



NATURE'S *Chambers*

2024 / ISSUE 1

PUBLISHED BY THE ICCF GROUP

FEATURES

**WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY • CAPITOL HILL OCEAN WEEK
BLUE TECH AND AI • SAVING AFRICAN WOODLANDS**

The Nonpartisan Magazine for Public Policy in International Conservation.



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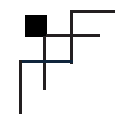
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LEFT: Eagle flying flush with water. Photo credit: by [juanjo](#) @ Adobe Stock.

ON THE COVER: A sunrise shot over the water of the Caribbean Sea. // Photo credit: by [drew](#) @ Adobe Stock.



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The ICCF Group, together with the Government of Mozambique, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and Rainforest Trust, hosted an international conference on the Miombo Forest, which covers more than 1 million square miles across southern Africa.

ABOVE: H.E. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, addresses audience at the ICCF International Conference on the Miombo Forest Initiative.



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Nature's Chambers is published semiannually in July and December by the ICCF Group, a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Periodicals postage paid in Washington, D.C. Send address changes to: The ICCF Group, 25786 Georgetown Station, Washington, D.C., 20007.

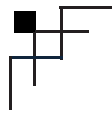


IN FOCUS

Kenyan President Ruto addresses Congressional luncheon on conservation and Africa's future

On Wednesday, May 22nd, ICCF, in partnership with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF), hosted His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya.

PHOTO CAPTION: RUTH ANNAN / ANNAN



FROM THE CEO

Introducing a nonpartisan magazine **100%** dedicated to public policy in international conservation.



Dear friends,

ICCF believes that the key limiting factor in conservation is sustainable political will that can endure despite turnover in administrations and shifts in political power. Too often the conservation community fails to recognize the fundamental need for nonpartisanship - "reaching across the aisle" - in conservation policy formulation and to recognize the essential role of legislators in achieving lasting conservation solutions.

Multipartisan legislative caucuses have proven to be the most reliable mechanism to provide long-term solutions for international conservation policy. ICCF works through a caucus model to build nonpartisan political buy-in by leveraging the expertise of our many partners in civil society, who, together, advance policymakers' knowledge and understanding of best practices and global standards within the realm of conservation policy.

I take great pride in the educational programs that ICCF carries out on Capitol Hill and

that the ICCF Group executed in support of over 20 legislatures around the world. We continue to provide an unbiased, scientific platform that effectively engages policymakers on the issues they care about, while highlighting sound approaches to problem-solving on pressing environmental issues.

The end result? A long list of legislation passed in the United States and internationally that, simply put, has withstood the test of time. I encourage you to visit our website (internationalconservation.org) to learn about the sweeping reforms that caucus leaders have undertaken with our support.

Recent caucus successes in the U.S. include the Growing Climate Solutions Act, which assists farmers, ranchers, and private landowners to access voluntary environmental credit markets through a program to register entities providing technical assistance or process verification; the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act, which implements "debt-for-nature" swaps, whereby countries are able to redirect debt

repayments to instead support the conservation of tropical forests and coral reefs; and the Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals Act, which promotes sustainable economic growth through trans-boundary conservation programs in the Okavango River Basin, home to Africa's largest remaining elephant population.

In the following pages, you will learn more about the work we're doing worldwide and hopefully be inspired to find ways to support our unique model. There remains much work to be done, but I am confident that, as we continue to raise awareness and reach consensus, we will together overcome what many have rightly called the great challenge of our generation.

Best regards,

John B. Gantt
Chief Executive Officer
International Conservation
Caucus Foundation



WHERE WE WORK



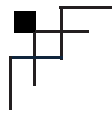
Nonpartisan legislative groups supported by the ICCF Group.

The ICCF Group has offices in the United States (ICCF U.S.), Africa (ICCF Kenya), Europe (ICCF-UK), Asia (ICCF Indonesia), and Latin America (ICCF Colombia). Each ICCF office is established as a separate legal entity, registered in the host country, with its own Board of Directors. These entities have charitable status in their respective countries, and their role is to further the mission of the ICCF Group. These separate legal entities are bound by a collaboration agreement that ensures a common purpose for all.



IN PICTURE, TOP TO BOTTOM FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (U.S.); Dep. Marcela Guerra (Mexico); Sen. Germán Blanco (Colombia); Dep. Rodrigo Agostinho (Brazil); Rep. Arturo Alegría (Peru); Barry Gardiner MP (U.K.); Saramchimeg Batsukh (Mongolia); Rep. Francis Chachu Ganya (Kenya); Rep. Sudin (Indonesia); MP Narend Singh (South Africa).



UNITED STATES

Legislative Tracker

ICCF works with the Senate and House International Conservation Caucus (ICC), Oceans Caucus (OC), and Senate Climate Solutions Caucus (SCSC). Here is what the caucuses have been tracking this first half of the year.

Appropriations

Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024 became law in March, after Congress cleared two consolidated appropriations bills.

The [first](#) included appropriations for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies and Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.

These include:

- North American Wetlands Conservation Fund
 - Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation
 - Multinational Species Conservation Fund
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service International Affairs
 - U.S. Forest Service
- International Programs and Trade Compliance
 - National Park Service International Park Affairs
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:
 1. National Ocean Service
 2. National Marine Fisheries Service

3. Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

The [second](#), passed toward the end of March, included appropriations for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.



ABOVE: U.S. Capitol Dome. // Photo credit: by [cjohnbrown](#) @ Adobe Stock.

These include:

- Combating Wildlife Trafficking
- Biodiversity
- Sustainable Landscapes
- Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation
- International Fisheries Commissions
- Multilateral International Conservation Programs
- The Global Environment Facility

The bill also provides for \$100 million to the Economic Support Fund, which would be directed to public-private partnership foundations for conservation and food security, should either be authorized before the end of the year.

International Conservation Caucus (ICC)

The ICC was founded in 2003 with a commitment to helping the U.S. lead public and private international partnerships that provide stewardship of natural resources for habitat and biodiversity protection, poverty reduction, economic development, and regional security.

The Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation

Enhancements Act was signed into law by President Biden on April 24th. The bill was sponsored by **Reps. Mariah Salazar (R-FL), Rick Larsen (D-WA)**, ICC Co-Chair **Dave Joyce (R-OH), Mary Peltola (D-AK)**, and Sens. Chairman **Ben Cardin (D-MD)** and ICC Co-Chair **John Boozman (R-AR)**. The legislation would reauthorize the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, providing grant funding for habitat conservation, research and monitoring, and community outreach. [Read more.](#)

House of Representatives

Co-Chairs

- Rep. Henry Cuellar
- Rep. David Joyce
- Rep. Betty McCollum
- Rep. Jake LaTurner

The [U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act](#) cleared the [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) on March 20th by a 42-7 vote. The bill, introduced in the House in December by Foreign Affairs **Chairman Mike McCaul (R-TX)** alongside House International Conservation Caucus Co-Chairs, would create the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation to fund public-private partnerships to support local communities in managing protected and conserved areas. [Read more.](#)

The [WILD Act](#), introduced by ICC Co-Chair **Rep. Dave Joyce (R-OH)** and ICC member **Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI)**, passed the House



In Washington, D.C., ICCF advances U.S. leadership in international conservation through public and private partnerships and developing the next generation of conservation leaders in the U.S. Congress.

Informing policy

ICCF educates and acts as secretariat to the leadership of the bipartisan U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus, Oceans Caucus, and Climate Solutions Caucus (Senate).

Building political will

We bring together leaders at the highest levels of government, business, and the NGO community, setting the conservation and environmental agenda by coordinating people with scientific expertise, organizations that support and manage programs on the ground, and policymakers who shape legislation.

Championing public-private collaboration

Through ICCF, public- and private-sector organizations collaborate and seek consensus on conservation issues and share their expertise with policymakers, providing sound, market-oriented conservation solutions with the highest standards in accountability, effectiveness, and transparency.

in February. The bill would reauthorize critical U.S. Fish and Wildlife conservation programs – specifically, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which enables wildlife and habitat conservation in all 50 states and territories, and the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, which help conserve some of the world’s most iconic species,



ABOVE: The American bison, also called the American buffalo or simply buffalo (not to be confused with true buffalo), is a species of bison native to North America.

including rhinos, elephants, tigers, great apes, and turtles. [Read more.](#)

The House passed the [Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025](#) on June 28th. The bill funds conservation programs for biodiversity and combating wildlife trafficking, as well as international fisheries commissions and the Global Environment Facility. The Appropriations Committee, in its [report](#), notes continued support for the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) and transnational approaches based on this model, including implementation of the DELTA Act. The report further expresses support for funds for

a new public-private partnership foundation for conservation, if authorized.

ICC Co-Chair Rep. **Betty McCollum (D-MN)** and Rep. **Jared Huffman (D-CA)** introduced the [Protecting Communities from Plastics Act of 2024](#), which would require the EPA Administrator

to carry out certain activities to protect communities from the harmful effects of plastics.

Rep. **Betty McCollum (D-MN)** and Sen. **Dick Durbin (D-IL)** introduced the [Forever Chemical Regulation and Accountability Act](#) to address the excessive use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) across the nation’s supply chain, which has led to the harmful compounds contaminating water sources, as well as surrounding environments and communities. [Read more.](#)

The House Natural Resources Committee held hearings on various other measures related to habitat conservation and the regulation of threatened and endangered wildlife and plant

species:

- February 14: [Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3119, H.R. 6784, H.R. 6854 and H.R. 7157](#)
- March 6: [Legislative Hearing on H.R. 7408](#)

Senate

Co-Chairs

- Sen. John Boozman
- Sen. Chris Coons
- Sen. Martin Heinrich
- Sen. Thom Tillis

ICC Co-Chair **Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM)**, along with **Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA)**, introduced legislation reauthorizing the [North American Wetlands Conservation Act \(NAWCA\)](#). NAWCA provides federal matching grants—in partnership with funding from state and local governments, private industry, and non-profit organizations—to projects that conserve North America’s wetlands, waterfowl, and wildlife. [Read more.](#)

Senate Foreign Relations **Chairman Ben Cardin (D-MD)** and ICC Co-Chair **Sen. John Boozman (R-AR)** have introduced a bill to amend the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act program that provides competitive grants for habitat conservation, research and monitoring, and community outreach and education. [The Migratory Birds of the Americas](#)

RIGHT: U.S. Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) shares with H.E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, the rich history of the Library of Congress, prior to the ICCF luncheon on Conservation and Africa’s Future.

[Conservation Enhancements Act of 2024](#) reauthorizes this program for the next 5 years.

ICC member **Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**, alongside ICC Co-Chairs **Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE)** and **Sen. John Boozman (R-AR)**, introduced the [Foundation for International Food Security Act](#) in November, aiming to tackle the global food security crisis by establishing a nonprofit, independent foundation to fund a focused group of countries by leveraging the private sector to bring additional capital and resources to projects that address food security systems. [Read more.](#)

The [U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act](#) passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 16th. The bill, introduced by ICC Co-Chair Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), would create the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation to fund public-private partnerships to support local communities in managing protected and

conserved areas.

The [America’s Conservation Enhancement \(ACE\) Reauthorization Act](#), introduced by Chairman Tom Carper (D-DE), which he co-authored alongside Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), passed out of the Senate. The ACE Act reauthorizes habitat and wildlife conservation efforts throughout the U.S. and aims to build on previous efforts to protect and preserve ecosystems from evolving threats such as invasive species and wildlife diseases. ICC Co-Chair Sen. John Boozman (R-AR) and OC Co-Chair Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) are among the original co-sponsors. The ACE Act also included ICC Co-Chair Sen. Martin Heinrich’s (D-NM) bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) through 2028. [Read more.](#)

Sens. Chris Coons (D-DE), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Tim Scott (R-SC) introduced a [resolution](#) recognizing the strategic

relationship between the United States and Kenya and celebrating the 60-year anniversary of U.S.-Kenya relations. The resolution recognizes Kenya as being “at the forefront of improving environmental resilience and is a top tourism destination known for its biodiversity and conservation efforts.” Senator Coons also published an Op-Ed in *The Hill*, attesting to the importance of U.S.-Kenya relations, including Kenya’s role as partner in conservation efforts. [Read here.](#)

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on March 6th to examine the state of global food security and the U.S. response. [Watch here.](#)

The Senate Budget Committee, chaired by Oceans Caucus Co-Chair Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), held a hearing in May to examine how climate change is causing environmental damage that affects global stability, national safety, and long-term fiscal health. [Watch here.](#)



PHOTO OP

The Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) committee also held a hearing in May to examine state and local perspectives on efforts to improve reuse, recycling, and the circular economy. [Watch here.](#)

Oceans Caucus (OC)

The OC was founded in 2011 to increase awareness and find common ground in responding to issues facing the oceans and coasts.

House of Representatives

Co-Chairs

- Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón
- Rep. Suzanne Bonamici

Oceans Caucus Co-Chair **Rep. Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (R-PR)** and caucus member **Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA)** introduced the [Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023](#), which cleared the [House Natural Resources Committee](#). The bill would authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program, which is a voluntary, partnership-based, habitat conservation program focused in 24 priority coastal areas along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, and Caribbean, including the Chesapeake Bay. An identical bill was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Ben Cardin and Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón and OC member Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) introduced the [National](#)

[Oceans and Coastal Security Improvements Act](#). The bill aims to support coastal communities' ability to prepare for and respond to coastal threats by supporting infrastructure improvement, coastal research, and restoration work. [Read more.](#)

Oceans Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Rep. Dave Joyce (R-OH) introduced the [Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2023](#), which advanced out of the [House Natural Resources Committee](#) and House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. This legislation would reauthorize the HABHRCA program through 2028 to improve monitoring, forecasting, prevention, and mitigation of harmful algal blooms (HABs) and hypoxia by requiring better coordination among task force agencies, and state and local entities, including Indian tribes. The Senate version is led by Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). [Read more.](#)

Oceans Caucus member Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA) introduced [H.R. 7797](#), which directs the Secretary of Energy to establish a pilot program on ocean fertilization and restoration research and development and which seeks to implement strategies outlined in the National Academies of Sciences 2022 report: [A Research Strategy for Ocean-based Carbon Dioxide Removal and Sequestration](#).

