

# Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)

Scientific collaboration among dedicated experts to better understand marine biodiversity and support country efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets



Convention on  
Biological Diversity



Japan  
Biodiversity  
Fund



COLEACANTHS, INDIAN OCEAN (PHOTO: PETER TIMM) ©

### **Scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs)**

In 2008, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9) adopted the following scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats (further details available at <http://www.cbd.int/marine/doc/azores-brochure-en.pdf>):

#### **CBD scientific criteria for ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs) (annex I, decision IX/20)**

1. Uniqueness or Rarity
2. Special importance for life history stages of species
3. Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
4. Vulnerability, Fragility, Sensitivity, or Slow recovery
5. Biological Productivity
6. Biological Diversity
7. Naturalness

### **Application of scientific criteria for EBSAs**

In 2010, COP 10 noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can be achieved through a variety of means, including marine protected areas and impact assessments.

### **Who identifies EBSAs**

COP 10 emphasized that the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

### **Dataset for identifying EBSAs**

COP 10 emphasized that identification of EBSAs should use the best available scientific and technical information and integrate the traditional, scientific, technical, and technological knowledge of indigenous and local communities, and requested the Executive

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Secretary to facilitate availability and interoperability of the best available marine and coastal biodiversity data sets and information across global, regional and national scales.

### **Scientific description of EBSAs at the regional level**

COP 10 requested the Executive Secretary to organize a series of regional workshops with a primary objective to facilitate the description of EBSAs through application of scientific criteria as well as other relevant compatible and complementary nationally and intergovernmentally agreed scientific criteria, as well as the scientific guidance for the application of EBSA criteria.

### **Endorsement by COP of the report on description of areas meeting EBSA criteria and submission of the report to UNGA processes**

COP 10 requested the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to prepare reports based on scientific and technical evaluation of information from the regional workshops, setting out details of areas that meet the scientific criteria for consideration and endorsement in a transparent manner by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, with a view to include the endorsed report in the repository and submit the endorsed report to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), particularly the Ad Hoc Open ended Informal Working Group, as well as relevant international organizations, Parties and other Governments.

### **Cooperation on managing areas meeting EBSA criteria**

COP 10 encouraged Parties, other Governments and competent intergovernmental organizations to cooperate collectively or on a regional or subregional basis, to identify and adopt appropriate measures for conserva-

tion and sustainable use in relation to EBSAs, including by establishing representative networks of marine protected areas in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and based on best scientific information available, and to inform the relevant processes within the UNGA.

### **A series of regional workshops to facilitate description of areas meeting EBSA criteria**

Pursuant to the request by COP 10, the Executive Secretary has convened a series of regional workshops in the following regions:

- » Western South Pacific (Nadi, Fiji, 22-25 November 2011, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=RWEBSA-WSPAC-01>),
- » Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic (Recife, Brazil, 28 February – 2 March 2012, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=RWEBSA-WCAR-01>),
- » Southern Indian Ocean (Flic en Flac, Mauritius, 30 July – 3 August 2012, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=EBSA-SIO-01>), and
- » Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific (Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, 27 – 31 August, 2012, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=EBSA-ETTP-01>).

Additional workshops will take place in South-Eastern Atlantic/West African region (Namibia, March 2013), North Pacific region (Russia, March 2013), and other remaining regions, in collaboration with Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-11/official/cop-11-22-en.pdf>). Similar processes have taken place or are underway for further refinement in both Mediterranean and North East Atlantic regions by UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan as well as OSPAR Commission and NEAFC, respectively.

