

Global Ocean Legacy



Photo: Chas Anderson

World-scale marine reserves—places where no fishing or other extractive activity is allowed—protect our global marine heritage for future generations and celebrate our shared ocean legacy.

Although 71 percent of the Earth's surface is water, remarkably little of the marine environment is protected. Unrelenting pressure from industrial fishing and other extractive activities threaten life in the world's oceans. Habitat loss, pollution, and overfishing have led to the global depletion of fish and other marine life, and a downward spiral of productivity in the world's oceans.

Marine reserves—places where no fishing or other extractive activity is allowed—are one way to address the continued loss of our living marine resources and to protect our global marine heritage. However, most of the reserves created to date, as well as those being proposed, are relatively small and intended primarily for local

benefits. Few nations have examined the potential for placing off-limits ecologically significant expanses large enough to protect entire ocean systems. Even in Australia's Great Barrier Reef, one of the world's most treasured ecosystems, only 33 percent is closed to fishing. In most countries, the land area protected in parks far exceeds the area fully protected by marine reserves, and most maritime nations have few or no marine reserves.

Global Ocean Legacy originated as a continuation of work done by the Pew Environment Group in 2005 and 2006 to establish a fully protected marine reserve of 362,000 square kilometers in the northwestern Hawaiian Islands—the largest, permanent “no-take” marine

reserve in the world. Subsequent conservation work led to the designation of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument in the western Pacific Ocean and the Chagos Marine Reserve in the Indian Ocean (544,000 sq. km.), now the world's largest no-take marine reserve.

Inspired by initial successes, a collaboration was formed with Lyda Hill, the Oak Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Robertson Foundation, the Sandler Foundation, and the Waitt Foundation with additional support from the Tubney Charitable Trusts to protect some of the world's largest and most spectacular seascapes.