The House Natural Resources Committee additionally held hearings on various measures related to Great Lake and ocean conservation:

March 21: [Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1395, H.R. 5487, H.R. 6814 and H.R. 7020](#)

Senate

Co-Chairs

- Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse
- Sen. Lisa Murkowski

The Senate passed two recycling bills that aim to improve recycling and composting systems: the [Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act of 2023](#), which would create a pilot program to increase access to recycling services in underserved areas, and the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act, which would improve the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to gather data on our nation's recycling systems and explore opportunities for implementing a national composting strategy. [Read more.](#)

The Senate Budget Committee, chaired by Oceans Caucus Co-Chair Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), held a hearing in January to examine the economic costs of climate change, and, in particular, how it impacts ocean industries. [Watch here.](#)

In February, the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Chemical Safety, Waste Management, Environmental Justice, and Regulatory Oversight held a hearing on understanding the presence of microplastics in water. [Watch here.](#)

IN A NUTSHELL

THE ICCF GROUP WORKS TO ADVANCE THE CAUCUS MODEL, TRANSFORMING CONSERVATION GOVERNANCE AROUND THE WORLD.

Caucuses are informal groups of members of a particular legislative body organized around a shared policy interest or concern - in this case, conservation.

Caucuses provide a space for dialogue between legislators holding differing policy positions through which they can explore innovative, nonpartisan solutions and achieve consensus, serve as a forum to provide access to the best conservation governance solutions, and provide opportunities for policymakers to experience conservation realities first-hand.

WELCOME

New Caucus Members

Every season, the ICCF Group welcomes new members to the parliamentary groups it supports around the world. This first half of 2024, we are pleased to welcome the following members.

Brazil

Deputy Sidney Leite

Mr. Sidney Leite was elected Federal Deputy of the State of Amazonas in 2018 and was re-elected in 2022.



United States

Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY)

Congresswoman Elise Stefanik is the House Republican



Conference Chair, representing New York's 21st district in her fifth term. She's a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House Armed Services Committee, and House Education and the Workforce Committee.

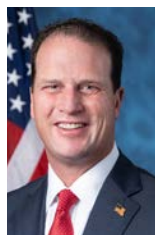
Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA)

Congressman Guy Reschenthaler is the House Majority Chief Deputy Whip, representing Pennsylvania's 14th district in his third term. He is a member of the House Rules Committee and the House Appropriations Committee, where he sits on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee and the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee.



Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX)

Congressman August Pfluger represents Texas' 11th congressional district,



BANNER: U.S. Flag. // Photo credit: by [Michalel Filippo](#) @ Adobe Stock.

now serving his second term. He's a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and House Homeland Security Committee.

Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY)

Congressman Tom Suozzi represented New York's third congressional district from 2017-2023 and was reelected to Congress in 2024 in a special election. He is a member of the House Homeland Security Committee and House Budget Committee.



Rep. Celeste Maloy (R-UT)

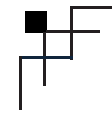
Congresswoman Celeste Maloy represents Utah's 2nd district, taking office in November 2023 after winning a special election to replace her former boss and International

Conservation Caucus Co-Chair, Congressman Chris Stewart. Maloy serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and House Small Business Committee.



PHOTO OP

ABOVE: U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse addresses an OCF briefing on "The Emerging Role of AI and Blue Technology in Ocean and Great Lake Management" as part of Capitol Hill Oceans Week.



UNITED KINGDOM

A new dawn for global action to protect the environment



By the Honorable Barry Gardiner, MP.

restoring biodiversity loss, ending deforestation and tackling climate change.

Keir Starmer's entrance into Number 10 Downing Street as head of the first UK Labour government in 14 years marks a new dawn for global action to deliver for our precious natural environment.

Political failure by previous UK administrations has left Britain to become one of the world's most nature depleted countries. Nearly 50% of our bird species and 25% of our mammal species are at risk of extinction. Our national parks are experiencing decline. Not to mention that many of our rivers, lakes and seas are polluted with sewage.

This is good news for all those who care about halting and

But voters in Britain have chosen change. The Labour Party which now holds a 172 seat majority in the House of Commons has been

.....
Barry Gardiner is a British politician who has served as Member of Parliament (MP) for Brent North from 1997 until the seat's abolition in 2024 and Brent West since 2024. He is a member of the Labour Party. Gardiner served in Tony Blair's New Labour government from April 2004 to June 2007 as a junior minister in the Northern Ireland Office, Department of Trade and Industry and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs respectively. After holding junior positions on the Official Opposition frontbench under Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn, Gardiner served in Corbyn's Shadow cabinet as Shadow Energy and Climate Change Secretary from June to July 2016. He subsequently served as Shadow International Trade Secretary and Shadow Minister for International Climate Change until returning to the backbenches in April 2020.

BANNER: Big Ben and House of Parliament. Photo credit: by [Béatrice Prêve](#) @ Adobe Stock.



elected on a promise to improve responsible access to nature, expand nature rich-habitats such as wetlands and peat bogs, take steps to clean up our water, meet UK Environment Act targets and improve animal welfare by banning trail hunting and the import of hunting trophies.

In his first statement as Environment Secretary, Steve Reed has already announced that one of his five core priorities will be to ensure nature's recovery. Along with David Lammy, the new Foreign Secretary, and Ed Miliband, the UK's Energy Secretary, this incoming Labour government will place an emphasis on greater cooperation for ambitious climate and environmental action at the heart of its foreign policy reset.

In an increasingly hostile, confrontational and multipolar world this is important.

Underpinning this intent to foster improved collaboration between the UK and others on climate and nature is a suite of further policy commitments. The new government has pledged to reappoint a UK climate envoy, ratify the Global Oceans Treaty, create a clean power alliance to accelerate the global energy transition alongside becoming the first G7 producing nation to end

new oil and gas licenses and to maintain the UK's commitment to its own £11.6bn climate finance target.

In particular the promise to move away from new oil and gas is hugely beneficial for ocean life, underwater habitats and rebuilding UK

"Nearly 50% of our bird species and 25% of our mammal species are at risk of extinction."

credibility as a trusted partner on the world stage. Many sites for North Sea fossil fuel drilling overlap with Marine Protected Areas, threatening important ecosystems, and therefore contradicting the UK's commitment to The Global Biodiversity Plan (previously known as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework) to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030. Moving away from new oil and gas demonstrates the new government's commitment not just to the promises made at COP15 in Montreal but also

those made at COP28 in Dubai for countries to "transition away from fossil fuels". This will be a world leading move that should be celebrated.

With the upcoming United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, COP16, fast approaching the UK Labour government is well placed to work with Colombia towards achieving success at the summit. This critical meeting will take place just five years before the world must meet its agreed north star of halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity. Ahead of the meeting countries must indicate through the releasing of National Targets and National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans (NBSAPs) how they're going to support the achievement of the Biodiversity Plan.

This new UK Labour government will be working relentlessly to ensure a timely release of its own NBSAP and work to leverage ambition from other governments at this important moment for nature.

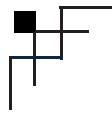
The actions that governments take in the remainder of this decade will have enormous consequences. Their decisions will help to decide if species survive or become extinct, if habitats are protected or become irreversibly damaged and whether the world we inhabit today will be protected for generations to come.

Members of Congress should be confident that this new UK government will be held to account by the most environmentally aware and ambitious cohort of cross-party parliamentarians I have ever seen in my 27 years in the House of Commons.

Together we will ensure the new government takes the necessary action to stand up for nature.



ABOVE: ICCF-UK brings key leaders together on the road to COP16. From left to right: Sandra Valenzuela, Director of WWF-Colombia, Lord Benyon, Minister of State for Climate, Environment and Energy, The Rt. Hon Chris Grayling MP, and Anna McMorrin MP.



UNITED STATES

World Migratory Bird Day Congressional Reception

By Jesse Walls, Senior Director of Government Affairs, National Audubon Society.

Twice a year, a global observance takes place to mark the spring and fall migration of birds around the world, and emphasize their importance to our communities and to the environment at large.

World Migratory Bird Day celebrates the incredible journeys undertaken by migratory birds each year, and raises awareness about the need to conserve their habitats and protect them from threats such as habitat loss, climate change, and pollution.

Events held worldwide include birdwatching activities, educational programs, and



conservation initiatives aimed at preserving these vital species and their ecosystems. The day serves as a reminder of the importance of global cooperation in safeguarding our birds and the environments they live in. This May, ICCF and the National Audubon Society hosted an event on Capitol Hill honoring Congressional champions for bird conservation, and calling for continued investment in the habitats and landscapes that both people and birds need to survive.

The attention could not come at a more urgent time. North America's bird population has declined by 3 billion birds since 1970 -- a loss of more than one in four birds. Successful recovery will require efforts across the full ranges of migratory birds. All throughout the hemisphere, communities are connected by migratory species like the [Osprey](#), Baltimore Oriole, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Violet-green Swallow, and Western



Tanager. The sweeping scope of some of these migratory routes is detailed in Audubon's [Bird Migration Explorer](#), showing how interconnected all of these habitats are.

Birds' migratory routes transcend borders. So must our conservation efforts. This spring, Congress passed the [Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act](#) - a law that will help support funding for bird conservation throughout the Americas, the Caribbean and along the entire migratory paths for hundreds of our beloved bird species. But we must do more. In addition to ensuring [that critical programs receive the funding they are promised](#), we have many opportunities to make a difference.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, for example, was passed in 1918 and is one of the nation's oldest conservation laws. [It must be](#)

[strengthened](#) to reflect the challenges that birds face today from climate change and habitat loss. At particular issue is boosting incentives for industries to avoid harming or killing birds - known as "incidental take" - by employing measures to avoid, minimize, or meaningfully compensate for any harm done to birds.

The much-anticipated Farm Bill also presents an opportunity to provide vital resources for migratory birds. Currently, critical provisions from the 2021 Climate Bill that would support farmers, ranchers, and other

.....

Jesse Walls is the Senior Director, Government Affairs at the National Audubon Society. Walls is a native Ohioan who came to Audubon with 13 years of experience on Capitol Hill, most recently as Director of Member Services for Congressman Steve Stivers (R-OH) during his time as the Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee. Before that, Walls was Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative Director for Congressman Stivers and previously worked for the late Senator George V. Voinovich (R-OH) and the Ohio State Senate. Walls received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from The Ohio State University in 2005.

BANNER: Birds flying into sunset. // Photo credit: by [babaroga](#) @ Adobe Stock.

PHOTO: Jerome Ford, Assistant Director, Migratory Bird Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, addresses the audience at a reception hosted by ICCF and the National Audubon Society on Capitol Hill. // Photo credit: Sydney Walsh @ National Audubon Society.



The National Audubon Society

The National Audubon Society, in partnership with ICCF, has worked to help bird conservation and protect habitat across the Western Hemisphere through educating federal elected officials about effective policy like the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The organization protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. Audubon works throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. State programs, nature centers, chapters, and partners give Audubon an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire, and unite diverse communities in conservation action. A nonprofit conservation organization since 1905, Audubon believes in a world in which people and wildlife thrive.

Whether you're an avid birder or can't tell a grouse from a grackle, understanding how changing habitats affect migratory birds means that we can understand how a changing ecosystem affects us all. Migratory birds don't just delight us with their passing presence, they're critical to our shared survival.

Learn more at [audubon.org](https://www.audubon.org) and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @ [audubonsociety](https://www.audubonsociety.org).

producers in making their working lands climate- and conservation-friendly [are at risk of being omitted from this sweeping legislation](#). Audubon and our partners

"Birds' migratory routes transcend borders. So must our conservation efforts."

will continue to work with leaders on both sides of the aisle to preserve this funding.

While federal policy is absolutely necessary to conserving the migratory birds that we love, there are plenty of things anyone can do in their own homes and communities. Many migratory

birds depend on specific insects and plants to nourish them on their journeys.

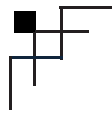
If you are able to maintain a garden, planting native plants will ensure that your migratory visitors get the right nutrients, and won't have to search elsewhere or go without.

[You can also ask your town or city](#) to plant native plants, or support your local park. No matter where you live, you can help make your community more bird-friendly.

As if you needed another incentive to help conserve migratory birds, birding also happens to be big business! [A survey by the Fish and Wildlife Service](#) found that 96 million Americans engage in birdwatching each year, and consumers spend nearly \$100 million on traveling, equipment, and other resources to view birds and wildlife. So birds provide an economic benefit in addition to the key ecosystem services they provide through pest control, seed dispersal, pollination, and more.



ABOVE: A colourful kingfisher bird perched on a branch. / Photo credit: by [Cavan Images](#) @ Adobe Stock.



BRAZIL

Brazilian Senator Nelsinho Trad announces next steps towards institutionalizing PARLAMAZ after mission in Peru

During the 8th Ordinary Session of the Amazon Parliament (PARLAMAZ) in Lima, Peru on the 4th of June 2024, Senator Nelsinho Trad (PSD/MS), President of PARLAMAZ, announced that progress in formalizing the organization's status as a part of the Amazon Treaty Cooperation Organization (ACTO) depends on the launch of the ACTO Working Group of country representatives announced at the Belém Amazon Summit in August of 2023.



Senator Trad noted that the launch of the ACTO working group will happen at the XV Meeting of ACTO Foreign Ministers, which is scheduled to take place in Paramaribo, Suriname this year.

While in Peru, the senator met with the Brazilian ambassador to Peru, Clemente de Lima Baena Soares, and with the vice-president of the Peruvian Congress, Arturo Alegria, to discuss the matter. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil (Itamaraty) asked the senator

to strengthen parliamentary dialogue to support ACTO, which is currently without a general secretary. "As long as ACTO is without permanent leadership, there is no way to implement the Declaration of Belém or bring together the working group to discuss PARLAMAZ's link with the organization", explained Senator Trad.

Minister João Marcelo de Queiroz, from Itamaraty, also followed the debates at the PARLAMAZ assembly in Peru, where he emphasized the importance of institutionalization to promote sustainable development in the Amazon.

"We need to put the needs of the more than 50 million people who live in the Amazon at the center of our attention, but also move forward with concrete projects in the areas of bioeconomy and research in the area of science and technology," stated the minister.

"We are happy to see the strength that parliamentarians are giving so that the institutionalization of PARLAMAZ becomes a reality, a unanimous decision by the governments of the eight Amazonian countries during the Belém summit," stated the executive director of ACTO, Vanessa Grazziotin. She noted the need to form a commission with representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the eight member countries to address the issue. "It is the first step to starting the debate on the format of the institutionalized PARLAMAZ." She also thanked PARLAMAZ for support to ACTO's cooperation networks for the management of water, forestry, and integrated fire resources.

