areas and to develop management plans that will serve them long into the future. As our Blue Parks initiative has grown, so, too, have our collaborations with communities that are inspired by the initiative and are charting a course toward becoming strong stewards of their ocean places. This momentum has evolved into a vital arm of our Blue Parks program: Blue Sparks.



WHAT ARE BLUE SPARKS? & OUR GOAL OF 30X30

Blue Sparks are marine protected area efforts in need of our support to achieve Blue Park status. We collaborate with community leaders and managers to create detailed Blueprints (i.e., action plans) for accelerating strong ocean protections while there is still time.

This is vital work on the path toward 30x30 – a goal to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. We have been a leading voice advocating this target. While several countries have already adopted this ambitious target, many more are needed and there is a lot of work ahead. Our work goes beyond celebrating successful marine protected areas (Blue Parks) but seeks to bridge the gap from MPA start-up to conservation success. Marine Conservation Institute has identified several Blue Sparks that need our guidance to achieve the Blue Park standard. A growing list of conservation projects are already using our expertise, including:

- **The Cocos-Galápagos Swimway** – a migratory pathway across international borders for endangered sharks and turtles in one of the most productive regions of the entire ocean
- **Piedra del Viento** – a region of rich biodiversity along the central Chilean coast; our local partners secured an MPA designation in 2021 with our help, and we are now working to guide a management plan worthy of becoming a Blue Park
- **The Mangroves of Inhambane Bay in Mozambique** – where local communities are securing their futures by securing fish nursery habitat

Blue Sparks

Marine Conservation Institute is collaborating with community leaders, MPA managers, and governments in the follow places to design and implement tomorrow's Blue Parks:



CABO PULMO, MEXICO



GALÁPAGOS EXPANSION, ECUADOR



INHAMBANE BAY, MOZAMBIQUE



PACIFIC REMOTE ISLANDS, USA



COCOS-GALÁPAGOS SWIMWAY



CALIFORNIA SEAMOUNTS, USA



YAGANES & NAMANCURA BANCO-BURDWOOD II, ARGENTINA



PIEDRA DEL VIENTO, CHILE



COIBA NATIONAL PARK, PANAMA



GITDISDZU LUGYEKS MPA, KITASOO/XAI'XAIS NATION



OUR APPROACH TO OCEAN CONSERVATION

Our Blue Sparks partnership strategy provides local champions with individualized Blueprints: tangible, science-informed steps for creating effective marine protected areas. Our approach is that of an oceanic general contractor: consult with the champion to identify the vision, use our scientific expertise to evaluate the specific needs of the project, and draw up a Blueprint for successful conservation, ranging from management plans to financing. Among the resources that we offer, careful mapping is a fundamental tool for well-managed parks. Marine Conservation Institute can train local scientists to use Geographic Information System (GIS) for mapping to better inform management and meet community goals. Mapping allows managers to better understand their biodiversity and Blue Carbon habitats – creating opportunities for innovative science and funding. From mapping to management, Marine Conservation Institute has the expertise and connections to work with Blue Sparks partners to achieve successful Blue Parks.



WE'RE MAKING AN IMPACT ACROSS THE GLOBE

Communities take pride in their special places, and through our Blue Sparks collaborations we are providing the expertise needed to create strong and lasting protections. At a time when human and ocean health are—more than ever—inextricably linked, we see Blue Spark partnerships as an opportunity for urgent and tangible change.

"Becoming a Blue Spark validates our effort for conservation and will make it easier to take the next steps towards creating a network of marine protected areas that conserves wildlife, recognizes specific surf breaks as conservation objectives while enhancing the recognition of the local traditional ecological knowledge of artisanal fisherman community as stewards in the conservation of the area."

**Juan Buttazoni
and Luis Felipe Rodríguez**
Co-founders and Directors of
Fundación Rompientes, Chile



"Cabo Pulmo has become a symbol of marine conservation in Mexico and in the world. What the community has done to protect marine life has been exceptional, and now it's time to work on a truly sustainable tourism plan. Becoming a Blue Spark will help this area to develop into a model for other marine protected areas in Mexico."

Dr. Octavio Aburto
Director of the Gulf of California Marine Program,
Professor, Scripps Institute of Oceanography



"As a member of the Community Group, we are working hard to ensure that the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument reaches the highest standards for enduring and effective conservation of this vast and diverse region of the central Pacific; becoming a Blue Spark and working with Marine Conservation Institute will help ensure this outcome."

Dr. Robert Richmond
Professor, University of Hawai'i



"In Inhambane Bay we balance the protection of our mangrove and seagrass habitats and our communities that depend on them. We are using traditional knowledge from our elders and the most modern marine science to conserve our bay. We hope to serve as a model for other coastal communities of Mozambique and around the world. We appreciate the help from Marine Conservation Institute to move our efforts forward; and we thank our elders, village councils, government partners, Ocean Revolution and Bitonga Divers for their great leadership."