## Contribution of CBD's EBSA process: *Views by regional workshop participants*

- » The EBSA process facilitates valuable scientific collaboration, enhancing our knowledge of marine biodiversity in open-ocean and deep-sea habitats
- » Data collation/synthesis/mapping undertaken for regional workshops contribute to existing regional and national conservation efforts
- » The expert-driven process provides an important starting point for future long-term continuous assessment with increasing availability of scientific information
- » EBSAs provide potential focus for future research and monitoring

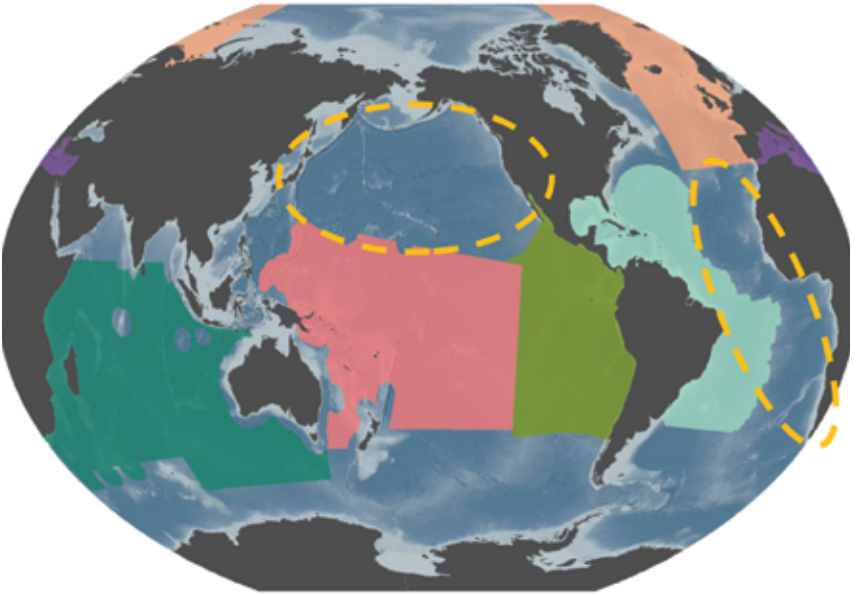


Figure 1. Coloured patches indicate areas covered by a series of CBD regional workshops and similar regional processes to facilitate the description of areas meeting EBSA criteria (dotted line indicates the confirmed future workshops to be convened by March 2013)

Southern Indian Ocean EBSA workshop, Mauritius, 30 July to 3 August, 2012





LEFT TO RIGHT: Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic EBSA workshop, Recife, Brazil; Western South Pacific EBSA workshop, Nadi, Fiji

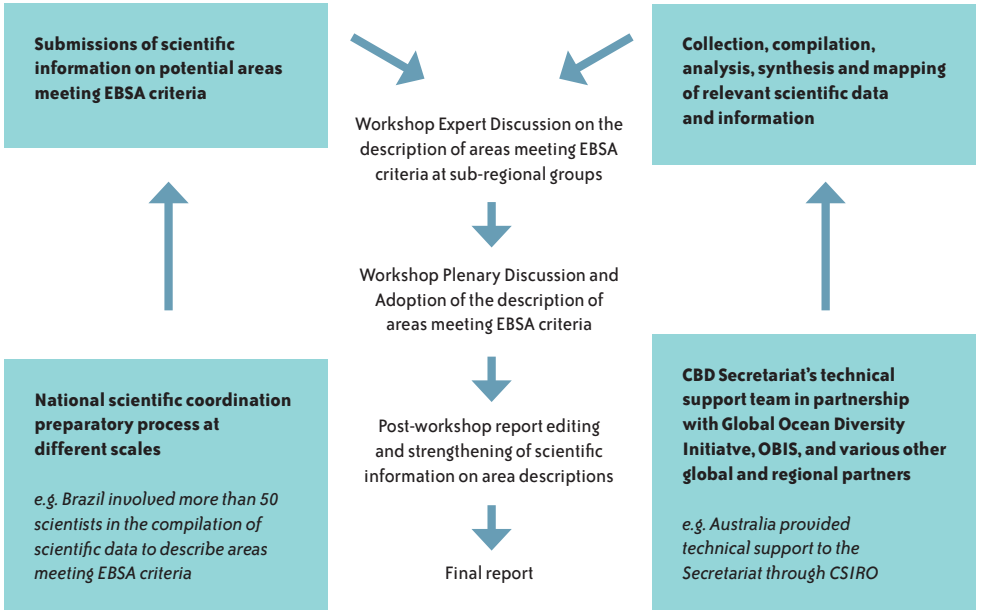


Figure 2. Scientific preparation prior to the regional workshop, workshop deliberation, and post-workshop refinement of scientific information

Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific EBSA workshop, Galapagos, Ecuador



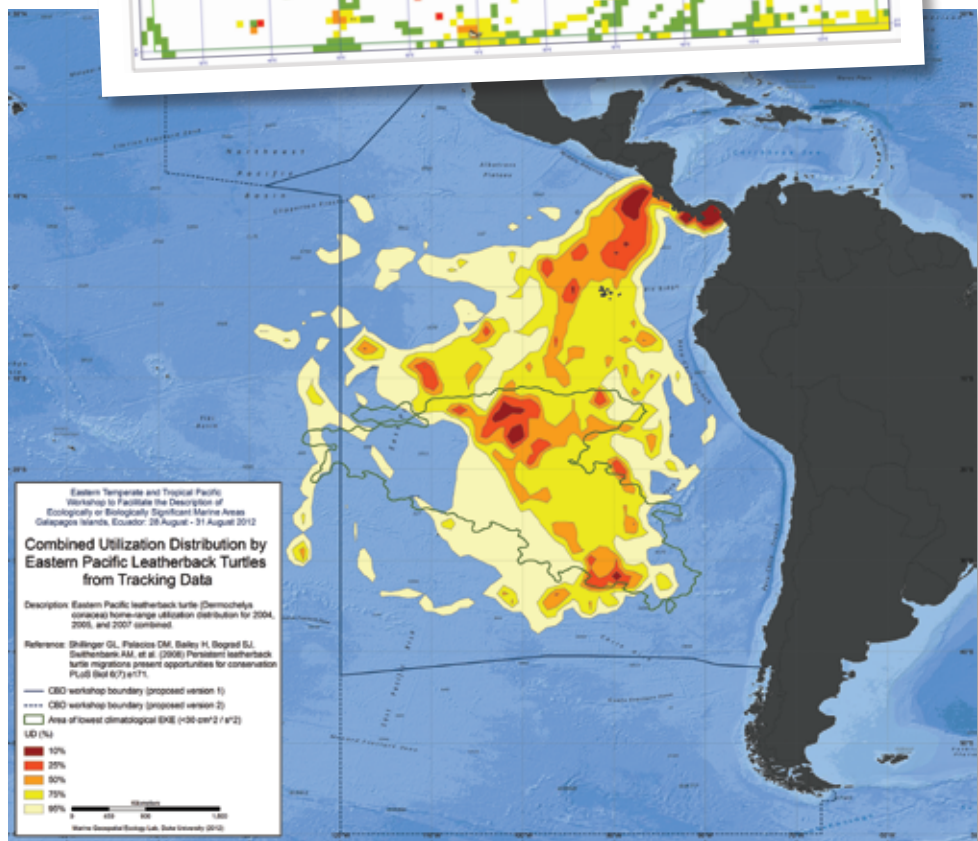