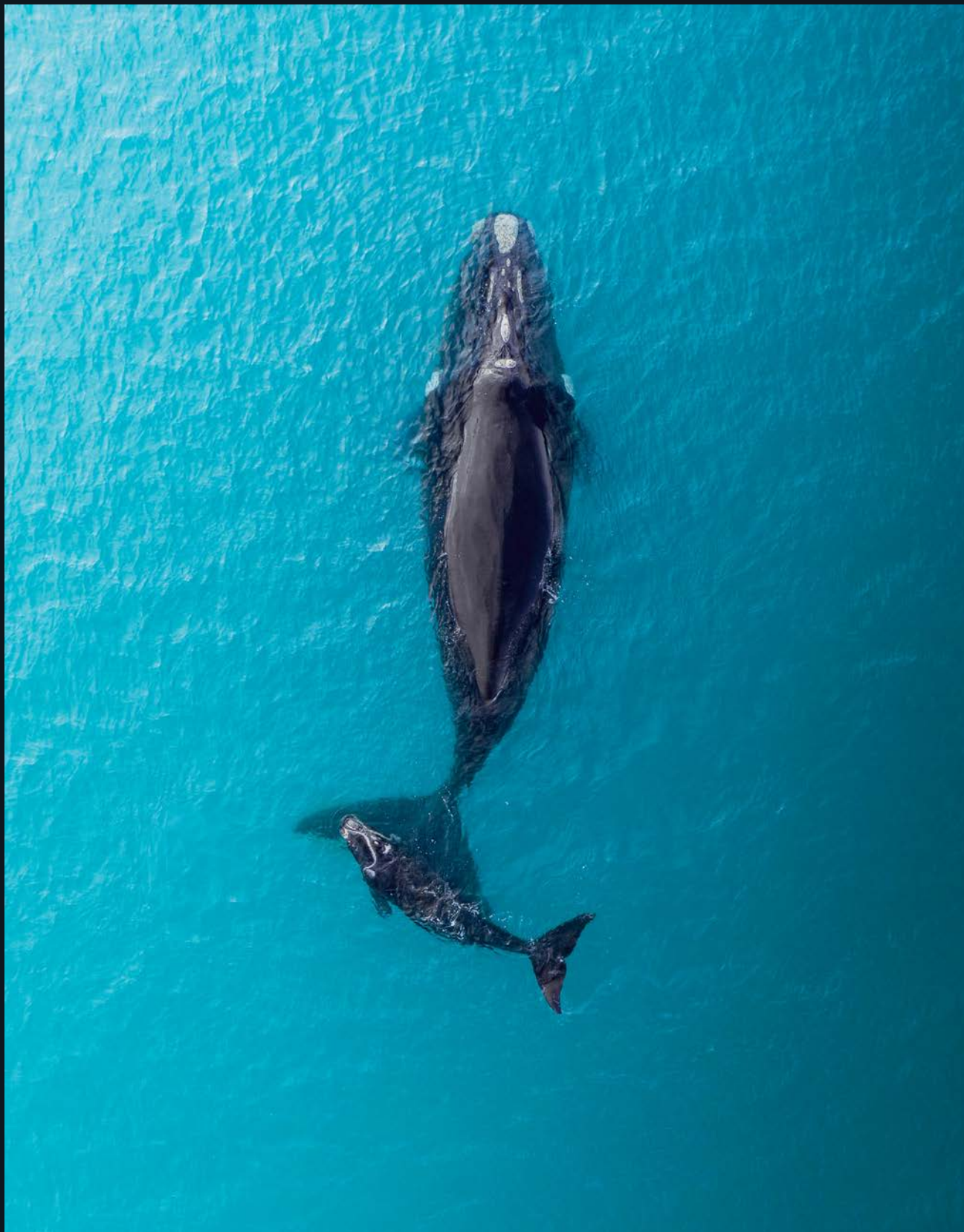
"We need to ensure the conciliation of the development of the quality of life of those who inhabit our region with the preservation of our biosociodiversity, which is fundamental for the world's climate balance," stated the vice-president of PARLAMAZ in Brazil, Socorro Neri, who presented the motion for support.

The session in Tarapoto also allowed discussions about the impact of the Amazon on other biomes. Professor Carlos

Eduardo Young, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, addressed how deforestation in the Amazon affects, for example, the Pantanal, highlighting the interconnection between ecosystems and the need for integrated preservation actions. "An important feature of the Amazon system is water transport," he explained. "It's as if there was a river flying over the Amazon, carrying moisture from the ocean to the interior. If you have deforestation, you will interrupt this chain and there will be a lack of water in the Pantanal, in São Paulo and in Buenos Aires.

The Pantanal is water. The Pantanal is determined by the rhythm of the waters. If there is no rain in the Amazon coming to the Pantanal, the Pantanal will dry out."

"As long as ACTO is without permanent leadership, there is no way to implement the Declaration of Belém or bring together the working group to discuss PARLAMAZ's link with the organization."



ABOVE: Top view shot of a Humpback whale in the ocean. / Photo credit: by [Dylan Dehaas/Wirestock Creators](#) @ Adobe Stock.

UNITED STATES

ICCF supports Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW)

ICCF's Oceans Caucus Foundation (OCF) program partnered with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) to bring Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) to the Hill.

Each year CHOW brings together ocean stakeholders from around the country to elevate ocean issues that are impacting our coasts and marine habitats. This year the theme of CHOW was Leadership - highlighting the importance of leadership not only in governments and large companies, but in local communities, among small organizations and stakeholders, and on the front lines and among first responders of our coastal environments. OCF and NMSF hosted two briefings this year that focused on two emerging topics in the marine management space: "The Emerging Role of AI and Blue Technology in Ocean and Great Lake Management" and "Marine Renewable Energy - What's Happening and What's Next."



Oceans CAUCUS FOUNDATION

The role of technology and AI in the marine management space is expanding rapidly and for good reason.

The ocean is huge, and relying on technology and data for a better understanding of the ocean habitat as well as for the management and enforcement of its resources is essential. Senate Oceans Caucus Co-Chair, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), kicked off the discussion highlighting the alarming rate of warming we are seeing and the toll it's taking on not only our environment but our insurance markets and costly cleanup budgets.

The ocean is on the front lines of climate mitigation and has been absorbing the planet's excess heat since before climate change was even a topic of discussion. However, it is often left out of climate mitigation conversations, which are dominated by land-based carbon sequestration opportunities such as agriculture and forestry. Diane Hoskins, Carbon to Sea Initiative, and Dr. Rick Murray, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, discussed the exciting carbon sequestration opportunities in the ocean, to include a project by Dr. Murray and the team at WHOI that will look at the viability of ocean alkalinity enhancement as a way to pull more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

ABOVE: Capitol Democracy. / Photo credit: by [Gary Blakeley](#) @ Adobe Stock.

Dr. Carlos Del Castillo, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, has been developing satellite technologies that help map the particle composition of the ocean surface, and even underwater, to help us better understand what is happening in the ocean at any particular time. This can help forecast events such as harmful algal blooms and dead zones that impact industries such as tourism and fisheries. He notes that even if we develop technologies that gather information and data, we need to have the resources to be able to decipher what the data is telling us and what we should do with the data.

From a management and enforcement perspective, technology has been essential in helping governments and advocacy groups see what is going on in countries' EEZs and high seas territories.

Distant-water fishing fleets have become a big issue and contributor to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, both within countries' EEZs and in the high seas. Paul Woods with the Global Fishing Watch (GFW) has noted how essential their technology has been in being able to monitor fishing activity in the ocean whether fishing vessels

want to be seen or not. Machine learning is a big part of GFW's technology. As Dr. Del Castillo noted, you can collect all the data you want, but if you don't have the technology or manpower to analyze it, it's just data. Machine learning allows GFW to target vessel activity that is taking part in fishing activity. The technology is able to pick out the vessels

"Distant-water fishing fleets have become a big issue and contributor to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, both within countries' EEZs and in the high seas."

that are engaging in behaviors consistent with fishing such as bottom trawling, long liners, or even transshipment. This allows enforcement to be targeted.

Although each panelist has their own specialty, certain messaging was

consistent across the board.

Investment in research, data collection, and analysis is essential for not only better understanding of the ocean environment and therefore better management strategies, but also for strategic competition as other countries, namely China, are investing heavily in these areas. Additionally, with the rapid development of technology and therefore more data, it's essential that data is shared within and across sectors so we are not duplicating efforts when the information is already there. Even within the U.S. Government, it is very difficult to share data across agencies, which leads to redundancies in research that cost both time and money.

For the second briefing, OCF partnered with the Ocean Conservancy to highlight the growing field of marine renewables. Tidal and wave energy are becoming a clean, renewable energy source for remote coastal communities when other power sources may not be available or reliable. The panel discussion laid out the importance of marine renewables to small, remote coastal communities and the potential for larger scale projects and the policy/regulatory needs to ensure a responsible and just growth of the sector.



House Oceans Caucus Co-Chair Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) opened up the panel and discussed the use of marine renewables in her own district, especially the research Oregon State University is leading. Ocean Conservancy's Ryan Ono set the scene with wave and tidal devices 101 before leading the discussion with panelists.

Wave and tidal energy capture may not be large-scale yet, but it is a very real opportunity for coastal communities.

Dr. Mike Lawson with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) spoke to the real opportunity and development of wave and tidal energy converter devices and the current projects and research that are already underway. He also noted that the potential is acknowledged by the U.S. Government, with many research and development projects being funded by the

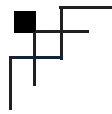
Department of Energy through their Marine Energy Program.

Jade Clemons with AltaSea was able to speak to some of the challenges of actually implementing and building wave energy devices in a community, specifically California. The stakeholder process of putting anything in coastal waters, especially in a community like California where stakeholders are very environmentally conscious, is very tedious. She also discussed the lengthy legislative process but applauded advancements of state legislation like California bill SB605 that directs the California Energy Commission to evaluate the feasibility of wave and tidal energy in California, including the costs and benefits of implementing the technology across the state's coastline.

Remote coastal communities are where marine renewables can really make a difference.

Nick Battista with the Island Institute works with remote coastal communities who don't have access to clean energy sources such as offshore wind and sometimes the energy grid in general. He points out that marine renewables provide an opportunity for not only clean energy, but clean jobs. The obvious stakeholder engagement is needed in order to get buy-in from these communities to build out wave and tidal devices on their coasts, but the ability to offer them training and more job opportunities is another huge opportunity. Stuart Davies with ORPC noted how essential the community engagement aspect has been in the deployment of ORPC's river power systems to remote communities in Alaska and pilot projects in Maine. As the industry representative on the panel, he noted how regulations to ensure best practices and high environmental standards are essential for the expansion of the industry.

ABOVE: House Oceans Caucus Co-Chair Representative Suzanne Bonamici discusses the use of marine renewables in her own district.



UNITED STATES

Supporting Energy Independence and Ocean Conservation with Waves and Tides

By Ryan Ono, Climate Policy Manager, Ocean Conservancy.

When you think of clean energy solutions, chances are solar panels and wind turbines spring to mind. And with good reason: these are indeed some of the most developed renewable energy solutions, with great potential to support the world's energy needs.

Yet there are other renewable energy sources on the rise that leverage the power of the ocean—namely wave and tidal energy—that can play an important, complementary role in meeting



our energy needs and supporting the planet. Now is the time to jumpstart their development in the U.S. in order to leverage their benefits for conservation, energy independence, and security.

The repetitive, forceful nature of waves and tides makes them valuable renewable energy sources. Wave and tidal energy converters capture this kinetic energy of the ocean and are able to convert it into electricity or power devices such as vessel charging stations or scientific buoys. Because waves and tides are so predictable, even more so than wind or sunshine, wave and tidal energy can be forecasted far in advance, helping to balance energy demand and reduce battery storage needs.

While single devices developed today have an electricity generation capacity of up to 2 megawatts, in aggregate, we know that these clean energy sources hold tremendous possibilities: the total technical

potential for wave and tidal energy in the U.S. is estimated to be 1,620 terawatt hours (TWh)/year, enough energy to support nearly 40% of the country's total electricity use.

And we know we must transition to clean energy. Since the Industrial Revolution, the ocean has absorbed more than 90% of the heat produced from burning oil and gas, causing ocean waters to warm and become more acidic; driving sea level rise; and causing habitat degradation, coral bleaching, and species migration. The best path forward for a healthy ocean—one which supports fisheries, communities, and conservation goals alike—is to phase out fossil fuels and shift to a mix of clean renewable energy sources, including wave and tidal energy.

In addition to helping protect the future of our ocean ecosystems, wave and tidal energy are

uniquely positioned to support remote places and activities.

Consider remote-island and small coastal communities. Due to the distance of these communities from larger population centers and infrastructure, most have no other option but to import fossil fuels for electricity, which can lead to energy prices up to 10 times the U.S. average. These communities are also particularly vulnerable to global market shocks and supply disruptions which can further exacerbate energy costs. Many of these rural coastline and island communities seek to improve their energy independence, reduce costs, and

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Ryan Ono has been a Climate Policy Manager at Ocean Conservancy since 2020 and now works on U.S marine renewable energy, offshore wind and ocean carbon dioxide removal policy. He collaborates with energy technology companies, non-profits, researchers, federal staff, coastal community groups, and blue economy accelerators to support the responsible, just and rapid development of these technologies. Previously, he worked with ocean user groups on ocean acidification and sustainable fisheries policy and legislation. Ryan holds a Master of Marine Policy from the University of Delaware as well as a degree in Environmental Economics and Policy from the University of California at Berkeley.

BANNER: Photo credit: by [Felipe Oliveira](#) @ Adobe Stock.

lower carbon emissions, while keeping their way of life intact.

Dominant clean energy sources, such as solar and wind, are not necessarily viable or cost effective for remote and small communities given land availability, sun or wind resources, and electricity infrastructure. Wave and tidal devices can provide these communities with the right-sized clean energy solution to meet their needs. More importantly, wave and tidal devices give these communities the ability to generate their own, controlled, localized energy, building needed energy independence and resiliency against larger global forces while protecting their local budgets.

Furthermore, the U.S. defense industry considers wave and tidal energy uniquely positioned to support defense operations in remote locations, to reduce its vulnerabilities from geopolitical supply chain disruptions and fluctuating prices while building energy resilience. For example, one of the only U.S. wave energy test sites, the Navy Wave Energy Test Site, is located off the coast of the Marine Corps Base Hawaii. The Navy site has been testing wave energy devices for more than 10 years, including marine devices designed to resemble buoys that can power or charge remote underwater vehicles.

