

SCALING GLOBAL MPA CAPACITY TO REACH 30X30 AND BEYOND

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 for marine management.

To address this need, the Blue Nature Alliance came together with dozens of capacity development partners to launch the Scaling Global MPA Capacity to Reach 30x30 Initiative (the Initiative). Initiative participants advocated for an approach that would help them move beyond project-by-project capacity development to achieve sustained delivery that keeps pace with expanding area-based conservation.

By applying a systems approach, Initiative participants assessed the current state of the marine management field and recommended the highest leverage opportunities to improve the effectiveness of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). By expanding collaboration opportunities for marine management capacity development, the Initiative seeks to:

- Co-design a global strategy to address what it would take to scale capacity development, ultimately strengthening MPA and OECM 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 educating and influencing donors and policymakers.

OUR PARTNERS

Since launching the Initiative in 2023, more than 70 people from 37 organizations participated in more than 15 virtual and in-person convenings, bringing together individuals from MPA networks and universities alongside government and nonprofit organizations. Our most active partners have a combined 1500 years of experience in MPA management and just as much expertise leading capacity development programs globally.

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



Tima Dagu, an MPA ranger for the Kenya Wildlife Service
©Open Planet/Blue Nature Alliance

AT A GLANCE



8.3%

of the world's ocean has been placed under some form of protection



2.8%

of the world's MPAs have been assessed effective and likely to deliver intended protections



2/3

of MPAs globally report having insufficient budget to manage their areas

OUR FINDINGS

To begin the development of a global strategic framework for marine capacity development, Initiative participants identified a guiding star, or vision statement for what an effective marine management landscape will look like.

Our Guiding Star: Marine management systems are rooted in and responsive to local context, where collaboration and cross-sectoral cooperation are the norm. These systems are well-resourced and organized for learning and improving decision making in ways that build community trust and a sense of a shared future and are driven by a recognition of the interconnectedness of healthy marine ecosystems and community well-being. Ultimately, such systems effectively assure a healthy marine environment that provides an equitable and resilient set of socio-cultural, economic, and ecological services.

With the guiding star in mind, and under the guidance of Karen Grattan of Engaging Inquiry, participants analyzed and synthesized the obstacles and opportunities through a systems map — a visual representation that helps stakeholders understand and deeply explore a system, its structure, and its drivers. In this case, the systems map illustrates the global state of marine management and the complex relationships and interdependencies influencing MPAs, OECMs, and capacity scaling.

SYSTEMS MAP REGIONS

Networks and Collaboration

Networks are increasingly used to advance marine management effectiveness by enhancing collaboration, inspiring experimentation, and influencing policy. Despite significant progress, MPA networks face systemic challenges that stress and isolate marine managers and communities, leading to an insufficient and overwhelmed workforce. A participant noted, "We are barely holding the line."

Status Quo Practice

Legacy structures and mindsets can marginalize local conservation actors and communities, leading to distrust. Top-down approaches promote short-term thinking and hinder local ownership of management solutions. Funding practices that favor novelty and short-term projects result in a reliance on outside expertise, which detracts from trust-building and the institutionalization of solutions. Communities lack opportunities to co-design and implement marine programs, policies, and practices.

Durability Challenge

Durability challenges arise when power and knowledge are concentrated. Favoring short-term solutions or "wins" decreases the sustainability of marine management practices and undermines the trust and influence of marine managers and conservation practitioners. As a result, programs lack local buy-in and agency and often struggle to generate the social and political capital needed for the long-term institutionalization of conservation practices.

