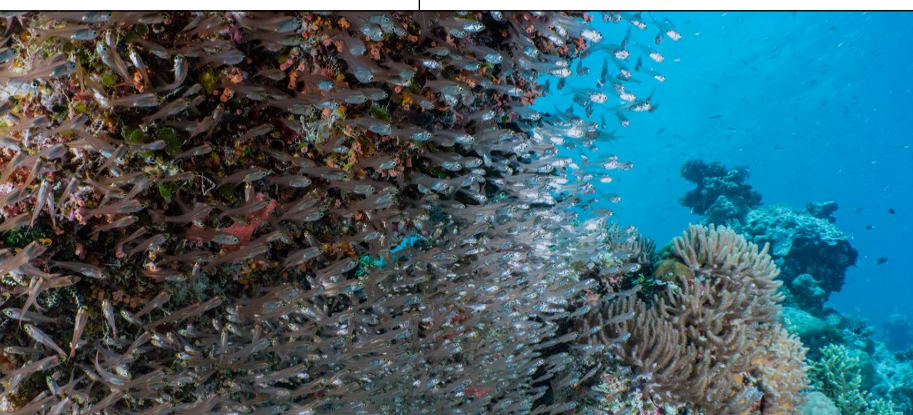




POST
 BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK
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TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS. SOLUTIONS #39

SEASCAPE APPROACH: SCALING BIODIVERSITY, CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS



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The seascape approach is a scalable solution for the sustainable use of coastal and marine areas, and a key method to raising the ambition to deliver biodiversity, climate and sustainable development benefits. Its success depends on the coordinated actions of relevant stakeholders at each level of governance.

From sea-grass meadows to coral reefs, from mangroves to salt marshes, marine and coastal ecosystems contain an unparalleled diversity of marine life. They protect shorelines from ever-growing climate change impacts and offer a wide range of socioeconomic benefits, including diverse seafood that sustain livelihoods and food security for millions of people.¹

However, coastal ecosystems are under heightened pressure. Growing population density and higher concentration of economic activity in coastal areas, compounded by climate change, threaten the biodiversity, livelihoods and overall well-being of the nearly 40% of the world's population that live within 100 kilometers of the coast.²

The seascape approach, an integrated model for conservation that aims to draw a sustainable path between ocean protection and production, is a significant opportunity to overcome these challenges. When properly supported and implemented, the seascape approach can both ensure long-term biodiversity protection and secure the many ecosystem services that underpin social-ecological welfare, including the resilience of coastal communities and ecosystems in the face of climate change.



“WITHOUT AN INTEGRATED, COORDINATED, CROSS-SECTORAL AND SCIENCE-BASED APPROACH TO COASTAL AND MARINE MANAGEMENT, THE RESILIENCE OF COASTAL AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR ABILITY TO PROVIDE VITAL SERVICES WILL BE REDUCED.” -

The Ocean and the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2017)

1. THE SEASCAPE APPROACH, A COLLABORATIVE MODEL

The “seascape” terminology can be adopted for multiple purposes, including when applying the landscape ecology concept to marine and coastal environments, when looking at ecological causes for spatial distributions and patterns in the ocean, or when observing the mosaic of interacting habitats.

In this brief, seascapes are defined as large, multiple-use marine coastal areas, scientifically identified, in which a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, cooperate to manage and sustain biodiversity while generating socio-economic benefits for people.³ The seascape approach incorporates the fundamental elements of its terrestrial counterpart, the landscape approach,⁴ adapted for coastal marine areas and consequently provides a collaborative and integrated model to protect and sustainably use coastal and marine areas at a larger scale.

Collaboration is vital to conservation, particularly in the context of diverging interests from multiple ocean users and stakeholders along coastlines. Seascapes strongly emphasize multi-level governance structures, multi-sector engagement and cooperation among partners. Various models and tools have been defined and implemented around the world to support the management of coastal and marine areas⁵ but they are mostly delineated on ecological criteria or political and strategic criteria.⁶ This lack of interaction between stakeholders and decision-makers impedes these tools to be more effective. With its holistic vision, seascapes aim at building coalitions among governments, private sector entities, and civil society organizations to sustain effective management at a large scale.