Remote and island communities in the U.S. are also beginning

to explore this kind of energy. While no domestic commercial wave or tidal projects exist, the Native Alaskan Village of Igiugig has deployed a river hydrokinetic project—which operates similarly to tidal energy devices. The device has been a great pride to the village, lowering energy costs and increasing energy reliance, so much so that the village has deployed a second device. Two other communities in the San Juan Islands in Washington State and Cook Inlet, Alaska are investing in piloting tidal energy devices, thanks to grant

funding from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Water Power Technologies Office (DOE WPTO).

Despite this exploration, the overall wave and tidal industry in the U.S. is in its early stages. European countries have advanced the majority of wave and tidal demonstration projects and have devices that are actively sending energy to the grid. In the U.S., funding and permitting challenges have stymied deployment and commercialization. For marine renewable energy to responsibly get off the ground, federal leaders need to increase support.

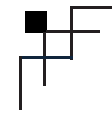
First, Congress should direct federal and state government agencies, such as the DOE WPTO, to provide robust, predictable funding and financial incentives across fiscal years for development and deployment of wave and tidal energy pilot and demonstration devices. Congress appropriates funds each year for marine renewable energy, and this added

future assurance can help attract private investors, opening the door to millions of dollars to move technologies from early stages to long-term development.

Second, Congress can allocate funds for much needed environmental monitoring and analysis to ensure devices are developed responsibly for the ocean and ecosystems. This supports the scientific understanding of environmental effects, gleaned the most information from every device deployment. Through early and ongoing monitoring, best practices to avoid, minimize, and mitigate significant impacts can be implemented before deployments increase in size and scale.

Finally, federal and state agencies should require non-proprietary data and knowledge sharing among those in the industry and the public. Congress can mandate this as a federal funding requirement. This can help to build better understanding of the benefits of wave and tidal energy, accelerate technology development, assist in implementing environmental mitigation measures, and build confidence that these technologies can responsibly coexist with current ocean uses and ecosystems.

Wave and tidal energy solutions can provide critical support for local communities, for conservation, and for security. Together, we can chart a course to bring these technologies to Americans who need them the most.



Interview with Jim Ritterhoff, Executive Director and Co-Founder of FORCE BLUE, Inc.

Introducing FORCE BLUE

What is FORCE BLUE and what makes you unique in the conservation community?

Established in 2016 as a means of addressing two seemingly unrelated issues — the rapidly declining health of our oceans

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Jim Ritterhoff has penned and directed award-winning advertising campaigns, screenplays, teleplays and documentaries. As Founder and Creative Director of NYC-based advertising and content production company Chowder, Inc., Jim wrote and produced the theatrically released feature film, *Cayman Went* and the children's book, *Tuke the Specialist Turtle*. An avid SCUBA diver and lifelong environmentalist, Jim previously served on the Board of Directors of the Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) and was recently named "2019 Sea Hero of the Year" by *Scuba Diving Magazine* and the *Seiko Watch Corporation* for his work with FORCE BLUE.



Through its composition and commitment, FORCE BLUE is building a nonpartisan model of caring, cooperation and positive change with the power to restore lives and the planet.

What are you proud of? What challenges you?

and the difficulty far too many servicemen and women have in adjusting to civilian life once their service ends —FORCE BLUE is the only 501c3 nonprofit organization in the world that retrains and redeploys former Special Operations veterans and military trained combat divers to work alongside scientists and environmentalists on marine conservation missions.

Harkening back to the days of Jacques Cousteau and the French frogmen he trained, FORCE BLUE has assembled a modern-day cadre of elite military veterans with the aptitude and ability to achieve great things on the conservation front — and the visibility to let the world know about it.

Since its inception, FORCE BLUE has partnered with some of the biggest names in the marine scientific community, deploying dozens of Special Operations veterans to work on projects ranging from coral reef and kelp forest restoration to marine debris removal and marine reptile rescue throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean. With the support of key corporate sponsors (many of whom have never participated in marine conservation before), FORCE BLUE veterans have deployed on several high-profile projects that have produced hundreds of print and television stories, three documentary films and millions of dollars of earned media coverage. The biggest challenge, of course

— as it is for all nonprofit NGO's — is fundraising. How do we maintain the steady stream of funding necessary to continuously train and deploy more veterans?

Why is it important for policymakers to prioritize conserving and restoring the marine environment?

Simply put, because our lives depend on it. The health of our marine ecosystems and resources are vital to the health of our planet. This is about much more than just abundant fish populations or pristine coastlines. Without a healthy marine environment, the day will come when we are no longer able to breathe fresh air or drink clean water — which makes conserving and restoring our marine resources an existential priority.

The Senate and House Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs have recently introduced the DYVACA. How would this bill impact an organization like FORCE BLUE?

Should the Don Young Veterans Advancing Conservation Act



(DYVACA) be passed into law, the impact on FORCE BLUE and other organizations would be both tremendous and immediate. With no shortage of demand out there for skilled underwater and maritime operators like FORCE

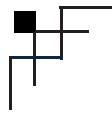
BLUE's veteran workforce, the grant funding provided through DYVACA would enable us to train, onboard and deploy more veterans on more missions in more places throughout the CONUS.

ABOVE: FORCE BLUE veterans prep for a dive along Florida's Coral Reef — one of nation's most prized, yet critically threatened marine ecosystems.

FORCE BLUE

FORCE BLUE works to unite the community of Special Operations veterans with the world of marine conservation for the betterment of both. Like the service branches from which they form their ranks, FORCE BLUE strives to cultivate an organization based on mutual respect, encouragement, mentorship, tolerance, and open-mindedness, thereby engendering a welcoming environment for all. Onboarding as a FORCE BLUE scientific diver is open to any Special Operations Forces (SOF) veteran — without regard to race, creed, color, age, religion, or sexual orientation — provided he/she has successfully completed his/her military dive training and remains in good standing within the service community.

Learn more at forceblueteam.org.



INTERNATIONAL

How fisheries transparency supports us all

By Steve Trent, CEO and Founder, Environmental Justice Foundation.



Improving fisheries transparency would strengthen American strategic interests overseas, support businesses that do the right thing, and allow shoppers to make an informed choice at the checkout. It would uphold human rights and protect ocean wildlife around the world, and even better, the policies we need are readily available now, largely with no costs involved. We can achieve all of this now.

Globally, fisheries are in crisis. Fish populations are in the worst state they have ever been, with over a [third](#) now overfished and

[90%](#) of the world's large ocean fish having been wiped out since the 1950s. As vessel owners and captains hunt ever further for declining catches, something has to give to keep them profitable. All too often, the solutions unscrupulous operators land on is to fish illegally to increase revenue and to subject workers to modern slavery to cut costs. Protected sharks and marine mammals can be targeted, and conditions on board are often brutal and squalid, with appalling violence meted out on crew with impunity.

At my organization, the Environmental Justice Foundation, we have interviewed hundreds of former fishers.

We have collected evidence of industrial-scale shark finning and the slaughter of dolphins and walrus. Crew recount how they are shuttled between fishing vessels for years without ever

seeing land or even dropping anchor, only to return home to find their wages have been stolen.

These abuses thrive in the distant-water fishing industry in particular, where the remoteness of fishing means regulators have little oversight and crew have little or no chance of raising the alarm or escaping. In turn, this means American businesses that do not exploit their workers can be undercut on price, and American consumers may unknowingly be buying seafood tainted with human rights abuses, the destruction of marine ecosystems, or wildlife crimes like shark finning.

While our investigations are global, one country looms particularly large in the testimonies we hear. China's distant-water fishing fleet is the world's largest, and the scale of the abuses on its vessels is [singularly severe](#). The U.S. Coast Guard has accompanied and assisted [efforts](#) by other nations

to counter Chinese fishing vessels encroaching in their coastal waters, and President Biden and Vice President Harris have [recognized](#) the importance of tackling illegal fishing to national security. While we welcome these actions, we know that more progress can and must be made now.

This begins with closing loopholes in the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP). SIMP could be an effective tool for ensuring the species it applies to are caught legally, sustainably and ethically, but its coverage is far too piecemeal to be effective. Fewer than 50% of seafood imports are currently screened under SIMP, and for China, this falls to around 20%.

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Steve Trent is CEO and Founder of the Environmental Justice Foundation and has more than 30 years' experience in environmental and human rights campaigning. He also cofounded WildAid, serving as president for over a decade and leading WildAid's work in China and India.

BANNER: Fishing nets. / Photo credit: by [Sondem](#) @ Adobe Stock.

As the biggest source of illegally-caught seafood entering the USA, China's exports must be thoroughly scrutinized, and enhancing SIMP to cover every species the USA imports is the way to achieve this.

Next is strengthening the [Moratorium Protection Act](#).

This legislation empowers the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to identify, engage with and sanction countries responsible for illegal fishing, but defines this too narrowly for the legislation to be as effective as it could.

Switching to the internationally-used definition provided by the [UN](#), including human rights laws and labor violations, would give NOAA and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) the power to effectively block imports from countries which fail to take action.

Building on this progress, the next step would be to develop new due diligence requirements for imports, to ensure that forced labor has not been used in their creation.

Lastly, the principles of the [Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency](#) should be enshrined into US legislation. The Charter is backed by over 50 global civil society organizations. It offers practical, cost-effective

The Environmental Justice Foundation

EJF works internationally to inform policy and drive systemic, durable reforms to protect our environment and defend human rights. We investigate and expose abuses and support environmental defenders, Indigenous peoples, communities, and independent journalists on the frontlines of environmental injustice. Our campaigns aim to secure peaceful, equitable, and sustainable futures. Our investigators, researchers, filmmakers, and campaigners work with grassroots partners and environmental defenders across the globe. Our work to secure environmental justice aims to protect our global climate, ocean, forests, and wildlife and defend basic human rights.

For a thriving ocean, we need legal, ethical and sustainable fisheries. We share this vision with ICCF, promoting transparency as a means to end illegal fishing, environmental destruction and associated abuses.

Learn more about the [Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency](#), and visit the [Environmental Justice Foundation website at \[ejfoundation.org\]\(http://ejfoundation.org\)](#).

Watch the [Tide of Injustice: Exploitation and Illegal Fishing on Chinese Vessels in the Southwest Indian Ocean](#)

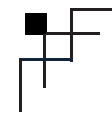
For a deeper dive, [learn more about the Zhejiang Ocean Family Co., Ltd.](#)

“As the biggest source of illegally-caught seafood entering the USA, China’s exports must be thoroughly scrutinized.”

and immediate steps to improve fisheries governance, bringing illegal fishing and human rights abuses out of the shadows. As one of the world’s top seafood markets, the USA has both a responsibility and an opportunity to drive global progress by acting now.

Some of the policies in the Charter are simple and straightforward, no more complex than requiring cars to have license plates. However, the effect they would have for human rights and our planet, for US interests overseas and businesses and consumers at home, would be profound.

I urge you to support them now.



CARIBBEAN

Water for Peace

By Farzana Yusuf-Leon, Project Manager, Ocean Governance and Fisheries Programme, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed March 22 as World Water Day (WWD) in 1993. This year’s theme, “Water for Peace,” aims to highlight the benefits of water management as a conduit for peace.

OECS and ICCF convened a roundtable discussion on March

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RIGHT: Aerial view, Exuma, Bahamas, America. Photo credit: by [Juan Carlos Muñoz](#) @ Adobe Stock.

Farzana Yusuf-Leon is a Project Manager in the Environmental Sustainability Division at the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Commission, where she manages project activities under the thematic areas of Land and Water, Chemicals, Pollution and Waste, and Sustainable Ocean Management. This article was developed through collaboration with colleagues at the OECS Commission, with key input from Danny Moonie, Communications / Knowledge Management Specialist.



Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States



22, 2024, with critical players in the water sector in Saint Lucia, focusing on water security in the OECS, as the world recognised World Water Day. The meeting brought together parliamentarians and high-level representatives, including the President of the Saint Lucia Senate, Hon. Alvina Reynolds, Hon. Wayne Girard, Minister of Finance, Economic Development, and Youth Economy, and Opposition Senator Dominic Fedee. Also in attendance were Head of the OECS Environmental Sustainability Division, Mr. Chamberlain Emmanuel, Caribbean Program Officer for the ICCF, Mr. Eustace Vitalis, and Managing Director of Soloricon Ltd. and former Minister for



the Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology, Dr. James Fletcher, who was the keynote speaker at the event. Recognising the varied challenges associated with water supply across OECS Member States, the OECS Director General, Dr. Didacus Jules is actively engaging with regional governments to develop practical policies and identify effective solutions to these pressing issues.

Approximately 97 percent of water on the planet is salt water, found in our oceans. The remaining 3 percent, which is freshwater, is locked in glaciers, ice caps and deep groundwater, and only 0.5 percent of freshwater is useable and available.

This fraction of available freshwater is unevenly distributed around the world, with dry, arid deserts in some regions, and rainforests and monsoon climates in others (Gleick, 2018). Bringing the focus to the Caribbean region, there are wet and dry seasons, and extremes of weather and climate change impacts in the form of droughts and floods, which result in unequal distribution of water during specified times. Additionally, available resources,

as well as the provision and performance of infrastructure can result in an unequal spatial distribution of water. Unequal or no access to water can cause tensions between or among communities, leading to conflict and vandalism, although many Caribbean countries report high levels of access to municipal water supply for domestic and sanitation purposes (GWP-C,

“Managing water resources can also be seen as an opportunity for cooperation.”

2022). Non-revenue water (NRW), which is defined as the difference between the amount of water that enters the distribution system and the amount of water billed to consumers, is well over 40% and in some cases as high as 75% (Janson, Burkhard, & Jones, 2021). Given that many countries within the Caribbean region are either water scarce or borderline water scarce (GWP-C, 2022), addressing NRW requires urgent attention. At the roundtable, the Chief Executive Officer of the Saint Lucia Water and Sewerage Authority, WASCO, Mrs. Zilta

George-Leslie, examined some of the major challenges to providing potable water on the island, including non-revenue generating water.

Additionally, many other factors affect water availability, including pollution, over-abstraction and poor land management practices, all of which need to be addressed to reduce the region’s vulnerability to water scarcity. Carl Hunter, Property Manager at Jade Mountain and Anse Chastanet Hotel and Spa, and Chair for the Saint Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association Environment Committee, addressed the challenges the tourism industry faces, especially during periods of dwindling freshwater reserves. He shared how resorts are adapting to maximise the guest experience while minimising the use of water.