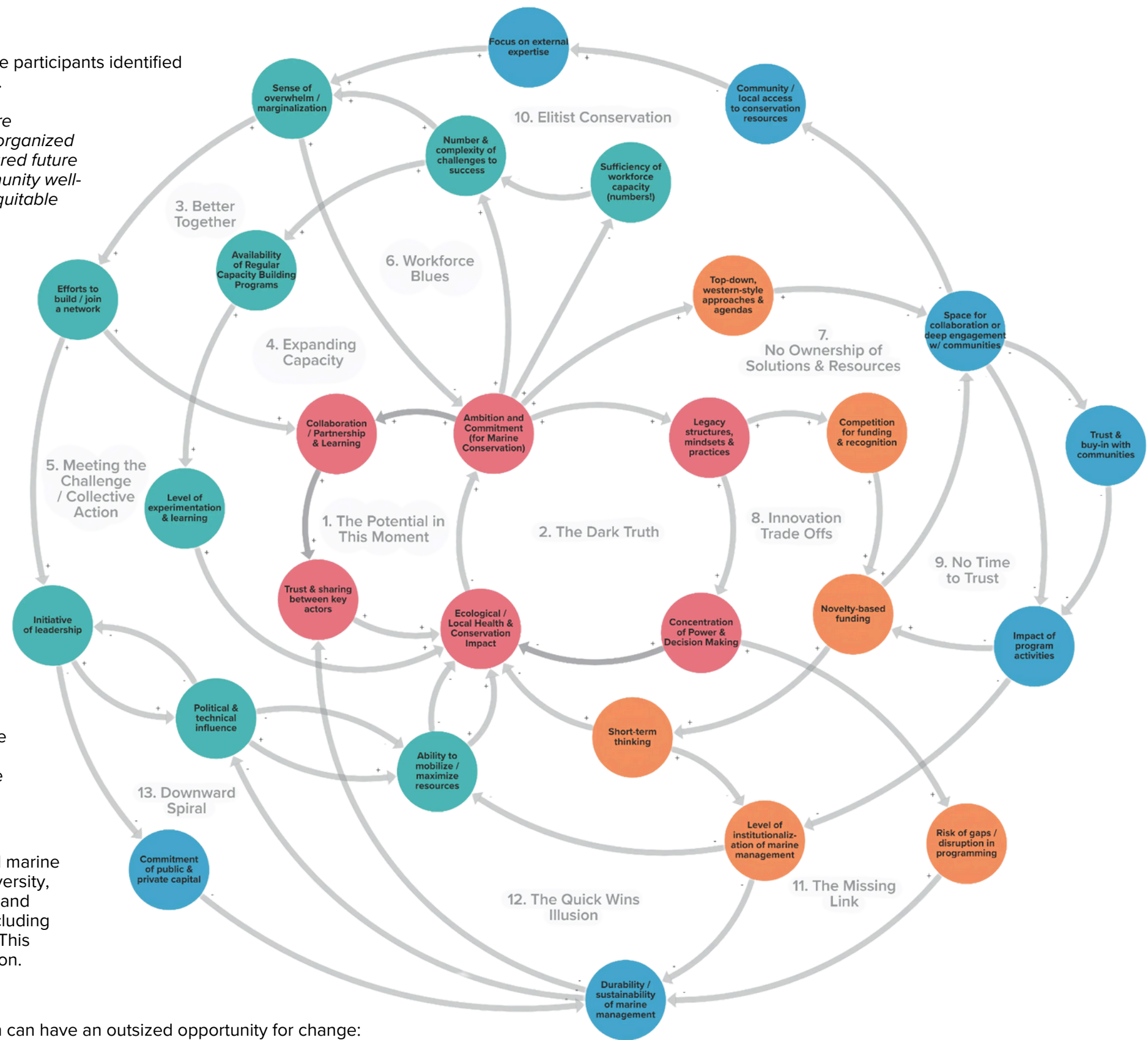
SYSTEMS MAP SUMMARY

The Initiative found that marine management systems are failing to preserve and protect people and marine ecosystems. Despite good intentions, the system is not addressing the root causes of climate, biodiversity, and human inequities. It is disproportionately resourced, overwhelming the conservation workforce, and perpetuating colonizing and extractive practices. Agendas driven by external global north actors, including funders and large NGOs, are not sufficiently empowering local and indigenous rights and practices. This does not perpetuate long-term, locally rooted, resilient, and durable institutionalization of conservation.

LEVERAGE AREAS

Using the systems map, Initiative participants identified major leverage areas where collective action can have an outsized opportunity for change:

- **Reimagine power relations and decision-making structures:** Reimagining decision-making structures will counteract the repercussions of novelty funding and short-term thinking so that we can enhance the durability and equity of marine management programs
- **Build collective political and technical influence:** As we build collective political and technical influence across sectors, we can drive sustained commitments of private and public capital so that there is greater durability in conservation programming.
- **Unlocking the full power of networks:** As efforts to join and build networks grow, stronger collaboration, partnership, experimentation, and learning emerge, which enables the institutionalization of new practices and challenges legacy structures.

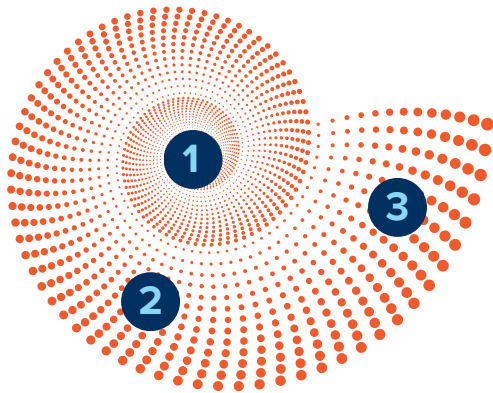


The map pictured here allows stakeholders to assess the structure and drivers of the marine management system. Interact and learn how to interpret the map by visiting this QR code



A GLOBAL STRATEGY

Based on the systems framework, the Initiative developed a global strategy to guide collective action that would shift the marine management system. The strategy consists of three main elements:



1. At the core, we will **cultivate a Community of Practice (CoP)** by articulating and disseminating the systems framework, defining an equitable and transparent governance model, attracting capital to support the strategy, and promoting a culture of learning and knowledge exchange.

2. The Community Practice **fosters a global network of portfolios** that responds to the leverage areas and addresses the complexity required to deliver MPA effectiveness. A portfolio is a suite of actions, actors, and assets that are aligned through a common intent and distributed globally. The CoP is currently generating an initial set of portfolios that influence the system in places where equity and effectiveness are most critical, and in geographies where resources are most scarce. Details coming soon!

3. The networking of portfolios allows the CoP to **drive aligned strategic actions** at the regional, national, and site levels that are locally responsive yet globally connected.

This tiered, responsive approach returns learning to the system, ensuring a constant flow of knowledge exchange between the levels. By design, the CoP and portfolios are learning groups that generate momentum over time.



In April 2024, capacity development leaders from around the world convened alongside the UN Oceans Decade Conference in Barcelona to contribute to the systems map development and analysis



Our partners gathered again in August 2024 to begin designing the Global MPA Management Capacity Development Strategy

JOIN US

If the world is to realize the 30x30 target — and effective management of MPAs well beyond 2030 — the human, technical, and institutional capacities needed to make these protections meaningful must be supported by a wide range of stakeholders across the globe. An effort of this scale and significance requires the integration of different voices, perspectives, and expertise.

Join us to be part of a movement that goes beyond square kilometers to realize effective and durable marine protections. We invite you to support development of this approach! For more information, contact Lihla Noori, Capacity & Learning Lead for the Blue Nature Alliance at Inoori@conservation.org.



 www.bluenaturealliance.org

 contact@bluenaturealliance.org