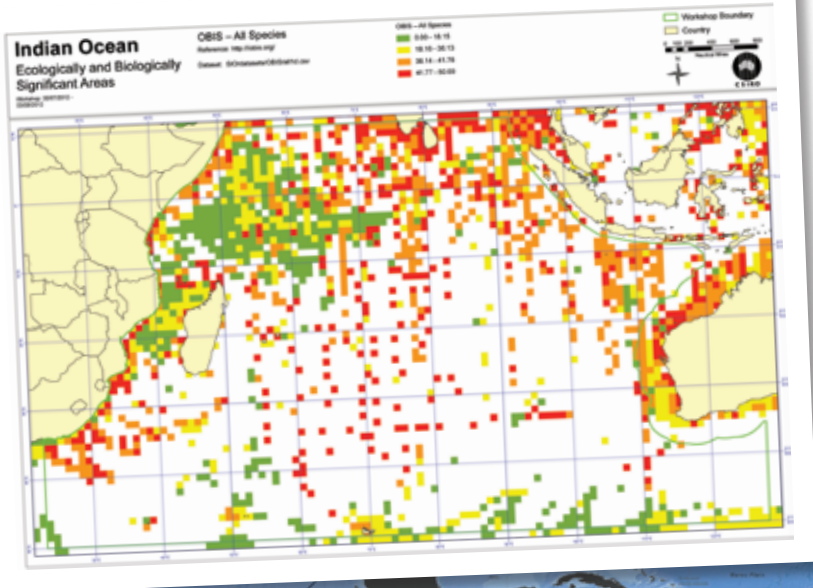
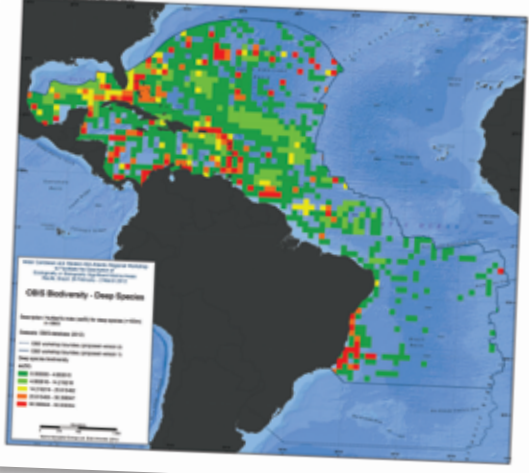
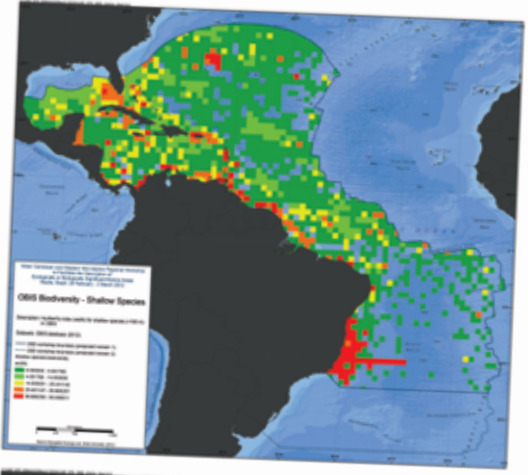
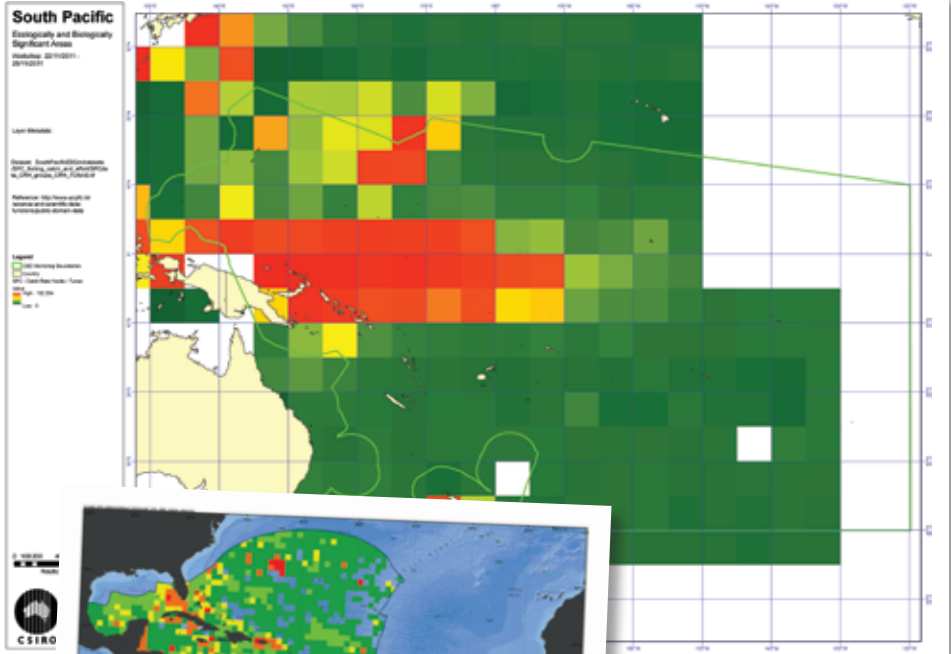