Further, as climate change impacts become more apparent and water demands increase, there is greater need for efforts toward water security.

Water security is seen increasingly as an integral part of human security and central to the achievement of other rights such as the right to life, to education, to health, and to adequate housing (UNDP, 2006). The Global Water Partnership has defined a water-secure world as one that “integrates a concern for the intrinsic value of water together

with its full range of uses for human survival and well-being” (Cashman, 2013).

At a High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace convened by the General Assembly on September 9, 2014, United Nations officials underscored that peace means dignity and well-being for all, not just the absence of war. Good health, sanitation, food security, economic productivity and prosperity are all factors that contribute to the dignity and well-being of individuals, communities and countries, and all are dependent on water availability.

Managing water resources can also be seen as an opportunity for cooperation. The Small Island Developing States of the OECS embrace the Island Systems Management (ISM) framework, a concept which underpins the Revised St. Georges Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability (SGD 2040), and recognises that despite physical and natural resource limitations, integrated planning and management is critical if the islands are to become economically, socially and ecologically resilient. The concentration and close proximity of ecosystems on an island means that each of these ecosystems is linked to the others, either through biological processes, ecological impacts, or the impacts of human interventions (OECS, 2020). All of these interlinked ecosystems are dependent on water, and conversely, clean water and flood mitigation are some outputs of ecosystem services.

In light of this interdependence and importance, water resources management is therefore embedded within the OECS Strategic Priorities relating to building resilience and valuing the environment.

There is a shared need, whether at a national level, across all sectors and stakeholders for each country, or at a regional level among countries, to coordinate and work together for environmental sustainability, and water security, peace, and prosperity.

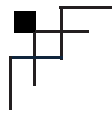
OECS Commission

The OECS is an international intergovernmental organization dedicated to regional integration.

The Organization consists of eleven member States: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Christopher (St. Kitts) & Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

It was established through the Treaty of Basseterre in 1981, which was replaced in 2010 with a Revised Treaty of Basseterre, establishing the Economic Union. The OECS Authority comprises the Heads of Government (Prime Ministers of the independent countries as well as the Chief Ministers and Premier of the non-independent countries) whose policy decisions direct the work of the organization and is the highest decision-making body of the organization. The Central Secretariat, called the OECS Commission, is based in Saint Lucia, responsible for OECS administration, and headed by a Director General. The OECS Commission is pleased to continue partnership with the ICCF Group through the commemoration of World Water Day 2024. The caucus, convened with critical players in the water sector in Saint Lucia on March 22, 2024, focused on water security in the OECS and the role of water management in fostering peace and prosperity.

Learn more at oecs.int/en.



MEXICO

A Blue Carbon Regulatory Framework Is Needed in Mexico

By *María Navarrete, Governments and Multilateral Liaison Officer, The Ocean Foundation; Paula Tussie, Communications & Policy Manager, WILDCOAST; and Tannia Frausto, Climate Change Director, WILDCOAST.*

Mexico has a continental area of 1,960,189 km² (INEGI) with 15,069 km of total coastline, according to the cartography generated by the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), developed to record the country's coastline in detail,

which is essential to understanding its dynamics, and conserving and sustainably using its natural resources (CONABIO, 2019).

Coastal ecosystems, mainly mangroves, seagrasses and marshes, have a great capacity to capture and store carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the form of organic carbon – also known as “blue carbon” – which makes them important allies for climate change mitigation. According to CONABIO's Mexico Mangrove Monitoring System (SMMM), Mexico is the country with the fourth largest mangrove area in the world with approximately 905,086 ha (CONABIO, 2020). Its carbon dioxide (CO₂) absorption power is up to 5 times greater than that of terrestrial forests, and its storage power up to 10 times greater. However, mangroves are also essential tools for adaptation to climate change, as they function as barriers against tropical storms, floods and hurricanes, thus protecting coastal communities.

The conservation of blue carbon ecosystems is essential to guarantee the wellbeing of Mexican society, particularly coastal communities, because in addition to being allies in the fight against climate change, they provide environmental, social and economic benefits, safeguard biodiversity, store carbon, and



offer livelihoods.

Preserving their existence generates the need to strengthen their legal protection, in light of the numerous natural and anthropogenic threats they face, as well as tackle the existing challenges related to the design of strategies, policies and laws aimed at their conservation and restoration.

Although strategies and approaches to the management of coastal and marine ecosystems exist, it is necessary to design, develop, complement, strengthen and implement legal provisions and policies focused on addressing the existing threats and challenges, and particularly on recognizing the potential of blue carbon ecosystems to increase the resilience of coastal communities to the effects of climate change.

With a clear purpose and working collaboratively on behalf of blue carbon ecosystems, legislators in Mexico have been encouraged to contribute to the strengthening of the national institutional and legislative framework, taking a comprehensive approach that addresses the following aspects:

- Budget: ensure sufficient budget for Branch 16 (environment), so that institutions in this sector can meet national objectives and international commitments regarding the environment and human rights, in the short, long and medium term.
- Strengthen the environmental legal framework by:
 1. Defining the concept of “blue carbon” in the General Climate Change Law (LGCC), and incorporating concepts related to the topic, such as carbon absorption, fixation, storage, compensation, reduction, etc.
 2. Including the term “green carbon” in the LGCC to highlight the importance of freshwater wetlands and refer to the carbon sequestered by them.
 3. Complementing the protection of other blue carbon ecosystems, through the General Wildlife Law (LGVS) and the Federal Criminal Code.
 4. Providing clarity on the protection of wetlands of international importance (Ramsar Sites).
 5. Balancing various laws, such as the LGVS, the National Water Law (LAN)
- Define and regionalize the regulations for permits and authorizations: clearly define the permitting and authorization processes related to the conservation and restoration of mangrove and other blue carbon ecosystems, taking into account the different needs
- and the General Law for Sustainable Forestry Development (LGDFS).
- 6. Providing certainty through legislation to the ownership rights of blue carbon ecosystems, especially mangroves and marshes, and the benefits derived from their conservation.

BANNER: Bahía Chachacual Aerial Coast 358. / Photo credit: by [JOSEPH](#) @ Adobe Stock.

María Navarrete has been working in the national and international environmental law field since 1992. She has experience in working side-by-side with Ministers and the office of the President of Mexico, including in the creation and enactment of several national presidential commissions such as the “Commission on Climate Change and the Seas and Coasts.” She was most recently the National Project Coordinator for a GEF project in the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem, “Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the GOM LME,” between Mexico and the U.S.

Tannia Frausto Illescas is the Climate Change Director of WILDCOAST, where she oversees and coordinates their natural climate solutions and blue carbon programs in Mexico and California. Tannia coordinated a pioneering RAMSAR Wetlands of International Importance management program and helped launch their blue carbon mangrove conservation and carbon sequestration work. Prior to joining WILDCOAST, Tannia carried out research and conservation work for the protection of coral reefs and sea turtles.

Paula Tussie Berdichevsky helps advance conservation and mitigation policy in Mexico through advocacy, educating policymakers and legislators, and communication campaigns. Before working at WILDCOAST, she worked on research and evaluation of social and educational programs and policy. She has also been a volunteer in a reforestation program in the Peruvian Amazon; and at Enlace Rural, giving capacity building training to women in rural communities.

The Ocean Foundation

As the only community foundation for the ocean, The Ocean Foundation's mission is to improve global ocean health, climate resilience, and the blue economy. We create partnerships to connect all peoples in the communities in which we work to the informational, technical, and financial resources they need to achieve their ocean stewardship goals.

Learn more at oceanfdn.org.

WILD COAST

WILD COAST is an international team that conserves coastal and marine ecosystems and addresses climate change through natural solutions. They envision a society in which ecologically sensitive and globally significant coastal and marine ecosystems and wildlife are conserved, restored and sustained for future generations.

Learn more at wildcoast.org.

- of these ecosystems determined by their region in the country and seasonality.
- Regulated carbon market: Incorporate the conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems, mainly mangroves, as a tool for offsetting

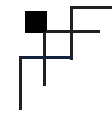
These collaborative efforts for blue carbon ecosystems have identified the need to work in parallel to strengthen public policies in this area. A key element is the publication and implementation of the National Blue Carbon Strategy, committed to in Mexico's Nationally Determined Contribution.

"The conservation of blue carbon ecosystems is essential to guarantee the wellbeing of Mexican society."

emissions within the regulated carbon credit market, covering aspects such as: clarity on administrative and tax issues, competent authorities, timing, commitment of those who buy and must reduce emissions, applicable processes and methodologies, ensuring benefits for communities, ecosystems and climate.

By protecting and restoring the country's blue carbon ecosystems, we are generating better living conditions for coastal communities and society at large, and advancing in the fulfillment of various international commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Mexico is the sea.



MEXICO

Toward legislation to combat ghost gear in Mexico

By Ingrid Giskes, Senior Director of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative and International Government Relations, Ocean Conservancy.

Mexico is among the top 15 countries with the largest marine and coastal areas in the world.

From the beautiful beaches and marine biodiversity that draws millions of tourists a year to a thriving fishing industry that supports local economies, it should come as no surprise that the ocean is a critical part of the country's history, culture, and economy. In 2023, for example,



Mexico recorded over [1.7 million metric tons](#) in total fish catch.

Unfortunately, a threat to Mexico's fishing industry and marine biodiversity lurks beneath the waters – abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), also known as "ghost gear." Results from the first multi-institutional ghost gear removal program in the vaquita marina area launched in 2016, showed that more than 1,300 nets were removed from the Northern Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) as of 2020. This removal effort inspired others and showed the need for more research in order to more effectively conduct gear removals in the state.

In 2021, the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) worked with Natural Resources Consultants, Pronatura, and Manta Caribbean

Project to develop the first ghost gear predictive model in Mexico. This project created a list of likely locations where fishing gear is lost and accumulates the most. The results showed that in the Mexican Atlantic, the most prominent high-probability area is along the east and northeast coast of Quintana Roo, and in the Mexican Pacific, along the coast of Sinaloa, Nayarit, Chiapas, and Sonora.

Ghost gear poses a huge problem for both wildlife and fishers alike. Fish and other marine life can get entangled in nets or trapped in pots, leading to their eventual death. Ocean Conservancy research has shown that ghost gear is the single deadliest form of marine debris to marine life. Some estimates show that an up to 30% decline in some harvestable fish stocks can be attributed to ghost gear. In addition to entanglement threats, some 1,300 marine species have been documented ingesting plastics. When swallowed, ocean plastics can block digestive tracks and eventually kill marine animals of all sizes.

Entanglement and ingestion are perhaps the most obvious threats, but they're not the only ones. When larger plastic items, including ghost gear, break down

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Ingrid Giskes is the Director of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative® (GGGI), where she works to tackle the most harmful form of marine debris in our ocean: lost and abandoned fishing gear. She has a background in international policy and has been working in this field for the last ten years.



due to weather or UV exposure, they become smaller and smaller plastic fragments and eventually microplastics. A review of research published from 2019-2020 revealed that 60% of fish studied globally contained microplastics. In animals, swallowing microplastics has been shown to negatively impact feeding, reproduction, and other behaviors, and even damage cells and DNA.

The ghost gear issue isn't unique to Mexico: ghost gear is a problem anywhere fishing takes place.

But luckily, in recent years, momentum has grown to

“Ghost gear poses a huge problem for both wildlife and fishers alike.”

combat ghost gear. Since 2015, 23 national governments, including Mexico, and over 130 organizations from academia to the private sector have joined Ocean Conservancy's Global Ghost Gear Initiative, the world's largest alliance dedicated to tackling the issue of ghost gear at the global level.

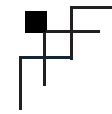
In response to Mexico joining the GGGI, the GGGI created the North American Net Collection Initiative (NANCI) - the first-ever transboundary initiative

to prevent ghost gear in the coastal waters of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The GGGI is also working closely with the government of Mexico and the ICCF Group to create national legislation to address ghost gear at the executive and legislative levels in Mexico.

While we are proud of this progress, it's critical that more countries join the fight to address ghost gear at the national levels with action planning and progressive legislation; and international levels like the Plastics Treaty.

Doing so would be an incredible win in the fight to protect our ocean and improve fishing sustainability for generations to come.

ABOVE: Divers saving fish caught in ghost net. / Photo credit: by [swen](#) @ Adobe Stock.



UNITED STATES

Blue Tech and AI

By Dr. Carlos E. Del Castillo, Chief of the Ocean Ecology Laboratory, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.



of the Earth System and its responses to human activities.

Our planet operates like a super organism, where the interactions among oceans, atmosphere, land, and cryosphere shape our environment.

To comprehend this intricate system, Earth System Science emerged as a discipline that integrates remote sensing, field and laboratory investigations, and modeling. This holistic approach aims to unravel the workings

The advent of satellite-based measurements was crucial in advancing our understanding of the planet. Seasat, launched in 1978, was the first ocean satellite observatory and a valiant proof of concept that lasted a few months. Nowadays we expect our orbital observatories to last over a decade, and the complexity and volume of the data and the value of the information continues to increase. Satellite data are crucial in addressing science and policy questions and in providing information used by the government, private sector, and environmental and national security concerns.

Dr. Carlos E. Del Castillo is the Chief of the Ocean Ecology Laboratory at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. He was previously a member of the Senior Professional Staff with the Space Department of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory and an Associate Research Professor at the Johns Hopkins University Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences.

BANNER: A technician prepares a SPEXone flight instrument for vibration testing. Image credit: Andre Dress @ [NASA](#).

Opinions expressed are solely the author's and do not reflect the opinions and beliefs of NASA or its affiliates.





On February 8, 2024, NASA significantly advanced the state-of-the-art by launching the Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission.

