

Bermuda Commits To Protect 20% Of Its Waters In New Marine Protected Areas.

The Government of Bermuda commits to protect at least 20% of their total EEZ in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) while vowing to develop their Blue Economy.

HAMILTON, BERMUDA, June 5, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Government of Bermuda has committed to protect at least 20% of their total Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in marine protected areas (MPAs) while vowing to sustainably develop their Blue Economy.

On June 5th, the Government of Bermuda's Ministry of Home Affairs, [the Waitt Institute](#), and Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to form the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme. Through this partnership, Bermuda will create a binding ocean plan to sustainably manage and improve ocean industries like fishing and tourism while at the same time preserving 90,000 square kilometers (50,000 square miles) of Bermuda's waters, which total 465,000 sq. kilometers (180,000 sq. miles), in



Marine Protected Areas are crucial management tools that can sustainably protect ocean habitat. More productive and attractive habitats can then act to help grow local economies.

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*Ted Waitt, Founder and
Chairman of the Waitt
Institute*

fully protected areas (no fishing, extraction, or destruction of any kind is allowed).

This process will be based on scientific, legal, and socio-economic assessments of the island and will be designated and implemented by 2022. Utilizing marine spatial planning (MSP), new inshore and offshore zones will aim to preserve commercially important fish stocks, migratory routes for marine mammals, and deep-sea ecosystems like seamounts and corals while allowing for responsible development of marine industries.

Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs the Hon. Walter H. Roban said, “We Bermudians rely on our ocean for our food, livelihoods, shipping, tourism, climate resilience and recreation. This partnership confirms our

recognition that a healthy ocean is essential to our island's prosperity – our future depends on it. Bermuda is committed to achieving the highest standard of marine protection, which is essential to build ocean resilience, while at the same time ensuring economic resilience.”

900 km (570 miles) from the Eastern United States, Bermuda's waters contain the northernmost

coral reef ecosystem in the world. While boasting some of the healthiest coral in the Atlantic, Bermuda's waters face mounting pressures from human activity such as declining fish stocks, sea level rise, and a potential risk of increased tropical storms.

"Bermuda has a robust history of ocean management and research, starting with the protection of sea turtles in the early 1600s. The Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme will ensure this legacy lives on by leveraging current scientific understanding to preserve marine biodiversity for both its inherent environmental and socioeconomic values. BIOS is pleased to be a part of this initiative that will no doubt serve as a model for other countries around the world," said Bill Curry, CEO of Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences.



The Waitt Institute is pleased to partner with the Government of Bermuda and the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences to work on creating MPA's in at least 20 percent of their EEZ.

The announcement comes in the wake of last month's United Nations report which warned of unprecedented rates of extinction and asserted that direct exploitation of fish and seafood has the largest relative impact in the oceans. Mounting [scientific reports](#) declare that protecting 30% of the ocean in areas with no extraction will help maintain marine resources while maximizing fisheries yields and economic growth. The Programme will help Bermuda achieve international objectives set by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ODS) 14, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature).

The Waitt Institute will provide expertise and financing to support the comprehensive marine spatial plan (MSP) that aims to balance ecological, economical, and social priorities of the ocean. The Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme is part of the recently-launched [Blue Prosperity Coalition](#), a network of global experts that offer world-class planning, legal, advocacy, strategy, and scientific expertise to help governments achieve 30% marine protection while growing their ocean economies.

"By taking proactive steps to manage their ocean, Bermuda is not only fostering healthier marine ecosystems, but creating a long-term roadmap for economic growth, food security, and climate resilience. Bermuda is taking the initiative to develop a "future proof" ocean plan that doesn't just designate protected areas on a map, but builds local capacity and enforcement, involves the stakeholders, and sustainably grows the ocean economy." said Ted Waitt, Founder and Chairman of the Waitt Institute.

Marine spatial planning was identified as a key tool for islands in the 2018 Ocean Risk Summit, hosted by Bermuda which identified potential global exposures to ocean risk and discussed innovative solutions to tackle its broad-ranging consequences. The MOU announcement has been warmly welcomed by AXA XL, the lead sponsor of the Ocean Risk Summit and one of Bermuda's largest commercial (re)insurers.

"Given the risk climate change poses to island communities, marine spatial planning provides a sustainable business and resiliency strategy that helps ensure long-term economic growth," said Charles Cooper, Chief Executive, Reinsurance at AXA XL and Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences trustee.

Bermuda is the latest island nation in the Atlantic Ocean to protect part of their exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The Governments of the Azores, Barbuda and Curaçao have recently announced similar commitments under the Blue Prosperity Coalition. Ascension Island recently received UK government backing for its call to designate all of its waters as a marine protected area, with no fishing allowed, which would make it the largest fully protected marine reserve in the Atlantic.

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