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## **One of the Largest Efforts to Protect the Planet's Ocean Underway**

*Blue Nature Alliance partners to protect 18 million square kilometers of ocean globally over five years*

**Arlington, VA.** (April 20, 2021) — A new ocean conservation initiative is underway to catalyze the protection and conservation of 18 million square kilometers of the ocean (7 million square miles) over the next five years—an area twice the size of the continental United States and larger than the continent of South America.

The effort, called the Blue Nature Alliance, is a collaboration led by Conservation International, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Global Environment Facility, Minderoo Foundation, and the Rob and Melani Walton Foundation. The Alliance aims to expand and enhance ocean protections with a focus on working alongside Indigenous peoples and local communities, scientists and academia, and other partners.

The Blue Nature Alliance is working with governments and other partners on large-scale efforts in Fiji's Lau Seascape, Antarctica's Southern Ocean, and Tristan da Cunha to collectively secure protections over 4.8 million square kilometers (1.9 million square miles) of the ocean. The Alliance will soon engage in efforts in Canada, Palau, Seychelles, and the Western Indian Ocean. This will aim to strengthen and enhance the protection of nearly 2 million square kilometers (734,000 square miles) of the ocean. A pipeline of 18 additional Blue Nature Alliance engagements has been identified across North and South America, Europe, and the Asian Pacific region. The Blue Nature Alliance will announce the next round of locations in summer 2021.

"A Healthy ocean is key to our existence. It provides nutrition and employment for a majority of people around the world and half of the oxygen each of us breathes. Yet significantly less of our ocean is protected when compared to land," said 'Aulani Wilhelm, senior vice president of Oceans for Conservation International. "We must collaborate globally, in partnership with local governments and Indigenous peoples, to make the conservation of our ocean a priority. The time is now to take big practical action to move this work forward."

The world's ocean is under stress, it is facing threats from climate change, damaging fishing practices, and pollution. Science shows that protecting and conserving large areas of the ocean is necessary to support the air we breathe, regulate the climate, and maintain essential levels of biodiversity.

"From the coastlines to the high seas, we need to tackle conservation holistically and in partnership. Our collective efforts will help secure a healthy ocean that is more resilient to climate change and yields benefits to both nature and people," said Tom Dillon, senior vice president for environment at The Pew

Charitable Trusts. “To boost biodiversity, fisheries, and economies, the Blue Nature Alliance will work with partners globally to apply science and lessons learned, and build on best practices to conserve our ocean at scale. We need this type of ambition to address the challenges facing our ocean today.”

The Blue Nature Alliance’s efforts support the push to protect at least 30 percent of the ocean by 2030, a global conservation goal expected to be formally adopted at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference later this year. To date, less than 10 percent of the global ocean is protected. The 30 percent goal is widely agreed upon as the threshold needed to maintain a resilient and functioning ocean that supports the health of people and nature.

“Conserving 30 percent of the world’s land and sea in the coming decade will require all of us to work together, with science as our North Star,” said Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility. “It is heartening to see collaborative work underway in the South Atlantic, South Pacific, and Antarctica’s Southern Ocean, and with work about to begin in even more locations around Palau, Seychelles, Canada, and the Western Indian Ocean. Through the Blue Nature Alliance, we will be contributing significantly to the 30 percent global ocean conservation goal and ensuring we have momentum to build on as we strive for our 2030 ambitions.”

To achieve its ambitious goal, the Blue Nature Alliance is creating a global network of partners dedicated to building on lessons learned from well-functioning marine protected areas and innovating new approaches to conserving large ocean areas, many of which have heavily incorporated the traditional knowledge and needs of local communities and governments into their long-term management plans – a practice that helps ensure resilience, both in funding and implementation.

“Engaging with local communities is essential to the long-term success of ocean conservation efforts,” said Dr. Tony Worby, CEO of Flourishing Oceans at Australia’s Minderoo Foundation. “Local communities rely on the ocean directly for livelihoods, cultural activities and recreation, so it is critical that they are involved in decision making that supports long-term sustainability. A measure of success for the Blue Nature Alliance will be to build community support for ocean conservation measures that are enduring.”

“Melani and I care deeply about the future of our planet and the communities that depend on nature for their health, livelihoods and culture,” said Rob Walton, co-founder of the Rob and Melani Walton Foundation. “That’s why we are pleased to be part of the Blue Nature Alliance - which brings together philanthropists, businesses, governments and NGOs to substantially increase and improve ocean conservation. Now is a critical time. The ocean is under immense pressure, and we all have a responsibility to help safeguard it.”