All previous missions focused on ocean biogeochemistry measured the color of the ocean at a handful of

“The advent of satellite-based measurements was crucial in advancing our understanding of the planet.”

wavelengths (6 to 12). In contrast, the PACE mission measures

over 100 wavelengths (colors) from the ultraviolet to the near infrared and is therefore referred to as a ‘hyperspectral’ instrument. The color of the ocean gives us important information about what is inside those waters. One of these water constituents we are particularly interested in is called ‘phytoplankton’. While microscopic, these plants are not only responsible for over 50% of the oxygen the

readers are breathing right now but can also serve different functions depending on the type of phytoplankton present at a location. Some of them can be toxic to other animals including humans, while others feed larger organisms including many that we rely on for food. Ocean color also allows us to measure many other important components like organic matter and particles. The increase in information from PACE will allow us to improve legacy measurements from earlier missions but will also surpass them by helping determine the type of phytoplankton present in our ocean. This significant

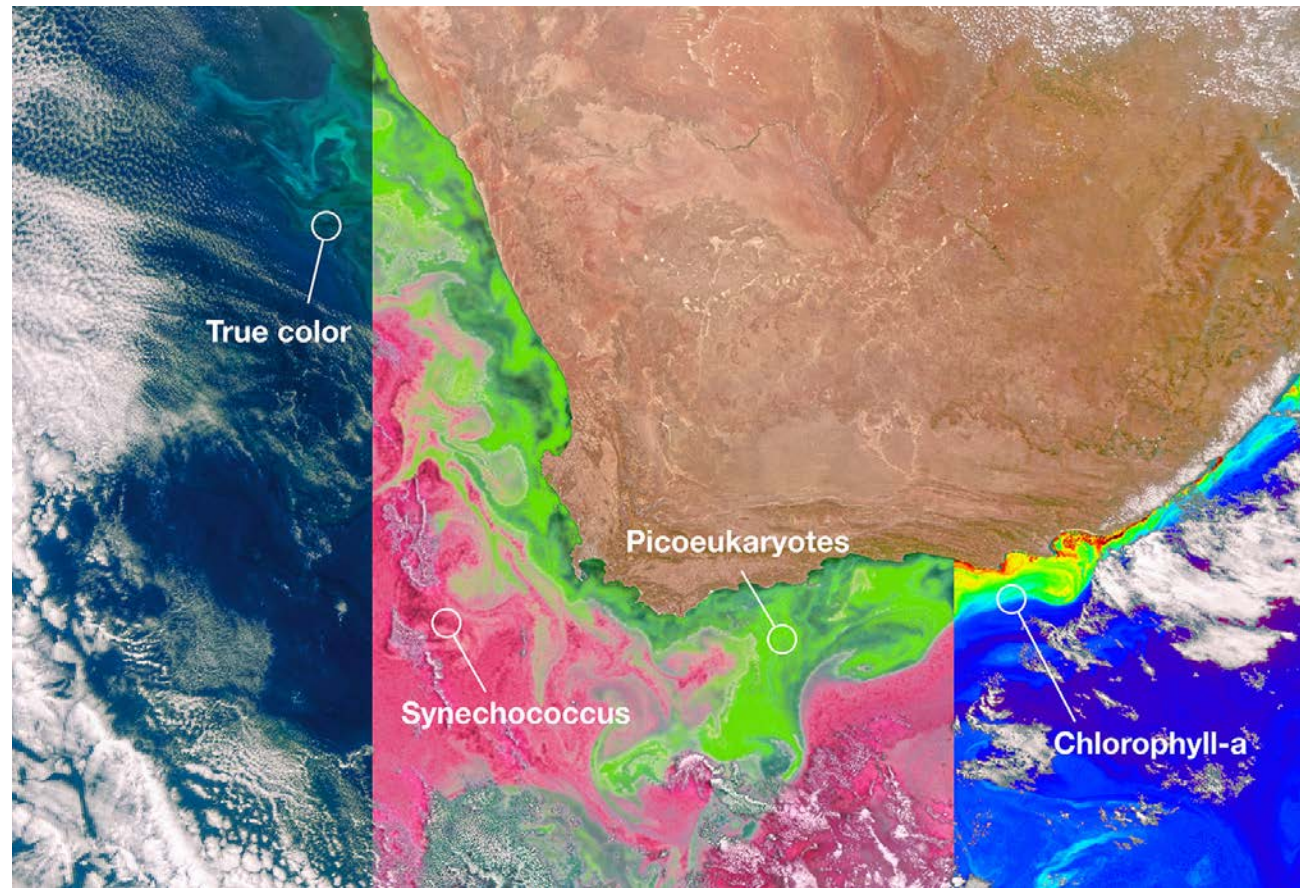
advancement in capabilities is key because, like land plants, different marine plants have specific roles in the ecosystem and respond differently to environmental change. The biology of the ocean is responding to climate change, and the capabilities of PACE are needed to monitor, understand, and predict future changes.

The PACE mission also has two polarimeters designed to measure various aspects of our atmosphere, including clouds and aerosols.

This information will be critical for assessing air quality, various weather events such as dust storms and volcanic eruptions as well as reduce our uncertainties of the contributions of clouds and aerosols to the Earth heat forcing. PACE will also gather data across land areas, positioning it as a comprehensive Earth System Science mission. It not only captures measurements of oceans, atmosphere, and land but is specifically designed to study the interactions among these elements. Finally, the PACE mission also tackled the thorny problem of “research to operations” by implementing the



ABOVE: Mechanical Team Photo in front of PACE Observatory on Dolly at Astrotech during Launch Campaign. / Photo Credit @ [NASA](#).



Early Adopters Program, where data users in the operational community were included in some aspects of mission planning, and provided access to simulated data, so they could be ready to exploit the data right after launch. This step helps scientific advancements to contribute effectively to solving practical problems, improving processes, or enhancing decision-making in various fields, including science, technology, industry, and public policy.

One of the outcomes of the technological development that has enabled missions such as PACE is that the amount of data available becomes larger and more complex. As a result, expanding the current data distribution capabilities and accessibility of the data becomes increasingly critical. Data access and transparency are imperative in maintaining trust in the scientific process and in the development of science-informed policies. NASA has a long history in the public

distribution of satellite data. By principle and regulations, everyone has unrestricted access to our research data. In the case of ocean color data, we were ready to distribute data one year before launch through a well-known, web-based outlet. This has been the case since the 1980's. This longstanding practice, now formalized as "open data open science," is essential for expediting scientific breakthroughs and for informing and educating the public.

ABOVE: PACE's Ocean Color Instrument (OCI) detects light across a hyperspectral range from the ultraviolet to near-infrared, which gives scientists new information to differentiate communities of phytoplankton – a unique ability of NASA's newest Earth-observing satellite. This first image released from OCI identifies two different communities of these microscopic marine organisms in the ocean off South Africa on Feb. 28, 2024. The central panel of this image shows Synechococcus in pink and picoeukaryotes in green. The left panel of this image shows a natural color view of the ocean, and the right panel displays the concentration of chlorophyll-a, a photosynthetic pigment used to identify the presence of phytoplankton. / Image Credit @ [NASA](#).

The complexity and volume of the new data, and the need to combine multiple data sources, requires the use of new analytical methods including various flavors of machine learning and artificial intelligence (ML-AI). Ocean scientists have been using ML for decades in various applications, including the analysis of satellite data. We are now, however, facing a new paradigm that will accelerate its use. Data availability has increased, and the need for ML-AI has grown significantly while becoming more accessible. Therefore, technical data and ML-AI are now inevitably intertwined. This creates practical and ethical questions for scientists and policy makers. The fact that a tool is readily available and seemingly easy to use does not mean that everyone could use it well, and ML-AI is not the exception. The same goes for easily accessible research data. Regardless of the tools used, it is important to bear in mind that: 1- Computers are fast and efficient, but they are not truly intelligent, ethical, or moral; and 2- scientists and policy makers are ultimately responsible for scientific results and their use in shaping policy. Scientists have the responsibility of piercing the black box of ML-AI methods to understand how ML-AI are trained and how the data are being analyzed. Policy makers should continue to encourage open science open data policies, transparency in ML-AI use, and be clear-eyed about its benefits and shortfalls. This necessitates close collaborations between scientists, data scientists, applied mathematicians, statisticians, and computer scientists. Formal interactions between policy makers and scientists should

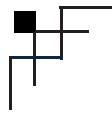
be broader and more frequent. The era where all science was done by the lone specialist with a few graduate students is over. As multidisciplinary approaches become necessary and the exploitation of large data sets by ML-AI becomes the norm, government agencies and academic departments need to quickly evolve to adapt to this new paradigm.

What is next in ocean measurements?

We cannot fully understand the oceans without looking at the rest of the components of our planet. But there are specific ocean measurements that need improvement. We can measure well properties in the surface of the ocean using satellites. The next technological step is to measure the vertical dimension of the ocean from space. This will include depth profiles of plankton, particles, temperature, and salinity in the ocean. These measurements are needed fast if we are going to keep up with monitoring and understanding our fast-changing planet. These scientific requirements can be addressed with Lidar technologies, particularly when combined with polarimetry and hyperspectral measurements of ocean color. Happily, these same technologies also work in measuring many important atmospheric parameters. These applications of Lidar are a scientific and engineering challenge, but one that can be addressed. Other challenges might be more vexing. In the field of Earth Remote Sensing, the

mission development process is slow, but expensive. The PACE mission took over 20 years to move from the research concept to the launch pad. It took a decade to build the instruments and space craft. For perspective, the Manhattan project, infinitely more complex than PACE, took about 4 years. The slow cadence in satellite missions is often caused by risk-averse processes and budgetary uncertainties. Not only are we not developing new technologies and getting all the scientific information we could get, but slow mission cadence inevitably results in diffusion of institutional memory and technical knowledge as well as increased cost. Agencies should review their risks postures and streamline processes. Appropriators should provide a more stable funding environment, understanding that funding uncertainties increase costs.

We have new, fantastic data sets and the analytical tools to monitor and understand how the oceans are responding to climate change. We also have a clear vision of what new measurements and research work are needed. We just need to accelerate the speed of space missions' development. They are crucial to better understand our intricate living planet.



MEXICO

The importance of funding for the conservation of protected natural areas in Mexico and the role of legislators in this process

By Daniel Martín Villar, Coordinator, Noroeste Civil Society for Environmental Sustainability (NOSSA).

The climate crisis in Mexico in 2024 has resulted in heat waves with record temperatures and, days later, torrential rains that have caused significant damage to infrastructure and housing in several states of the country.



In this context, the discussion about the importance of seeking nature-based solutions compels us to look to our protected natural areas, key tools in the fight against climate change and its effects. The conservation and proper management of protected natural areas (PNAs) in Mexico is essential not only to preserve biodiversity, but also to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the social sphere. In this context, adequate and sustained funding is crucial, and legislators play a vital role in ensuring the resources needed for these tasks.

We start by illuminating the close relationship between biodiversity and climate change, which is both cause and effect, as well as mutual coexistence. The different types of PNAs, from those created at the federal level to the areas voluntarily set aside for conservation, are spaces that sequester large amounts of carbon, protect water sources and facilitate connectivity between ecosystems, all essential elements for the adaptation of



species to climate change.

The establishment of PNAs, the publication of their management plans and their subsequent proper implementation, are actions that require a great deal of resources for issues ranging from the hiring of personnel for monitoring and oversight to the allocation of funds for the proper operation of Advisory Boards that guarantee the effective participation of those communities and productive sectors that make use of the resources of these spaces, to ensure the participatory implementation of conservation policies in these areas.

However, the 2024 Draft Federal Spending Budget (PPEF) presents a troubling prospect for environmental conservation in Mexico. Although important legislative advances have been made in recent years, such as the ratification of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental

Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) and the prohibition of new mining concessions in PNAs, the budget allocated to environmental protection has followed a downward trend and, as in recent years, has been insufficient and in many cases has even decreased. For example, the budget of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat) has been cut 11.4% in real terms for 2024, which is equivalent to 9 billion pesos less than the previous year.

Lack of adequate funding has direct and devastating

consequences for conservation.

Without sufficient resources, PNAs face problems such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and the degradation of critical ecosystems. This, in turn, reduces the ability of these areas to act as carbon sinks and natural buffers against extreme weather events.

For example, old-growth forests, such as the Tutuaca Forest in Chihuahua, not only sequester more carbon than other types of vegetation, but also provide refuge for diverse species of flora and fauna. Without the necessary funds, the conservation

of these ecosystems is seriously compromised and at risk from climatic phenomena such as heat waves that could result in forest fires with catastrophic impacts on the resilience of ecosystems and the human communities that depend on them.

The effective conservation of PNAs, therefore, requires adequate funding to be able to carry out essential activities such as monitoring and oversight, infrastructure maintenance, ecosystem restoration, community awareness-raising and relations with the productive sectors located in and around the PNAs. Programs such as the Program for the Protection

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Daniel Martín facilitates joint activities of 5 Mexican environmental organizations that make up the NOSSA coalition, whose objective is to strengthen the protection of Natural Protected Areas throughout the country, with emphasis on the Northwest. Working from both civil society organizations and international organizations, Daniel has actively advocated for the inclusion of vulnerable populations, indigenous communities and migrants in the implementation of environmental and climate change public policies in Mexico.

BANNER: Ik-Kil Cenote, Mexico. / Photo credit: by [Marius](#) @ Adobe Stock.

and Restoration of Ecosystems and Priority Species (Prorest) and the Conservation Program for Sustainable Development (Procodes) depend on these resources to operate and meet their objectives, but they have had little increase in the amounts allocated for performing their functions.

Together with academia and civil society, the people's representatives in Congress have a crucial responsibility in the process of guaranteeing resources for the environmental sector. Their role goes beyond simply approving the budget; they must advocate for a fair and sufficient allocation of resources for environmental conservation and ensure the implementation of effective public policies. The active participation of legislators is essential to reverse budget cuts and ensure that PNAs receive the necessary funding for their management and conservation.

Legislators should also work to create innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms.

This could include promoting tax incentives for companies that invest in conservation, implementing fees for the use of natural resources that are reinvested in protecting them, and collaborating with international organizations to obtain additional funds.

"The discussion about the importance of seeking nature-based solutions compels us to look to our protected natural areas."

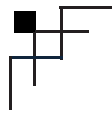
In conclusion, the conservation and proper management of PNAs in Mexico is vital not only to preserve biodiversity, but also to combat climate change. Ensuring adequate funding for this to happen is a task that falls largely on legislators, who must work, according to the standards of access to

information, participation and environmental justice, for a fair allocation of resources and the design and implementation of public policies that ensure the financial sustainability of these areas. Only through a serious and sustained commitment can it be guaranteed that PNAs continue to play their crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, ensuring a sustainable future for Mexico.

Today's climate crisis requires swift and decisive action. Every peso invested in the conservation of our PNAs is an investment in the well-being and security of future generations. Legislators must assume the magnitude of this responsibility and work towards the development of policies that not only protect these spaces, but also encourage their restoration and ongoing maintenance.



ABOVE: Mexican farmer on his horse walking in his agave seed. / Photo credit: by [jcfotografo](#) @ Adobe Stock.



Our Program, Around the World

The ICCF Group advances leadership in conservation by building political will among parliamentary and congressional leaders, and by supporting ministries in the management of protected areas. Here is a snapshot of the latest programs and activities that support this mission.