The direct impacts of biodiversity loss are most heavily felt at the local level by the people closest to the resources. It is therefore vital to adopt participatory management structures⁷ which include members of all different stakeholder groups, like Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), and ensure actions are sensitive to the local context while acknowledging and integrating traditional management structures and existing local systems for development.

As multiple-use areas, seascapes can provide a pathway toward sustainable development, and successfully meet the needs of local stakeholders. Seascapes typically include Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) where human activities such as fishing and tourism may be limited to protect ecologically significant marine areas, while also ensuring that local communities can sustainably derive food and livelihoods from marine and coastal resources allowing marine species to recover and thrive. Seascapes can give policy-makers the possibility to anticipate by thinking holistically and adopting longer-term planning.

Community resilience and adaptability to climate pressures depend critically on the integrity of its ecosystems. Among the many benefits it provides, seascapes can also help coastal communities adapt to new conditions resulting from a changing climate, such as sea level rise and extreme weather events, combined with increasing anthropogenic pressures along the coast. The seascapes approach is a practical framework to implement ecosystem-based management,⁸ which prioritizes the management of ecosystem services and encourages the sustainable use of resources, at scale, strengthening the ability of the territory to build resilience and adjust its climate adaptation strategies.

2. ENSURING FUNCTIONAL AND THRIVING SEASCAPES

From an ecological standpoint, the seascape approach offers an opportunity to manage coastal and marine ecosystems holistically - protecting biological connectivity between these valuable ecosystems.⁹ Many marine species rely on systems without boundaries and migratory species in the ocean span local, national and regional jurisdictions. Functional seascapes must include areas large enough to encompass natural realities and must integrate work at multiple levels of governance, without being too large to be managed effectively. This can result in stabilised or improved population trends for threatened marine species, as well as maintenance and restoration of habitats and ecosystems so that ecological processes and ecosystem services are sustained.

While the specific interests of stakeholders may be particular to a local context, nine essential elements¹⁰ for a functional and successful seascape have been identified.¹¹ They describe how seascapes can create the enabling conditions for marine conservation, build effective management and generate significant outcomes for people and nature.

Seascapes can act as a lever to facilitate marine conservation at local, national and regional scales. They can generate a favourable framework of laws, regulations and policies, and build appropriate institutional frameworks and capacity to strengthen governance structures. As an example, the Great Blue Wall (GBW) initiative, a first-of-its-kind network of regenerative seascapes in the West Indian Region, is an opportunity for governments in the region to strengthen their institutional capacities to manage marine resources and conserved areas. By taking advantage of the GBW, they can operate efficiently within the framework of regional corridors for ecosystem conservation and restoration.¹² Seascapes also create favourable conditions through social and political support, increasing the social and political viability of marine conservation.



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¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf>

² https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

³ https://coraltriangleinitiative.org/sites/default/files/resources/CI_Seascapes_Guidebook_select_develop_implement_seascapes.pdf

⁴ For instance: integrated management of conservation and use areas, with high biological diversity, ecological connectivity, and aesthetic and cultural value

⁵ <https://clmeplus.org/app/uploads/2020/04/Comparison-approaches-management-large-marine-areas.pdf>

⁶ <https://clmeplus.org/app/uploads/2020/04/Comparison-approaches-management-large-marine-areas.pdf>

⁷ <https://cutt.ly/CIir774>

⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12299>

⁹ https://coraltriangleinitiative.org/sites/default/files/resources/CI_Seascapes_Guidebook_select_develop_implement_seascapes.pdf

¹⁰ <https://cutt.ly/tlu4vb7>

¹¹ <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/asset/168923f1-34b7-4a21-bea5-e724a39d1878/csp2423-fig-0002-m.jpg>

¹² <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/06/23/the-great-blue-wall-initiative-at-the-nexus-of-climate-change-nature-conservation-and-the-blue-economy/>



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“WE CANNOT IGNORE THE FACT THAT IT IS US WHO DEPEND ON [AQUATIC] RESOURCES, AND NOW MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED TO GEAR OUR EFFORTS TOWARDS THE PROTECTION AND THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF THESE RESOURCES. THE GREAT BLUE WALL INITIATIVE SIGNIFIES AN EPITOME OF HOW A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP COULD EXIST BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.”

