



PRESS RELEASE

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ProtectedSeas, Law of the Wild Partner on African and Latin American Marine Protected Areas

Information on MPAs in Africa now freely available on ProtectedSeas Navigator

PALO ALTO, Calif. (Dec. 8, 2022) — The ProtectedSeas Navigator now includes regulatory information for important protected areas in Africa and Latin America, including Benin, Gabon, and Panama. These special places, now available on the Navigator's interactive map of current marine life protections and their boundaries, represent a major expansion of the database, which is on track to complete global coverage by the end of 2022.

The new partnership with Law of the Wild, an environmental law firm with a mission to secure justice for wildlife, habitats, and ecosystems worldwide, was instrumental in the effort to complete these hard-to-find regulations for marine areas offshore Africa and Latin America, including 20,060 square miles (51,955 square kilometers) of marine protected areas in Gabon and 37,916 square miles (98,228.25 square kilometers) in Panama.

The Navigator database includes over 24,000 MPAs in more than 120 countries and overseas territories, including the High Seas, North America and the Caribbean. For each protected area, Navigator includes a synopsis of key regulations, allowed status of specific fishing and other human activities, and a standardized level of fishing protection score. All information is available in English and in each country's official language. The ProtectedSeas team anticipates completing global coverage by the end of this year.

This partnership between Law of the Wild and ProtectedSeas strengthens and builds awareness of the foundational underpinning of marine protection by highlighting the legal codified regulations of these special places. Partnering with legal experts at Law of the Wild who know the importance of evaluating the law to truly understand ocean protections is rare and provides a huge opportunity to speed up our progress towards completing global coverage.

ProtectedSeas Director Virgil Zetterlind stated:

“We are thrilled to partner with the team at Law of the Wild—they were instrumental in sourcing difficult-to-find regulations, which as a result of this effort are now available online to any researcher, policy analyst, or decision maker who is interested in marine spatial planning as it relates to governments protecting 30% of their waters by 2030. We are sharing the last seven years of intense data collection work with colleagues in marine conservation to aid in the dissemination and analysis of global marine protected areas.”

Law of the Wild’s Founder Catherine Pruett stated:

“Overexploited and underprotected, the oceans are in grave peril. As it stands, there is only a patchwork of conventions that provide any measure of security for marine ecosystems and countries face many challenges when trying to strengthen relevant national laws and sufficiently enforce existing protected areas. By teaming up with unique organizations like ProtectedSeas, Law of the Wild is able to broaden its capacity to help address these concerns. No one else has adequate resources to build a comprehensive data set like ProtectedSeas. This combination of expertise is much needed in today’s world, and our team is delighted to work together with ProtectedSeas to further demystify the protection levels for marine areas of the various countries in which we work in Africa and Latin America.”

After approximately seven years in development, ProtectedSeas is proud to offer this tool as a free, open-source platform to aid marine spatial planning and assessments. A wide audience, including MPA managers, resource protection staff, policy makers, scientists, the conservation community, and the public can access ocean conservation regulations and protection metrics at <https://mpa.protectedseas.net>. Many factors impact the effectiveness of MPAs to protect marine life, including size, location, habitat representation, ecological connectivity, and, importantly, the degree to which extractive marine activities are restricted or prohibited. *To see the existing legal protections for over 80% of the world’s MPAs visit <https://mpa.protectedseas.net>.*

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About ProtectedSeas: Protected Seas is the curator of a growing and open dataset of boundaries and regulations for marine protected areas (MPAs) and marine managed areas (MMAs) globally. ProtectedSeas is in a formal partnership under a Memorandum of Agreement with the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Protected Area Center as a partner in the development of this program. Through this NOAA public-private partnership, Navigator helps inform the U.S. MPA inventory, which in turn informs the U.S. Protected Areas Database (PADUS) and the upcoming 30x30 America the Beautiful Stewardship Atlas. International Navigator data is also cross referenced to areas in the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s World Database on Protected Areas (IUCN WDPA) for those conducting global assessments.

Learn more at: <https://protectedseas.net/mpa-mapping>

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About Law of the Wild: Law of the Wild is a nonprofit public interest international environmental law firm with a mission to conserve wildlife, habitats, and ecosystems, by ensuring that international and national legal frameworks and policies are robust, well-implemented, and enforced. Under this mandate, Law of the Wild works to combat wildlife trade, strengthen international and domestic environmental laws, establish and strengthen protected areas for at-risk species, provide capacity training for enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges, and wield the power of U.S. law to drive positive policy change in other countries. Learn more at <https://www.lawofthewild.org>

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