United States

ICCF Conservation Council Luncheon

Every year in Washington, ICCF’s annual conservation luncheon brings together Co-Chairs of the International Conservation Caucus, the Oceans Caucus, and the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus with members of ICCF’s Conservation Council of business and NGO partners, providing an opportunity for congressional leaders to highlight bipartisan priorities for the upcoming year to advance U.S. leadership in international conservation.

Deep Sea Mining: The Knowns, Unknowns, and What’s Next

ICCF’s Oceans Caucus Foundation joined the House

and Senate Oceans Caucus to host a panel discussion on innovations and regulatory needs for the deep-sea mining industry, featuring industry experts who provided valuable insight on current international and domestic environmental policy considerations, impacts of industry regulations on the marine environment, and technological innovations.

Briefing with Congressman Jake LaTurner

ICCF hosted a Breakfast Briefing with Congressman Jake LaTurner (R-KS), recently named Co-Chair of the International Conservation Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives, to discuss Congressional priorities for international conservation, development, and security.

Marine Renewable Energy - What’s Happening and What’s Next

ICCF hosted a panel discussion to lay out the potential role of the marine renewable energy sector and what policies and resources are needed in the United States to address technology and commercial development challenges, and how development can occur in a responsible, just, and accelerated manner for the benefit of coastal communities across the country.

United Kingdom

International Day of the Forest Panel Event

In honor of the International Day of the Forest, ICCF-UK brought together senior stakeholders from government, business, the diplomatic community, and the NGO community to discuss UK priorities ahead of the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity (COP) in Cali, Colombia. Attending were Lord Benyon, Minister of State for Climate, Environment and Energy, and H.E. Roy Barreras, Colombian Ambassador to the UK.

Transparency in Fisheries Coalition Roundtable

ICCF-UK hosted a private roundtable between APPG leadership and leading experts in the NGO space on combatting illegal fishing and increasing transparency in fishing products.

Africa

Summit on Legal Foundations for Transboundary Marine Conservation: Empowering Communities while Preserving Ecosystems

The ICCF Group in collaboration with Legal Atlas and WIOMSA hosted a summit in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, to serve as a pivotal platform for sharing the findings of the Policy Harmonization Study and Legislative Gap Analysis with the key stakeholders.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Presentation of the Pilot Plan for Regenerative Rational Rotational Grazing (PRIR) in the Paraguayan Chaco

A presentation was made in the town of Agua Dulce, Alto Paraguay, of the Pilot Plan for Regenerative Rational Rotational Grazing (PRIR) implemented as part of the cooperation project between the Agua Dulce Agricultural Association (APAD) and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable

Development, through the FOLUR Paraguay Project. PRIR is a grazing management system that seeks to harmonize pasture development with the needs of the animals and improve soil management, with the intervention of the producer.

Pilot Plan launched to promote the adoption of good agricultural practices with farmers and indigenous communities of the Alto Paraná Atlantic Forest

Producers in the towns of Tavai and Abai in the Department of Caazapá were selected to participate in this Pilot Plan that promotes sustainable practices in the agricultural sector. Through this initiative, green manure seeds were provided and training in responsible agricultural practices will be provided. The main objective of this program is to empower local farmers by providing them with the knowledge and tools necessary to adopt more sustainable practices.

Field Mission and Assembly of the Amazonian Parliament

ICCF Peru organized a field mission to the Amazon and Assembly of the Amazonian Parliament in Tarapoto, Peru.

Presentation of the Policy Brief “Towards a legislative framework for blue carbon in Mexico”

In the framework of the Ordinary Meeting of the Climate Change Committee, ICCF Mexico represented by ICCF Group Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, Jaime Cavelier, presented the policy brief “Towards a legislative framework for blue carbon in Mexico”. This document was prepared with the collaboration of WildCoast and The Ocean Foundation and is part of the closing activities of a GEF International Waters grant in Mexico. Six deputies, including Co-Chairs Edna Diaz & Adriana Bustamante, were present as well as more than 15 who participated virtually.

Brazilian Parliamentarians Celebrate Amazon Treaty Cooperation Organization

The event brought together people supporting the institutionalization of Parlamaz and its efforts to inform and align the countries of the basin on the conservation of the Amazonian ecosystem.



ICCF U.S.:
SEMIANNUAL
SPOTLIGHT

ICCF Hosts International Conference on the Miombo Forest Initiative

From April 16-17, 2024 in Washington, DC, the ICCF Group, together with the Government of Mozambique, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and Rainforest Trust, hosted an international conference on the Miombo Forest Initiative.

Chaired by His Excellency Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique.

The Miombo woodlands cover more than 1 million square miles across southern Africa and provide numerous goods and services that sustain the livelihoods for and feed more than 300 million inhabitants. Including tropical and subtropical grasslands, shrubland, and savannas, the Miombo woodlands comprise the largest ecosystem of dry tropical forests in the world and are responsible for sustaining the Greater Zambezi, one of the most important transborder hydrographic basins.

The large variety of species found in the woodlands provide diversified ecosystems services and products, which are extremely important for subsistence and income generation for local populations. However, a growing population

and resulting increased demand for agricultural land, combined with unsustainable use and overharvesting of natural resources in parts of the Miombo woodlands and impacts of a changing climate, pose a serious threat to the products and services of the woodlands, and to the livelihoods depending on them.

The Republic of Mozambique has an unwavering commitment to the achievement of sustainable development goals and is focused on the implementation of solutions to attain global targets on climate.

Toward that end, Mozambique has brought together the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states to promote a common approach for

the “Sustainable and Integrated Management of the Miombo Woodlands and the Protection of the Greater Zambezi Basin.” This “Miombo Initiative” was endorsed as the “Maputo Declaration on the Miombo Forest” in Maputo, Mozambique in August 2022 by the following eleven signatory countries: Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The Maputo Declaration on the Miombo Forest establishes priorities for the sustainable management and governance of the natural resources of the Miombo ecosystems.

About the Conference

The two-day conference was attended by Heads of State, parliamentarians, and government officials from signatory countries of the Maputo

Declaration on the Miombo Forest as well as by representatives of the U.S. Government, international financial institutions, private-sector entities, international conservation agencies, philanthropists, and environmental experts.

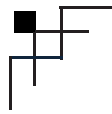
The conference included Ministerial meetings with partners, panel discussions, and a high-level U.S. Congressional Member Dinner and aimed to advance the potential of the Miombo Forest in contributing to global efforts to achieve goals on biodiversity conservation, climate, and integrated sustainable development. The conference concluded with the government representatives expressing a verbal adoption of a commitment letter defining a vision for the implementation of the Miombo Initiative.

ICCF Chief Executive Officer, John Gantt, congratulated the member states of the Maputo

Declaration on this ambitious initiative, spoke about its importance, and emphasized the need for collaborative strategies, innovative financing mechanisms, and a transparent governance system to implement the Maputo Declaration.

President Filipe Nyusi added, **“we need to transform the Intentions of the Maputo Declaration into concrete and sustainable acts, towards achieving the goals of regional and global countries and the ambitious target of achieving the 2030 objectives of the United Nations global biodiversity framework.”**

BANNER: H.E. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi; Ivete Maibaze, Minister of Land and Environment of Mozambique; and H.E. Amb. Hilda Suka-Mafudze, Permanent Representative of the African Union Mission to the USA.



THE ICCF GROUP:
SEMIANNUAL
SPOTLIGHT

ICCF Summit on Legal Foundations for Transboundary Marine Conservation: Empowering Communities while Preserving Ecosystems

To better assess the feasibility of a marine transboundary conservation area (TBCA) between Kenya and Tanzania, the ICCF Group, through funding by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in partnership with the United



Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), commissioned a study led by Legal Atlas to examine the legal foundations for managing a marine transboundary conservation area between the two countries.

The study, titled "Policy Harmonization Study and Legislative Gap Analysis for a Marine Transboundary Conservation Area (TBCA)," assessed the status and adequacy of existing legislation and developed specific best practices for marine conservation areas. This study was developed in collaboration with the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and Macquarie University.

In collaboration with Legal Atlas and WIOMSA, the ICCF Group convened a summit on June 5th

and 6th, 2024, in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, to serve as a pivotal platform for sharing the findings of the Policy Harmonization Study and Legislative Gap Analysis. The summit brought together 21 parliamentarians from the Parliamentary Conservation and Climate Change Caucus Kenya (P4CK) and Tanzania's Parliamentary Friends of the Environment (TAPAFE) Caucus, including key stakeholders working in the region, underscoring the regional commitment to marine conservation. Hon. Esther Matiko, the Deputy Chairperson of TAPAFE, opened the summit welcoming all participants to Tanzania, with Hon. Charity Kathambi and Hon. Rozaah Buyu, the Co-Chairs of P4CK, providing remarks as well. As leaders of their respective caucuses, the Members of Parliament introduced their colleagues present and affirmed their caucuses' commitment to elevating the importance of responsible environment and natural resource management in Kenya and Tanzania. Additionally, Jill Barasa, the ICCF Group's

Africa Program Director, and Arthur Tuda, WIOMSA's Executive Secretary, gave welcoming remarks.

To open the technical presentations, Magreth Mchome from Tanzania's Marine Parks Reserve Unit (MPRU) presented on the development of the proposed TBCA between Kenya and Tanzania, highlighting the collaborative efforts initiated by various partners to preserve the rich biodiversity and ecosystems spanning both countries' borders. Arthur Tuda then presented on activities done towards the TBCA, highlighting progress from its inception to the present, its successes and challenges, and outlining the proposed next steps to advance the process and how parliamentarians can be involved. He also presented on the valuation of the TBCA, highlighting that a TBCA could serve as an investment opportunity for Kenya and Tanzania, providing livelihoods to a large population and significantly increasing natural capital and ecosystem service values.

Florence Magoma from Kenya Wildlife Service presented on

the status of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between KWS and MPRU. Collaboration between the two entities

"The Members of Parliament affirmed their caucuses commitment to elevating the importance of responsible environment and natural resource management in Kenya and Tanzania."

began in 2015 with a study supported by UNEP, the Nairobi Convention, and WIOMSA, which recommended establishing a marine TBCA along the shared border. The anticipated signing of the MoU will be a significant step towards providing an effective framework for managing and conserving the rich biodiversity within the transboundary area. Lastly, James Wingard from Legal Atlas presented the Policy Harmonization Study and Legislative Gap Analysis to the

parliamentarians, highlighting the legislative gaps and policies that need alignment by both countries to ensure the sustainable

management of their shared marine resources. He also provided legislative agendas to the Members of Parliament, summarizing the findings and recommending legal reforms for the respective countries.

To close the summit, the delegation of parliamentarians visited Bongoyo Island, a protected and uninhabited island under the Dar es Salaam Marine Reserve. During the visit, they were briefed by representatives of the MPRU and learned about community-led marine conservation efforts currently underway. The island is home to some of Tanzania's largest specimens of endangered coconut crabs and serves as a popular day trip destination for both tourists and Tanzanian residents.

The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to collaborative action, recognizing the critical role of legal frameworks in advancing transboundary marine conservation efforts.

ABOVE: The Hon. Rozaah Akinyi Buyu, Member of Parliament, Kenya, addresses audience during the Legal Foundations for Transboundary Marine Conservation Summit.

PROTECTED-AREA,
WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT,
AND CONSERVATION
STRATEGIES

THE ICCF INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CORPS

Through the
International
Conservation Corps
program, the ICCF
Group provides
expertise to help
partner nations
develop protected-
area, wildlife
management,
and conservation
strategies.

International Conservation Corps team members are veterans of U.S. and Canadian government agencies such as U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and each member has decades of practical experience managing national parks, wildlife, forests, and water. These professionals work to complete demanding projects in countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.



Mongolia



Healthy Forest Project

A partnership between Rio Tinto Mongolia, the Mongolian Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and the ICCF Group has been working to strengthen the management of Mongolia's national forest resources. Other key partners include the National Conservation Caucus and Mongolia's new National Forest Agency.

The ICCF Group has deployed teams of experts retired from the United States Forest Service and Canada who have provided critical recommendations in efforts to 1) Combat the large and growing threat of insect populations that are decimating forest resources, 2) Improve national reforestation efforts, and 3) Fundamentally change the model for how national forest resources are managed.

Improvements to Major Land Laws

Mongolia's National Conservation Caucus requested that the ICCF Group review the major land laws of Mongolia and make suggestions for improvements. ICCF convened 15 experts retired from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service to conduct a review of the national protected areas law, the national law governing grasslands and grazing, and the national forest law and make recommendations. If enacted, these changes would greatly improve the management of national natural resources to increase the health of those resources and the ability of local communities to benefit from them.

Jim Wingard from Legal Atlas and Dr. Kirk Olson – who have more than 30 years of combined experience in Mongolia – were also instrumental in this effort. "This effort," they said, "would allow Mongolia to move into the future and develop as a nation while

also being able to shepherd its natural heritage, wild Mongolia which Mongolia is known for, but with a bigger more future looking vision. This is a chance to look back at and take all of the lessons learned during the creation of the U.S. park system, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Management system, over a 200-year history, package them up, put them into the Mongolian legal context, and this is a dream scenario that would allow Mongolia to better manage their natural resources if the country will pay for the implementation of those laws. The money can come from the mining sector, the tourism sector, and the agriculture sector. This can generate much more money for the country than it costs - the environment and people win."

Development of Management Plan for Bogd Khan Special Protected Area

The ICCF Group has provided five national park experts from the U.S. to develop the management plan for Bogd Khan, which is located next to Mongolia's capital city where half of the country's population resides. This park is very popular with tourists, who want to get out of the city and experience nature; however, past management plans have failed to address tourism management. This lack of capacity to manage

tourism is an obvious problem that exists throughout the national protected areas system in Mongolia, and in the many other protected areas systems that ICCF currently supports around the world.

Thailand



The ICCF Group is providing expertise to Thailand's national parks and protected areas system on a range of issues. A few examples include:

Management of Waste from Tourism

Human waste management in national parks is an important but often overlooked issue. The ICCF Group brought the leading U.S. expert on this topic to help Thailand's park managers understand the issue and develop capacity to address it.

Volunteers

Experts from the ICCF Group assisted Khao Yai National Park in developing a volunteer program. This idea was championed by Amata Foundation Chairman

Vikrom Kromadit and H.E. General Surasak Karnjanarat, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand, both of whom visited the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where they learned that 4,000 volunteers contribute to important aspects of the management of the national park. Khao Yai National Park now has a large and growing, successful volunteer program that will be a model for other parks in the country.