—H.E. Wavel Ramkalawan, President of Seychelles (2022)

With their strong emphasis on sustainable development, seascapes can facilitate the engagement of appropriate and sustainable economic activities in multi-use areas, and can thus encourage greater engagement of the private sector (e.g., tourism, fishery production, transportation). They use multidisciplinary scientific information, to plan and monitor ecosystems and advance large-scale management. Lastly, as they strive to be financially sustainable (e.g., large and diverse portfolios), seascapes can contribute to the development of more effective management through long-term sustainable financing.

3. SEASCAPES IN PRACTICE

When properly implemented, the seascape approach can lead to many positive outcomes for people and nature. One such case is the Eastern Tropical Pacific (ETP) Seascape, which covers nearly 2 million square kilometers of coastal land and waters in Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador. In nearly two decades, countries in the region have established over 20 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), with the support of over 100 organizations, government partners and community leaders. Stakeholders from these countries recognized the ecological interdependence of their coastal and oceanic regions and committed to a mechanism of cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.¹³

Since its establishment, critical stakeholders have remained engaged and committed to strengthening the legal, governance and financial sustainability of the seascape. There has been ongoing coordination between the technical components of the seascape: information exchange and coordination between the core MPAs and strong political collaboration among the four Ministries of Environment, which have facilitated joint positions at an international level on the common threats they face as a region. One challenge of the ETP seascape remains the low engagement of businesses and companies in the planning and operation of these multi-use areas.

The sustained collaborative learning and governance, as demonstrated in the ETP Seascape is critical for a greater likelihood of conservation success, although

the effects are also highly influenced by national contexts. Local and regional governments are key to authorizing protected areas and can also play an important role in gathering stakeholders and scaling the seascape approach.

Local governments networks can provide vital platforms for sharing resources and lessons learned and can play an important role in developing seascapes around the world:

- Coastal 500¹⁴ is a global network of Mayors and local government leaders committed to working directly with their local communities toward thriving and prosperous coastal regions. Local government leaders enable the establishment of conservation and management areas, work closely with community members, and significantly help advance policy and financial commitments for the sector. Together, their collective action can influence change on a national and even global scale.
- The Sea’ties initiative,¹⁵ developed by the Ocean & Climate Platform, aims to facilitate the adaptation of coastal cities facing sea level rise by mobilizing elected officials, government leaders and multiple local and regional stakeholder groups. To this end, Sea’ties provides a forum for knowledge exchange and feedback to collectively design sustainable adaptation solutions that are locally relevant and built on integrated and dynamic management as well as community visioning.

4. SEASCAPES: POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

While the challenges facing the ocean are global, they require actions that are locally driven and tailored to unique geographies and cultures. In a context where there is no “one size fits all” approach to ocean protection, seascapes provide a key opportunity to tackle these global challenges at a more local level.

Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will need to find a consensus on a new framework to protect the world’s biodiversity. As such, it is a successor to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the previous international biodiversity governing standards, which expired in 2020 without any of the targets being met. In the new framework, marine and coastal biodiversity have been integrated, under targets on spatial planning, ecosystem restoration and conservation. Seascapes can be scaled as part of these spatial targets, with the aim to deliver on a wide range of biodiversity objectives.

Based on scientific evidence,¹⁶ the target of globally protecting and conserving at least 30% of land and sea areas by 2030 - the so-called 30x30 target - will not be sufficient.¹⁷ Halting and ultimately reversing

¹³ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.674825/full#footnote4>

¹⁴ <https://www.coastal500.org/>

¹⁵ <https://ocean-climate.org/en/seaties-2/>

¹⁶ https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf

¹⁷ https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6/wg2/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf



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biodiversity loss cannot be achieved through conservation and restoration alone. It will require stopping all drivers of biodiversity loss and degradation, while shifting practices to sustainably use marine and coastal resources. As an example, seascapes can contribute to a target addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, or a target considering the sustainable management of fisheries.

