

Scaling Global MPA Capacity to Reach 30x30

A Systems Approach to Action



In 2022, 196 nations adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a historic agreement that aims to conserve 30% of all of Earth's lands and waters by 2030. Reaching this ambitious "30x30" goal will require countries not only to accelerate their efforts to protect marine ecosystems but also to realize a substantial increase in human, technical, and institutional capacities at the local, national, regional, and global levels.

To address this need, the Blue Nature Alliance and the Global Network of MPA Networks launched the Scaling Global MPA Capacity to Reach 30x30 Initiative (the Initiative) at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress in 2023. Early Initiative participants advocated for the establishment of a Community of Practice to leverage partnerships and, in 2024, these practitioners began using a systems approach. A *systems approach* equips diverse participants to discover and explore the current patterns across marine management systems that allow them to strategize together, build practical tools for communicating contextual conditions, and identify opportunities for outsized influence. The intent is to move beyond project-by-project capacity development to achieve sustained delivery that keeps pace with expanding area-based conservation and the growing need for effective management of existing protected areas. Since capacity building has systematically lacked adequate funding, the Community of Practice also intends to mobilize resources to ensure marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are better positioned for durability.

The ultimate goal of the Scaling Global MPA Capacity to Reach 30x30 Initiative is to convene capacity development leaders to assess the current conditions of the marine management field and recommend the highest leverage opportunities to improve MPAs and OECMs effectiveness. By expanding collaboration opportunities for marine management capacity development, the Initiative will:

- Co-design a global MPA management capacity development strategy to address what it would take to scale capacity development, ultimately strengthening MPA resilience and durability;
- Activate a Community of Practice to implement the shared strategy; and
- Inform the global agenda for effective marine management capacity building by influencing MPA network strategies and educating donors and high-level policy experts.

Our Team

This collective effort is made possible with the consultation with Karen Grattan of Engaging Inquiry and the generous support and partnership of the following organizations and individuals:

Blue Nature Alliance	MPA Connect, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
Cambio Democratico	NOAA National MPA Center and North America Protected Area Network
Coastal Resource Center, University of Rhode Island	Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Area Community, Micronesia Conservation Trust
Center for Biodiversity and Conservation, American Museum of Natural History	PEW Chile and MPA School of the Southern Cone
Center for Protected Area Management, Colorado State University	Reef Resilience Network, The Nature Conservancy
Global Network of MPA Networks, The Ocean Foundation	UN Coordinating Body of Biodiversity on the Seas of East Asia
Locally Marine Managed Areas Network International	WildAid Marine Program
Marine Conservation Action Fund, New England Aquarium	West Indian Ocean Marine Science Association
Mediterranean Protected Area Network	Dr. Hugh Govan, Dr. Gabrielle Johnson, and Meghan Gombos

Our Progress

Since launching the Initiative in 2023, there have been 10+ virtual and in-person convenings. During the first in-person workshop in Mexico, the group identified persistent patterns affecting the performance of marine management systems in both positive and negative ways. The group's expertise, experience, and insights were captured using a [systems map](#)—a living, visual representation that functions as a rapid assessment of the global state of marine management and illustrates the complex relationships and interdependencies influencing MPAs, OECMs, and capacity scaling.

During subsequent virtual workshops and a second in-person meeting alongside the 2024 UN Oceans Decade Conference in Barcelona, the map was developed further by a wider group of capacity development providers. Participants have been invited to express perspectives in a way that encourages curiosity and democratizes better conversation by sharing voices and leveling power dynamics. As of July 2024, the Initiative has completed the analysis of current conditions of marine management systems and is exploring where the capacity development field can have the highest leverage impact to affect change in human, technical, and institutional capacities needed to scale MPA effectiveness (i.e., where collective action has an outsized opportunity for change).

By 2025, the Initiative will complete the design of a global strategy for marine management capacity development and the associated Community of Practice. If the world is to realize the 30x30 target—effectively quadrupling the area of ocean placed under protection in under a decade—the human, technical, and institutional capacities needed to uphold these protections must be developed proportionally.

An effort of this scale and significance requires the integration of different voices, perspectives, and specialties from around the world. To join us and for more information, please contact:

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