Elephant Management Conference

The ICCF Group held a large, multi-stakeholder conference on the subject of managing elephant-human conflicts and understanding elephant behavior.

Web Development

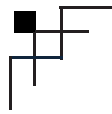
The ICCF Group helped develop a modern website for Khao Yai National Park that is highly successful and can be a model for other national parks.

Training

The ICCF Group provided national training for all leaders in Thailand's protected areas system.

ABOVE, LEFT PAGE: Nomads crossing sand dunes on camels in the Gobi desert, Mongolia. / Photo credit: by [kertu](#) @ Adobe Stock.

ABOVE, RIGHT PAGE: Haewsawat waterfall at Khao Yai National Park, Thailand. / Photo credit: by [pong0402](#) @ Adobe Stock.



ICCF WELCOMES

New Partners

On behalf of ICCF and the ICCF Group global network, we would like to sincerely welcome Conservation Force, Jamma International, and BAE Systems, who have recently become Conservation Council members.

Their respective strengths and focus on themes such as community-based conservation, tools to monitor conservation from space, and working closely with park guards and park administrators, among many other areas of expertise, is providing additional depth and context to efforts to educate and raise awareness about the full suite of conservation solutions in our toolbox.

Please join us in welcoming them to the global ICCF Network, and thank you again to our three new members and the entire Conservation Council for your support which enables our work.

United States

BAE Systems

BAE SYSTEMS

Environmental risks like air pollution and loss of biodiversity jeopardize the health of people, ecosystems and economies around the world. BAE Systems is supporting ICCF's mission to advance conservation governance and on-the-ground solutions. One example is Amazon rainforest management, in which a BAE Systems-built hyperspectral airborne instrument could enable a broad range of land, ocean and atmospheric science applications to provide information on the biochemical properties of vegetation, soil composition and atmospheric constituents such as aerosols and clouds. In addition, our SkyRanger wildlife census program, an artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML) solution, will help officials manage animal populations through automated identification and quantification of various wildlife species. This non-invasive technology can continuously monitor animal populations over large areas and extended periods, providing more accurate population estimates and serving as an early warning system for habitat degradation or encroachment. BAE Systems

and the ICCF are helping to make a crucial difference in protecting the future of our planet.

Conservation Force

Conservation Force, Inc. is an international 501(c)(3) Public Charitable Foundation formed in 1997 by a renowned board of scientist, educators and legal advocates to make recreational hunting and angling greater forces for conservation. Specifically, it is aimed at securing wild habitat, recovery of listed species, improving participation and the benefits from natural resources of rural people and partners, and management planning and intensive implementation of wildlife and resources.

The Force has at least twenty projects around the world at any point in time. In the mid-south, U.S.A., it operates a Land Trust Division that will soon hold one-hundred conservation and mitigation bank easements. Internationally, its conservation projects and programs are predominately in Southern and Eastern Africa where it supports and advises management planning of elephant, lion, leopard, white and black rhino, hippopotamus, Nile crocodile, Red Lechwe and other species. It helps secure the largest remaining expanse of wild habitat, the largest populations of key species and indirectly to

boost a significant share of the operating budgets of the wildlife authorities. Its programs extend to Mid-Asia where The Force has spearheaded the conservation of markhor, argali, swamp deer (barasingha) and eld's deer. It is an IUCN member organization and CITES Observer.

Originally founded by award winning conservationists John and Chrissie Jackson, who serve without pay, it has been among the highest regarded and most successful sportsmen and sportswomen's conservation organizations from its inception more than a quarter of a century ago.

Jamma International



Jamma is thrilled to announce its new partnership with the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF). As the newest member of ICCF's Conservation Council, Jamma was introduced at this year's Congressional Members luncheon and joined discussions at the recent international conference on the Miombo Forest Initiative in Washington, DC.

"Democracy is a key aspect to developing sustainable

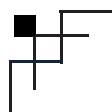
community-based natural resource management programs in rural areas", says Joe Goergen, Head of International Policy for Jamma. "We want to ensure that the American public policy space, conservation investments, and tourism markets work for local people across southern Africa."

Founded in 2010 and registered in the United Kingdom, Jamma International is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting, investing in, and implementing meaningful conservation projects worldwide. We focus on initiatives such as human-wildlife conflict mitigation or livelihoods training, and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge with modern practices. Jamma provides catalytic investment and regional infrastructure to develop community-based natural resource management and indigenous-led governance in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Important partners include the Community Leaders Network of Southern Africa, Resource Africa, and a newly established Indigenous Peoples Network of Southern Africa. Together, we advocate for evidence-based, conservation outcome-oriented policies focused on sustainable resource use, wildlife trade, biodiversity conservation, and indigenous peoples' rights.

Jamma's mission aligns well with ICCF's ability to build political will to address global environmental challenges. By joining forces with ICCF, Jamma aims to amplify its effectiveness in public policy spaces and impact in African-led, rights-based conservation approaches.

"We thank ICCF for their conservation leadership and are honored to work with ICCF's bipartisan caucuses around the world towards our shared goals for wildlife and people," concludes Goergen. Jamma looks forward to supporting policy priorities such as the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act and the African Growth and Opportunities Act, which are critical for securing U.S.-African relations and conservation investments in development and democracy.

Find out more at jammainternational.com, watch or listen to the Beneath the Baobab podcast, or reach out to Joe Goergen, Head of International Policy, at joe@jammainternational.com, for partnership opportunities.



THANK YOU

Our Global Network

The ICCF Group thanks these stakeholders for collaborating with us on briefings, engagements, and other events to raise awareness about conservation solutions to protect our natural resources.

United Kindgom

- African Wildlife Foundation
- Birdlife International
- Blue Marine Foundation
- British & Irish Association of Zoos & Aquariums
- Chester Zoo
- Coalition for Global Prosperity
- Conflict & Environment Observatory
- Conservative Environment Network
- Embassy of Colombia
- Embassy of Mexico
- Embassy of Peru
- Embassy of the United States
- Environmental Justice Foundation
- Flora & Fauna International
- Global Canopy
- Global Fishing Watch
- Green Alliance
- HALO Trust
- High Commission of Canada
- High Commission of Kenya
- High Commission of Namibia
- High Commission of New Zealand
- High Commission of Rwanda
- Kew Gardens
- Labour Climate & Environment Forum
- Marine Conservation Society
- Mars International
- National Oceanography Centre

- Natural History Museum
- NGO Forests Coalition
- Open Seas
- Peers 4 Planet
- Pew Trusts
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Samoan Conservation Society
- The Commonwealth Secretariat
- Tony Blair Institute for Global Change
- UK Friends of Ukraine
- UK Overseas Territories Association
- Uplift UK
- Wildlife Justice Commission
- WWF-UK
- Zoological Society of London

Africa

- ADPP (Ajuda e Desenvolvimento Para o Povo)
- African Parks
- African Parks Network
- African Wildlife Foundation
- Angola Ministry of Environment
- Angola Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Caritas Czech Republic
- Caritas Zambia
- Catholic Relief Services
- Conservation Alliance of Kenya
- Conservation International
- Endangered Wildlife Trust
- European Union
- FBS (Fundação Bornito de Sousa)
- Friends of Conservation
- Fundação Kissama
- GIZ
- International Crane Foundation (ICF)

- International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- IUCN - Conservation Areas & Species Diversity Programme
- KAZA
- Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association
- Kenya Wildlife Trust
- Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
- Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association
- National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)
- National Geographic Society
- One Acre Fund
- Parque Nacional do Iona (Iona National Park)
- PROSPERO
- SADC
- SADC PF
- The Halo Trust
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- TRAFFIC
- UNEP
- United Nations Development Programme
- University Of Zambia
- UNODC - Container Control Programme & Wildlife and Forest Crime Programme
- USAID
- VALAR Frontier Solutions
- Wild Bird Trust
- Wildlife Crime Prevention
- World Bank Group
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Zambia Department of Parks and

- Wildlife
- Zambia Environment Management Agency
- Zambia Fisheries Department

Asia

- Amata
- Ber-Ikan
- Coral Triangle Center
- EDF
- Embassy of Mongolia
- GEF
- International Pole and Line Foundation (IPLNF)
- KI (Conservation International in Indonesia)
- Masyarakat dan Perikanan Indonesia (MDPI)
- Resonance // Tuna Consortium
- Rio Tinto
- Starling Resources
- Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP)
- The Asia Foundation
- UNDP
- UNEP
- Walton Family Foundation
- WCS
- WRI
- YKAN (TNC in Indonesia)

Peru

- Autoridad Nacional del Agua (ANA)
- Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)
- Ministerio de Agricultura
- Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo
- Ministerio de Cultura
- Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas
- Ministerio de Producción
- Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

- Ministerio del Ambiente
- Ministerio del Interior
- OCEANA
- Policía Nacional del Perú
- ProAmazonia
- PROFONANPE
- Re:wild Perú
- Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado (SERNANP)
- Servicio Nacional Forestal y Fauna Silvestre (SERFOR)
- SPDA
- WWF

Colombia

- Agencia Italiana para la Cooperación para el Desarrollo (AICS)
- Asociación de Corporaciones Autónomas Regionales de Colombia (ASOCARS)
- Audubon Colombia
- Autoridad Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca (AUNAP)
- CAF
- Comisión Colombiana del Océano
- Conservación Internacional
- Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Amazonia (Corpoamazonia)
- Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina, CORALINA
- Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Chocó (CODECHOCO)
- COSUDE - Agencia Suiza para el Desarrollo y la Cooperación
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación
- Dirección General Marítima (DIMAR)
- FAO Colombia
- Fedepalma
- Fondo Acción
- Fontur

- Fundación Natura
- Fundación para el Desarrollo Sostenible
- Global Green Growth Institute
- Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones Científicas (SINCHI)
- Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales (IDEAM)
- Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt
- Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico (IIAP)
- Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras (INVEMAR)
- Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible
- Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
- Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo
- Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
- Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia
- Patrimonio Natural
- PNUD
- Procolombia
- Rainforest Alliance Colombia
- Red Pacto Global Colombia
- UNEP Colombia
- Unión Europea
- USAID
- Vicepresidencia de la República
- WCS Colombia
- WWF

Brazil

- Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA)
- Banco Santander
- Brazilian Ministry of Environment
- Climate Policy Initiative
- Coalizão Brasil Clima Floresta

- Agricultura
- Coca Cola Brasil
- Confederação Nacional de Agricultura (CNA)
- Embassies of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela
- Embassy of Norway in Brazil
- Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (EMBRAPA)
- European Union Embassy in Brazil
- Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
- Fundo Brasileiro para a Biodiversidade (FUNBIO)
- Instituto de Pesquisa Amazonica (IPAM)
- Natura & Co.
- Rainforest Trust
- Re:wild Brasil
- SOS Pantanal
- US Embassy in Brazil
- WWF Brasil

Mexico

- AMEBIN - Mexican Alliance for Business and Nature
- Costa Salvaje
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Global Ghost Gear Initiative
- Keystone Species Alliance
- Ocean Conservancy
- Reforestamos México
- Wildlands Network
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity
- Ministry of the Environment
- WWF Mexico
- Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature
- WRI Mexico
- National Institute for Ecology and

- Climate Change
- UNEP Mexico
- AMERE - Mexican Alliance for the Restoration of Ecosystems
- GYBN - Global Youth Biodiversity Network

Caribbean

- Advocacy Grenada Inc.
- Antigua and Barbuda Department of Environment
- Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Health, Wellness and Environment
- Barbuda Council
- Caribbean Cooperative MRV HUB (measurement, reporting, & verification)
- Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project (CLME+)
- Caribbean Regional Climate Centre
- Caribbean Water & Sewage Association Inc (CAWASA)
- Department of Forestry (St. Lucia)
- Dive Grenada
- Dominica Forestry Division
- Dominica Ministry of Environment, Rural Modernization and Kalinago Upliftment
- Embassy of Mexico in Saint Lucia
- GIS Grenada
- Grenada Fisheries Division
- Grenada Ministry of Agriculture
- Grenada Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment & Renewable Energy
- Grenada Ministry of Economic Development, Planning, Tourism, ICT, Creative Economy, Culture, Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives
- Grenada Ministry of Health
- Grenada National Ocean and Coastal Governance Committee
- Grenada Sustainable Development

- Committee/ National Climate Change Committee
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Kelley Drye & Warren LLP
- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission
- Soloricon Ltd.
- St. Lucia Department of Physical Planning
- St. Lucia Department of Sustainable Development
- St. Lucia Forestry Department
- St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Authority (SLHTA)
- St. Lucia Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Rural Development
- St. Lucia Ministry of Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology
- St. Lucia Ministry of Tourism
- St. Lucia National Conservation Fund (SLUNCA)
- St. Lucia National Trust (SLNT)
- The George Family
- The St. Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society
- The Stimson Center
- Water and Sewage Company (WASCO)

Paraguay

- Asociación Agropecuaria de Agua Dulce (APAD)
- Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios para un Chaco Sustentable (APACS)
- Asociación Rural del Paraguay (ARP)
- Cámara de Fitosanitarios y Fertilizantes (CAFYF)
- Cámara Paraguaya de Procesadores de Oleaginosas y Cereales (cappro)
- Comunidad indígena Ache -Naranjal

- Comunidad Indígena Ytu - Abai
- Comunidades Indígenas del Chaco
- Cooperativa Chortitzer
- Cooperativa de Producción Agropecuaria Naranjal Ltda. (COPRONAR)
- Cooperativa Fernheim
- Cooperativa Neuland
- Cooperativa Pindó
- Dirección de Extensión Agraria (DEAg)
- Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias de la Universidad Nacional de Asunción- Sede Chaco
- Federación de Cooperativas de Producción (FECOPROD)
- Fundación Ideagro
- Fundación Ysapy
- Gobernación de Alto Paraguay
- Gobernación de Alto Paraná
- Gobernación de Boquerón
- Gobernación de Caazapá
- Grupos CREA
- Instituto Paraguayo del Indígena (INDI)
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería
- Ministerio del Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible
- Municipalidad de Abai
- Municipalidad de Bahía Negra
- Municipalidad de Caazapá
- Municipalidad de Filadelfia
- Municipalidad de Fuerte Olimpo
- Municipalidad de Loma Plata
- Municipalidad de Mariscal José Félix Estigarribia
- Municipalidad de Naranjal
- Municipalidad de San Cristóbal
- Municipalidad de Santa Rita
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