In addition to its five founding partners, the Blue Nature Alliance’s growing network includes world-renowned conservation experts, scientists, and financial strategists including Big Ocean, the Global Island Partnership, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Murphy Family Foundation, Nekton, Oceana, Ocean Unite, the Tiffany & Co. Foundation, and SkyLight Surveillance and Enforcement Technology.

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### **About Conservation International**

Conservation International works to protect the critical benefits that nature provides to people. Through science, partnerships and fieldwork, Conservation International is driving innovation and investments in nature-based solutions to the climate crisis, supporting protections for critical habitats, and fostering economic development that is grounded in the conservation of nature. We work in 30 countries around the world, empowering societies at all levels to create a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable planet. Follow Conservation International's work on [Conservation](#), [News](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

### **About The Pew Charitable Trusts**

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Learn more at [pewtrusts.org](http://pewtrusts.org).

### **About Global Environment Facility**

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established 30 years ago on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit to tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, it has provided more than \$21 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$114 billion in co-financing for more than 5,000 projects in 170 countries. The GEF is the largest multilateral trust fund focused on enabling developing countries to invest in nature, and supports the implementation of major international environmental conventions including on biodiversity, climate change, chemicals, and desertification.

### **About Minderoo Foundation**

Minderoo Foundation is a modern philanthropic organization that takes on tough, persistent issues with the potential to drive massive change. Established by Andrew and Nicola Forrest in 2001, Minderoo Foundation is proudly Australian, with AU\$2 billion committed to a range of global initiatives that include ending modern slavery, making cancer non-lethal, ensuring parity for Indigenous Australians, and returning the oceans to a flourishing state. Minderoo Foundation purposefully pushes the limits of what is believed possible.

### **About Rob and Melani Walton Foundation**

The Rob and Melani Walton Foundation strives to provide catalyzing and supporting grants to those who want to build integrated solutions that elevate people, planet, and purpose in life. The foundation seeks partners who focus on the essential and interconnected elements of increasing the sustainability of people and our planet. The foundation collaborates with experts in sustainability, conservation of land and water, and healing the environment to sustain humanity.

## **ADDITIONAL QUOTES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition**

“Our partnership with the Alliance will give us the scientific, political, and communications tools we need to protect the waters around Antarctica,” said Claire Christian, executive director for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition.

### **Big Ocean**

“Big Ocean is excited to partner with the Blue Nature Alliance’s values-based vision, its resources, and partners. They are the mechanism we need to support early adopters and new locations, to build capacity in the collective of Large Scale Marine Protected Areas worldwide in ways that were not previously possible,” said Nai’a Lewis, coordinator for Big Ocean.

### **Christiana Figueres, Former Executive Secretary, UN Climate Change Convention (2010-2016) and Founding Partner, Global Optimism**

“Like siblings, the sky above and the waters around us share many characteristics – most notably, a need to be protected. As greenhouse gas emissions continue to threaten our world, restoring and maintaining the health of our ocean through efforts such as the Blue Nature Alliance can help to preserve biodiversity and buffer the planet against the devastating impacts of climate change.”

### **Global Island Partnership**

“The Global Island Partnership is honoured to be a partner of this exciting new ocean focussed initiative. It’s very refreshing to partner with an initiative, such as the Blue Nature Alliance, that puts in place some of the best practices around partnering, learns from what didn’t work before and acts according to a strong set of partnership values. As a partnership focussed on mobilising government commitment in the island space, we believe this effort will match resources to inspired island leaders, at all levels, who are working to accelerate ocean action,” said Kate Brown, executive director of the Global Island Partnership.

### **Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation**

“We see widespread and growing recognition that the world’s oceans need increased attention and care, and the Blue Nature Alliance is answering that call with vast conservation promise by mobilizing resources to support countries and communities with a vision for protecting their seascapes,” said Aileen Lee, chief program officer for the Environmental Conservation Program at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. “In addition, the Alliance will invest in growing the ocean conservation field by investing in marine science, tools, capacity, and innovation.”

### **Murphy Family Foundation**

“The Murphy Family Foundation has ocean conservation as one of its strategic gifting tenets. Our long-standing relationship with Conservation International made partnering with the Blue Nature Alliance a clear choice, and we are very excited to be part of it,” said Glenn Murphy, co-chair of the Murphy Family Foundation.

### **Nekton**

“Nekton is delighted to join the Blue Nature Alliance. We can’t protect what we don’t know and are deeply inspired by the inclusive, global approach towards accelerating the global target of at least 30 percent protection of our shared client, the ocean,” said Oliver Steeds, CEO and Mission director at Nekton.

