

Seychelles



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Overview

The Republic of Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands within a rich tropical marine ecosystem in the Western Indian Ocean. The Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone and Territorial Sea are 1.37 million square km, with a land area of only 455 square km. The island ecosystems have high rates of species endemism and their global importance for marine biodiversity is highlighted by UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Aldabra Atoll UNESCO World Heritage Site. The marine waters support thousands of species of fish as well as regionally significant populations of seabirds and marine mammals. The cold water upwelling to the Mahe Plateau supports a rich ecosystem of sharks, pelagic fish, cetaceans and invertebrates.

Tourism and tuna fisheries are both vitally important to the economy, and Seychelles is a valuable partner in regional and global trade through shipping and international port facilities in Victoria on Mahe Island. The dropoff habitats leading from the Mahe Plateau are excellent for the local sport

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fishing and marine charter operators, and are also important for the semi-industrial longline and artisanal fisheries. Seychelles and foreign owned tuna fishing vessels harvest four species of tuna in Seychelles' waters using purse seine and longline vessels. The unique geology of Seychelles is of interest to the petroleum sector, and seismic surveys have been undertaken to explore oil & gas potential.

Like other small island developing states (SIDS), Seychelles is concerned about the effects that increased storm frequency and rising sea levels may have on coastal areas. In addition, coral bleaching from warm ocean temperatures dating back to the late 1980s threatens the beautiful coral reefs that provide valuable ecosystem services for people and their livelihoods, including artisanal fisheries and tourism. The Blue Economy Roadmap is important for Seychelles to support its sustainable development goals, diversify its economy, and address climate change adaptation and ocean management.

In 2010, Seychelles committed to a 30% marine protection goal for its waters and in 2014 began the process of developing a comprehensive marine spatial plan to ensure representative species and habitats have long-term protection, to improve resiliency of coastal ecosystems with a changing climate, and ensure economic opportunities for fisheries, tourism and other uses. The Seychelles MSP will be the second largest in the world by area, and the first comprehensive MSP in the Western Indian Ocean.

TNC completed the world's first marine debt conversion aimed at ocean conservation and climate change adaptation with the Government of Seychelles and its [Paris Club](#) creditors in 2016. TNC manages the MSP process that is a condition of this debt restructuring, facilitates meetings with stakeholders and government officials, and manages communication materials including websites, information packets, and stakeholder comment logs. TNC also supports geospatial data management, analysis and cartographic outputs for the MSP process.

TNC's Role

- Financing
- Marxan
- Process design and facilitation
- Science and technical expertise
- Stakeholder engagement

Project Partners

Lead Authority: Government of Seychelles

Facilitation: The Nature Conservancy

Other Partners: Government of Seychelles – UNDP GEF Programme Coordinating Unit

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Status

The Seychelles MSP Initiative has completed Phase 1, which began in February 2014 and ended in February 2018. The Phase 1 Seychelles Marine Spatial plan includes two new areas for marine protection: Zone 1 – Aldabra Group and Zone 2 – Amirantes to Fortune Bank. Zone 1 is for high biodiversity protection and Zone 2 is for medium biodiversity protection and sustainable uses. Together, these new marine protections cover more than 210,000 sq km, or 81,000 sq miles and achieve a little more than half of the 30% marine protection goal.

Phase 2 began in March 2018 and continues until 2020. Phase 2 will identify marine zones for biodiversity protection and sustainable uses to complete the 30% protection goal, and also deliver on objectives for climate change adaptation and supporting the Blue Economy Roadmap. A marine spatial plan will be completed for the management of the full 1.37 million square km of ocean in Seychelles' territory by 2020.

Fact Sheets and Project Links

[Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan Initiative website](#)

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