Antonio de Sacramento Cabral
Program Director, Ocean
Revolution Moçambique



"All these years we thought we were doing this just for ourselves, to protect our food security, keep our own part of the ocean healthy, and to maintain our World Heritage status. The Blue Park Award made us realize that we in the developing world are also visible to the global community, and that what we do contributes to the bigger marine conservation picture. We therefore have no other recourse but to do a better job. Thank you for the inspiration!"

Angelique Songco
Superintendent of Tubbataha Reefs
Natural Park in the Philippines



ENGAGEMENT TOOLS FOR BLUE SPARKS

As Marine Conservation Institute works to build a global network of Blue Parks, we engage Blue Sparks in a variety of ways tailored to their individual needs. We must increase ocean protection, and your support strengthens our capacity to meet the needs of Blue Sparks. You can help build the Blue Parks network to safeguard marine biodiversity. To accelerate ocean protection, we have identified the following tools and strategies.



FUNDING

Money matters. We want to secure funding for our Blue Spark projects so that we can help them access the expertise, infrastructure and capacity they need to succeed as Blue Parks.



EXPLORATION AND EXPEDITIONS

Expeditions inspire people to become stewards of the ocean. The experience of an expedition connects people with the wonder of marine wildlife. The stories we can tell with photos and videos bring the ocean alive for many who may not have a previous personal connection to the ocean.



MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

A healthy community knows what's going on in its backyard. Develop and implement plans for long term surveillance and monitoring to show how your efforts are leading to successful conservation and improvements in the community. This can range from specific studies on species to surveys and observations, repeated year on year.



SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Knowledge acts as our true north in the campaign for marine protection. Develop a baseline inventory of flora and fauna and implement a set of metrics which can be used to track progress. This can be measurement of no-take areas, fish populations, etc. In some cases, we can provide technical resources and training for local partners – e.g., GIS training



PROMOTION, OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

The global marine conservation agenda is advancing because people are speaking up. Consider how to best promote the successes and remaining challenges including forming alliances, developing media, and collaborating with others.



INDUSTRY SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

When business and conservation discover shared goals, wildlife in the ocean scores a big win. Create a strategy to engage local businesses, including eco-tourism, restaurants and others to drive local sustainable economies.



IMPROVING MANAGEMENT

The difference between paper parks and Blue Parks is sustained and informed management. Help develop a management plan to tackle day to day issues or support the implementation of the existing plan. Using Blue Park Blueprints we can customize specific research and management recommendations to help reach Blue Park status.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The power of community to make change is greatest when folks of all stripes are involved. Create a strategy and plan to engage the community. Assess what the best options that might be used to do this; local press, local associations and clubs, etc.



EDUCATION

Education moves us toward a vibrant and equitable future. What we teach ourselves and our children creates the future world we want to live in. Create a plan to raise awareness of the Blue Spark and ocean conservation with school children, high schools, and universities.



RESTORATION AND RECOVERY

We play an active role in regenerating the living systems that support us. Where it is needed, develop plans for restoration and implement these.



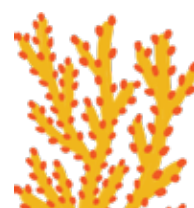
GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Just one political ally can entirely shift the winds towards more conservation policy. Create a strategy to engage government and gain support for the actions necessary to move the Blue Spark from wish to act to protect.



BLUE CARBON ASSESSMENTS

Increasingly protecting nature is recognized as a key component of combating climate change. Assessing the potential of Blue Sparks to mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration is an important aspect of their ecosystem level benefits.



BLUE SPARKS ARE IGNITING PROTECTION FOR THE OCEAN.

We need you to catch the wave!

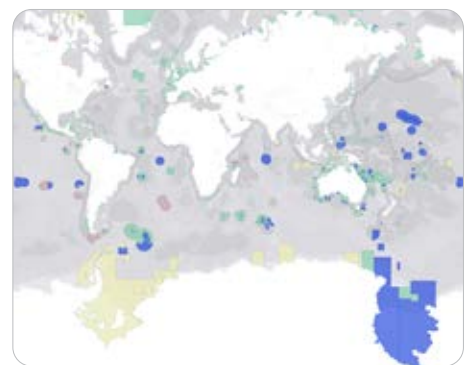


IT'S OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY, BUT OUR JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN.

Marine Conservation Institute's 25-year track record and outstanding team of MPA experts and scientists provide assurance for these communities as they seek to design marine protected areas that will nourish and the ocean and themselves for generations to come.

DONATE NOW

- Your donation accelerates protections for Blue Sparks
- Blue Sparks pave the way for Blue Parks
- Your voice inspires others to fight for our Blue Planet!



Marine Protection Atlas

[Marine Conservation Institute](#)

