

Embargoed until 7 October, 2008, at 14:30 CEST

High Tech + Science Know How = Protect Planet Ocean

The Latest: For the first time, we're bringing marine conservation to millions of desktops around the world. Ocean issues have long been 'out of sight, out of mind,' but through an unprecedented partnership spearheaded by IUCN and its World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), compelling imagery, stories, and information about each Marine Protected Area is available on computers worldwide through Google Earth Outreach. Key partners include: Google Earth, National Geographic, the UN Foundation, the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Study of Coastal Oceans (PISCO), Natural England, WWF, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, NOAA's Ocean Service International Program Office, National Marine Sanctuaries, the National Marine Protected Areas Center, and MPA News.

Background: Oceans cover over 70 percent of our planet and provide critical goods and services (from food to transport), and yet less than one percent of our oceans are under any kind of protection. As climate change hits home, with bleaching of coral reefs and movements in fish populations, combined with the existing threat of overfishing, our oceans are facing unprecedented threats. We have been slow to react to the crisis in our oceans. Countries around the world have committed to establishing networks of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) by 2012, yet at the current pace that goal will not be reached until 2060 at the earliest. There is an urgent need to accelerate the establishment of MPAs and, in effect, **Protect Planet Ocean**.

Key Issues:

- Scientific research shows that marine reserves work. Case studies from these no-take MPAs around the world provide scientific evidence that full protection in marine reserves can boost the abundance, diversity, and size of marine species. When extractive uses like fishing are prohibited, stressed and degraded marine areas are given a chance to rebound.
- Achieving success requires a massive global effort and an agreed plan. IUCN WCPA-marine, after an extensive global consultative process, is launching the global Plan of Action to accelerate progress to establishing MPAs. Information about priority actions, key actors, and updates on progress can be found at the MPA web portal also being launched today - www.protectplanetocean.org.

The Quote: *"The unprecedented threats our oceans, indeed our planet, are facing requires a new dynamic, a new way of working together, at a scale that we have not been able to reach,"* says **Prof Dan Laffoley, IUCN WCPA-marine Vice Chair**. *"By using the power and reach of Google Earth Outreach and the global network and expertise of IUCN WCPA-marine, we are now able to put critical ocean issues in front of hundreds of millions of people around the world. And, once we have people's attention, we hope to move them from awareness to action to protect planet ocean."*

When and Where:

- Launch of MPA layer in Google Earth Outreach, launch of the new MPA web portal www.protectplanetocean.org, and the global MPA Plan of Action – **Tuesday 7 October 11:30CEST**, Plenary B.
- Press conference **Tuesday 7 October 14:00CEST**. In the Main Press Conference Room.

Materials for the Media:

Web: www.protectplanetocean.org, www.iucn.org/marine,

www.earth.google.com/outreach/showcase.html **Documents:** IUCN WCPA-marine global Plan of Action available on Protect Planet Ocean website;

Spokespersons: Prof. Dan Laffoley, IUCN WCPA-marine Vice Chair and Marine Advisor, Chief Scientist's team, Natural England; Prof. Jane Lubchenco, Oregon State University and PISCO Science of Marine Reserves; Mr. Andrew Hurd, IUCN Global Marine Programme; Dr. Torre Stockard, National Geographic WildCam.

Media team:

Sarah Horsley, IUCN Media Relations Officer, m +41795283486, e sarah.horsley@iucn.org.

James Oliver, IUCN Global Marine Programme, m +41786155857, e james.oliver@iucn.org