Figure 3. Compilation, analysis, synthesis and mapping of scientific information prior to the regional workshops, using 40 to 80 GIS data layers of biogeography, biological and physical data

SOURCES: UNEP/CBD/RW/EBSA/SO/1/2; UNEP/CBD/RW/EBSA/ETTP/1/1



MAPS PRODUCED BY:  
Commonwealth Scientific and  
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- » Japan Biodiversity Fund, European Commission, Government of Australia and Government of Brazil for providing financial resources;
- » Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP/CEP), Nairobi Convention Secretariat, Permanent Commission on South Pacific (CPPS) and FAO for co-organizing the regional workshops;
- » OSPAR Commission and North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, and UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan for collaborating on CBD's EBSA process;
- » Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) of Australia, Duke University (Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab), and other members of the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) for providing scientific and technical support;
- » Experts from the following Parties, other Governments and organizations, who contributed to CBD's regional EBSA workshops:

## **Western South Pacific region**

Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France/New Caledonia, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, American Samoa, International Seabed Authority (ISA), Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS)/IOC–UNESCO, IUCN Regional Office for Oceania, SPREP, University of the South Pacific (USP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI), Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), BirdLife International, Conservation International Pacific Islands Program, and Wildlife Conservation Society.

## **Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic region**

Barbados, Belize, Bermuda/United Kingdom, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, French Guiana/France, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, United States of America, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme – Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP), Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS)/IOC–UNESCO, OBIS–SEAMAP, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI), BirdLife International, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, Caribbean

Marine Protected Areas Network and Forum – Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Secretariat (CRFM), Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Archipelago of San Andres, Old Providence and Santa Catalina (CORALINA), Institute of Marine Affairs in Trinidad and Tobago, Sargasso Sea Alliance, Universidad Federal de Pernambuco, University of the West Indies, and the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Trust (WIDECAST).

## **Southern Indian Ocean region**

Australia, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa Sri Lanka, United Kingdom and United Republic of Tanzania, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Seabed Authority, Nairobi Convention Secretariat, UNDP/GEF Agulhas and Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystems (ASCLME) Project, UNESCO–IOC Sub Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States; IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Secretariat/Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals; IUCN Global Marine Program, IUCN/Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, Indian Ocean Commission, South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOC-ARC); BirdLife International, Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO), Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), Global Ocean Observing System for Indian Ocean (IGOOS), International Collective in Support of Fish Workers, Southern Indian Ocean Deepsea Fishers Association, Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association; Mauritius Oceanography Institute, Tanzania Deep Sea Fishing Authority, University of Nairobi, WWF Madagascar & West Indian Ocean Programme Office.

## **Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific region**

Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America, Permanent Commission on South Pacific (CPPS) Secretariat, South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization, Corredor Marino del Pacifico Este Tropical, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI), IUCN–WCPA, BirdLife International, Galapagos National Park, Instituto de Fomento Pesquero Chile/CPPS, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Valparaiso/CPPS, Universidad Catolica del Norte de Chile/CPPS, Universidad de Concepcion Chile/CPPS, Duke University (Technical Support Team), Conservation International–Ecuador, and World Wildlife Fund.

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