### **Ocean Unite**

“As an organization whose core mandate is to activate, innovate and invest in a healthy ocean, Ocean Unite is delighted to join forces with the Blue Nature Alliance, and to partner up with this inspiring group of organizations. The ocean is in crisis and the threats it is facing are many. It is only by working together through partnerships like the Blue Nature Alliance that we will be successful in supercharging ocean conservation at the speed that is needed to put our blue planet on the road to recovery,” said Karen Sack, president and CEO of Ocean Unite.

### **Oceans North Conservation Society (Canada)**

“The Blue Nature Alliance’s commitment to support Indigenous-driven ocean management will set a powerful example for others to follow. Oceans North is proud to partner with the Alliance to work with communities to safeguard a healthy, abundant ocean for future generations,” Louie Porta, executive director at Oceans North Conservation Society.

### **Oregon State University and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama**

“It’s great to see the people-first approach the Blue Nature Alliance is taking,” said Dr. Ana Spalding, assistant professor of Marine and Coastal Policy at Oregon State University and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. “I supported the development of the Alliance code of conduct and it’s exciting to see these changes being integrated into the ‘how’ of doing ocean conservation. Importantly, it is a resource to secure accountability for ocean equity and justice across all actors in the conservation field.”

### **Pacific Blue Foundation (Fiji)**

“We are small remote islands scattered over the vast ocean with limited resources. We have a traditional governance system based on spiritual connections to our natural resources and our strong faith in almighty God. Like our traditional canoes, our traditional leaders have developed unique qualities through generations for leading our people in a sustainable way. The Blue Nature Alliance has provided the much-needed support to integrate scientific conservation efforts with our own, propelling us to the future as a more resilient community ready to face future challenges,” said Turaga Roko Sau, Josefa Cinavilakeba, community and government relations director for the Pacific Blue Foundation.

### **President of the Republic of Palau, His Excellency Surangel S. Whipps, Jr.**

“We are excited to partner with Blue Nature Alliance to strengthen the management of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and to ensure that the Palauan communities will benefit from the sanctuary and development of the domestic fishery.”

### **Seychelles**

“The Blue Nature Alliance is helping us take a holistic approach to get our MPA network actively managed with the necessary financing tools and management authority,” said Alain de Comarmond, principal secretary, Environment Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, Republic of Seychelles.

### **SpeSeas**

“The team the Blue Nature Alliance has assembled is smart, diverse and ambitious,” said Dr. Diva Amon, marine biologist at SpeSeas. “I’m especially excited to see the use of cutting-edge science and technology to help protect our ocean, and hope to see these tools in the hands of local communities and MPA managers.”

**The Tiffany & Co. Foundation**

“The Tiffany & Co. Foundation is proud to have provided early support to help launch the Blue Nature Alliance because we saw its potential to catalyze the creation of marine protected areas at scale,” said Anisa Kamadoli Costa, chairman & president – The Tiffany & Co. Foundation. “We believe that collaboration is crucial and that bringing together diverse perspectives—including scientists, governments, funders, NGOs, Indigenous peoples, and local communities—will be central to advancing these ambitious goals and protecting the world’s ocean.”

**Tristan da Cunha**

“The South Atlantic is a truly precious environment, teeming with globally important wildlife. I'm so grateful to the Blue Nature Alliance for supporting a long-term financial mechanism that will help us protect our island home and our waters for generations to come,” said James Glass, Chief Islander, Tristan da Cunha.

**Zac Goldsmith, Minister for the Pacific & the Environment, United Kingdom**

“Our ocean faces unprecedented pressures, and we need urgently to be doing all we can to both protect and restore it. I am delighted that the Blue Nature Alliance has now made Tristan da Cunha one of its first investment sites. In November 2020, Tristan da Cunha designated a marine protection zone three times the size of the UK with the support of our Blue Belt programme. This is a fantastic conservation win that will help ensure seabirds and wildlife continue to thrive in Tristan’s waters, and is a significant contribution to our collective goal of protecting at least 30 percent of the global ocean by 2030.”

**Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean**

“The health of the ocean will ultimately determine the survival of humankind on our planet. We all share responsibility for the decline in the ocean’s health and the measures required to restore and sustain it. With activities grounded in the best available science, the Blue Nature Alliance is expected to greatly expand much-needed conservation of key ocean ecosystems.”

**Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association**

“The Blue Nature Alliance has recognized the unique significance and opportunities for expanding community-led ocean conservation in the Western Indian Ocean. It is supporting us in the creation and improved management of both locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) and MPAs, while also addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing—one of the most significant threats to our region,” said Dr. Arthur Tuda, executive secretary for the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association.