In a context where the latest scientific evidence clearly highlights the climate benefits of marine biodiversity conservation for both mitigation¹⁸ and adaptation,¹⁹ the seascape approach can act as a lever to ensure synergies between climate and biodiversity efforts and mobilization. In the results report of their first joint workshop,²⁰ the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) highlighted the potential of multi-functional scapes, including seascapes, to contribute significantly to minimizing, and even reversing, climate impacts on nature - and the people who rely on it.

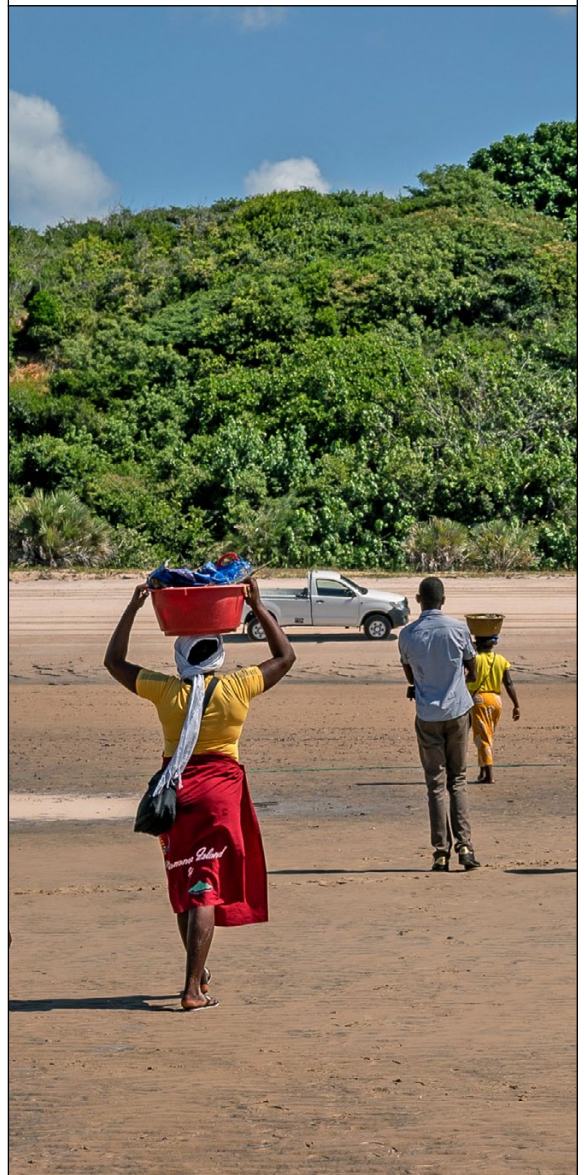
“THE IMPERATIVE FOR RAPID ACTION ON BOTH CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS ARGUES FOR GOVERNANCE MODELS TO MOVE BEYOND STATE-BASED APPROACHES TO EMBRACE MORE COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS.”

- Scientific Outcomes of the IPBES
- IPCC co-sponsored workshop (2021)²¹

Despite great compatibility and strong potential for complementarity, synergies between the CBD and its sister convention, the UNFCCC, remain rather weak and insufficient.²² To date, there is still no common vision or long-term strategy between the climate and biodiversity regimes. However, stopping the decline of biodiversity will not be possible if climate impacts are not rapidly mitigated and, conversely, the 1.5°C target under the Paris Agreement cannot be achieved without healthy ecosystems. A movement has emerged over the last couple of years to build synergies across UN forum, such as the Sharm el-Sheik Partnership for Nature-based Solutions. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will serve as a complementary international policy framework to the climate regime, designed in line with the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), further supporting the intricate linkages between climate change and biodiversity loss. Intended as an overarching framework,

the post-2020 global biodiversity framework must set the precedent and put forward nature-positive and climate-smart action, like seascapes, to bridge this climate-biodiversity gap.

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¹⁸ https://ocean-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Policy-Brief_MPA.pdf

¹⁹ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2022.09.002>

²⁰ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5101125>

²¹ <https://ipbes.net/events/ipbes-ipcc-co-sponsored-workshop-biodiversity-and-climate-change>

²² https://ocean-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Policy-brief_CBD_UNFCCC-VF.pdf

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