

## **UNEP-WCMC to convene a new Global Data Partnership for Critical Marine and Coastal Ecosystems**

Declines in marine biodiversity and ecosystem function mean that the need for freely available, reliable, and scale-relevant data on marine and coastal ecosystems is at an all time high.

The importance of marine and coastal ecosystems for critical ecosystem services such as coastal protection, waste processing, food security, and carbon sequestration, is becoming ever more apparent. However, our quantitative knowledge of these contributions is heavily limited by a lack of baseline data. Such data are typically unavailable as consolidated global datasets, and are instead geographically dispersed and unorganised.

Of existing global ecosystem and habitat datasets, including those compiled by UNEP-WCMC and its partners, most provide only static snapshots of extent, with little attribution of quality or measurement of change through time, and poor scalability from global to local applications. As such, these datasets currently have limited value for trend assessments, policy planning, or management prioritisation activities, including adaptive resource management and climate change mitigation.

To address these challenges, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) is convening a **Global Data Partnership for Critical Marine and Coastal Ecosystems**, a network of agencies, institutions and individuals working together to develop, collate, maintain and deliver high resolution, datasets (distributed, where necessary and/or appropriate) that are critical to a range of contemporary assessments, analyses and processes such as:

- Assessing opportunities and progress in achieving internationally adopted targets for the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Monitoring changes in critical key ecosystems and habitats;
- Mapping natural coastal carbon sinks and the assessment of 'Blue Forest' carbon;
- Quantifying, valuing and modelling marine and coastal ecosystem services;
- Developing market-based instruments for the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Assessment of impacts and adaptation approaches to climate change; and
- Identifying ecosystem restoration priorities.

This Global Data Partnership is a contribution to the Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO-BON), and in support of various multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity. As such the process will be fully inclusive and transparent. If you have comments or feedback, or would like to contribute or participate, **please contact Louisa Wood by 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010**. An initial teleconference will be planned for later in the year.

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