## BACKGROUND

### Locations with Work Underway:

- **Antarctica's Southern Ocean** (potential to protect 3,800,000 square kilometers/1.5 million square miles)
  - An area critical to maintaining the health of the global ocean yet increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and damaging fishing practices.
  - One of the last great marine wilderness areas remaining on Earth, home to nearly 10,000 unique species.
  - Work aims to build upon the success of the Ross Sea Region Marine Protected Area – the largest protected area in the world – by adding to the network of marine protected areas (Three MPA proposals currently exist – the East Antarctic MPA, the Weddell Sea MPA, and the Antarctic Peninsula MPA).
  - Lead partners are the members of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC).
- **Fiji's Lau Seascape** (potential for 332,000 new square kilometers/128,200 square miles of ocean conservation)
  - The Lau Archipelago is home to more than 200 species of hard coral and 531 reef fish species.
  - The most remote island group in Fiji. It provides food, cultural value, and livelihoods for the 10,000 people who call Lau home.
  - The Blue Nature Alliance will help the government and local communities establish an ocean conservation area to protect approximately 332,000 square kilometers of offshore waters while working to strengthen the management of traditionally managed coastal iQoliqoli areas of the Lau province.
  - The lead partner is Conservation International-Fiji.
- **Tristan da Cunha** (687,247 square kilometers/265,300 square miles of new fully protected marine zone)
  - An area with an expansive marine ecosystem that is home to 85% of the world's endangered rockhopper penguins, 80% of the world's subantarctic fur seals, and four endemic seabird species listed as globally threatened.
  - In November 2020, the Tristan da Cunha Island Council committed to designate most of the archipelago's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as a marine protection zone. The reserve will span more than 687,000 square kilometers (265,000 square miles), about 91% of the waters of the remote South Atlantic Ocean island chain, and create the fourth largest fully protected marine reserve on the planet.
  - In 2021, the Alliance will provide continued funding that will support research, education, community ownership, and local management of the marine protection zone (MPZ).

### Anticipated Engagement Sites:

- **Canada** (765,000 square kilometers/295,400 square miles of new or upgraded ocean conservation areas)
  - Has the world's longest shoreline, an exclusive economic zone larger than that of the entire European Union and touches three oceans – the Arctic, Atlantic, and the Pacific.

- Canada plans to protect 25% of its EEZ by 2025 and 30% by 2030 – this will require an 11% expansion of protected area in the next five years.
  - The Alliance will support the establishment of protected areas and work to ensure new and existing MPAs and Indigenous Protected Areas meet Canada’s commitment to creating jobs and sustains the culture of Inuit, Indigenous, and Coastal communities.
  - The lead partner is Oceans North Conservation Society, supported by SeaBlue, a coalition of six ocean-focused environmental NGOs, the Ocean Collaborative, and Inuit, First Nation, and Métis organizations.
- **Palau** (secure long-term resilience of 502,538 square kilometers/194,000 square miles)
    - An oceanic country consisting of more than 200 islands and recognized as a biodiversity hotspot within the Polynesia-Micronesia archipelago.
    - Commonly referred to as one of the seven underwater wonders of the world, the Palau National Marine Sanctuary law was passed in 2015 and took effect in 2020, fully protecting 80% of the country’s exclusive economic zone.
    - Palau has prioritized the remaining 20% of its EEZ for local and small-scale commercial fisheries with limited exports, thus helping to ensure local food security and sustainably caught fish for the tourism market.
    - The Blue Nature Alliance is working with the Palau National Marine Sanctuary Administrator to design an engagement that will stand up the core management team and systems, refine long term financing plans for a post-COVID-19 world and strengthen the enabling conditions for a successful domestic fishery that enables the Palauan people to benefit from the Sanctuary.
- **Seychelles** (441,513 square kilometers/170,500 square miles)
    - An archipelago of 115 islands, the Republic of Seychelles is widely recognized as one of the world’s most environmentally conscious nations.
    - In March 2020, it established a network of MPAs encompassing 30% of the Seychelle’s national waters, the design of which was lauded as the world’s first ocean-focused debt-for-nature swap.
    - The Alliance will help to stand up the MPA governance mechanism, once created by the Seychelles government, with technical support and core staffing, invest in the Seychelles Climate Change Adaptation Trust’s capacity to unlock and manage additional revenue streams for sustainable financing of the network.
    - Lead partners include the Seychelles Climate Change Adaptation Trust and the Seychelles government.
- **Western Indian Ocean** (190,000 square kilometers/73,400 square miles)
    - The region is globally recognized for its biodiversity and high socio-economic value, providing about 4.8% of global fish catch which equals about 4.5 million tons of fish per year.
    - The region lags far behind other parts of the world in meeting ocean conservation targets and is at high risk of nearshore and offshore illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing that negatively impacts local livelihoods and the environment.
    - The Alliance is working with the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Vulcan, and Fish-Africa to create a regional strategy to counter these threats, improve management ability, and enable expansion of locally managed marine areas.