

BECHT FOUNDATION

**Protecting and
restoring** our planet's
biodiversity through
marine conservation and
climate communications

*A philanthropic response to combating
threats to our planet's ecosystems and climate*



October 2024

From the founders:

“We have always believed we can and should live in full harmony with nature. Nature, even when not kind to us, is something to be nurtured, cherished and taken care of.

When we started our foundation, we were much less concerned about this than we were about the unneeded human suffering around the world. However, as time went by, we became increasingly convinced that the way we are living and exploiting our planetary resources is very much damaging the world we live in, will certainly lead to increased suffering and possibly even the demise of mankind. As a consequence, we took a big step back and completely reassessed the purpose and direction of our foundation in 2019, to focus on biodiversity through marine conservation and later included climate communications as an additional pillar. You will find the result of that review and the evolution of the foundation in the following.”

Ann & Bart Becht

Bechtfoundation.org



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Established by Ann and Bart Becht in 2006, Becht Foundation is a UK-based global funder dedicated to protecting and restoring our planet's biodiversity through marine conservation and climate communications.

Healthy ocean ecosystems play a vital role in supporting biodiversity, regulating climate, and providing livelihoods for millions of people, yet they remain underfunded and undervalued.

Becht Foundation supports marine conservation projects and campaigns to establish highly or fully protected marine protected areas, combat overfishing, and protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems. We also fund data-driven communications campaigns aimed at shifting the narrative on climate change and building strong citizen support for climate action.

Timeline: How we got to where we are today

2006

Ann and Bart Becht founded Becht Family Charitable Trust to fund humanitarian aid, education, and biodiversity.

2014–2019

Recognised that a significant portion of human suffering stems from natural disasters and climate change, increasingly driven by our exploitation and mismanagement of the planet. Failing to address climate change and biodiversity loss will lead to exponentially greater humanitarian crises.

2019

Conducted a strategic review to reassess purpose. Trustees met with approximately 30 experts.

- Engaged with Ten Years' Time, specialists in strategic philanthropy within the planetary health space.
- Identified the ocean as an untapped source of resilience against climate change and biodiversity loss, with a high return on investment.

2020

Adopted a new purpose: **protecting and restoring our planet's biodiversity through marine conservation**

- Hired a Programme Director to strategically increase funding.
- Made first marine grants to organisations such as Oceana, Blue Ventures, and Client Earth.

2021

Based on Year 1 learnings, identified three strategic priorities:

- 30 by 30: fully/highly protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030
- Fighting overfishing
- Protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems

2022

Added a new strategic pillar of **climate communications** and renamed the trust to Becht Foundation.

2023

Hired a Programme Manager to support and grow grant-making.

2024

Ramped up funding to ~\$12 million annually.

Strategic pillars

	MARINE			CLIMATE
	30 BY 30	FIGHTING OVERFISHING	MARINE & COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS	CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS
Priority area	Increase coverage of marine protected areas (MPAs) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Create more highly/fully protected MPAsConvert paper parks to highly protected MPAs Improve enforcement & compliance	End overfishing: reducing the extraction of fish beyond sustainable levels End destructive fishing: stopping practices that damage habitats and increase bycatch	Support protection and recovery of marine and coastal ecosystems for their carbon storage, biodiversity and livelihood benefits. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regenerative ocean farmingEffective mangrove restoration	Generate strong citizen support for climate action through science-based, data-driven performance marketing
Target % budget	30%	20%	10%	30%
GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS: Global				
LEVERS: Campaigning, strategic communications, transparency, policy advocacy, technology and enforcement				
MISCELLANEOUS GRANTS: 10%				

Key achievements of a selection of our partners between 2020 to 2024:

30 by 30

- Becht Foundation is supporting the protection of approximately 3.7 million km² of ocean, representing 1% of the world’s ocean. We fund projects to establish new marine protected areas and improve existing ones, with a focus on full or high protections.
- Tristan da Cunha fully protected 698,000 km² – largest reserve in the Atlantic Ocean and fifth largest in the world (RSPB and Blue Marine Foundation).
 - Australia tripled the size of Macquarie Island Marine Park to a total area of 475,465 km², ~93% of which is fully protected – an area larger than the size of Germany (The Pew Charitable Trusts).
 - Colombia announced a \$245 million agreement to permanently protect 178,000 km², resulting in more than 30% of its marine and terrestrial ecosystems protected (Enduring Earth).
 - Through the ‘Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation’ programme (The Nature Conservancy):
 - Gabon unlocked \$163 million to finance ocean protection and management of 30% of its ocean by 2030, in mainland Africa’s first debt swap for ocean conservation (~61,000 km²).
 - Barbados unlocked \$50 million to protect and effectively manage up to 30% of its exclusive economic zone (~56,000 km²).
 - Belize unlocked around \$180 million to protect 30% of its ocean in the world’s largest marine debt restructuring transaction (~10,300 km²).

Fighting overfishing

- 100% of global industrial fishing vessels and all stationary infrastructure at sea to be mapped by 2028 (Global Fishing Watch).
- 885,000 small-scale fishers reached in 15 countries, with 21,000 km² of ocean protected (Blue Ventures).
- European Court of Justice clarified that EU ministers have been breaking the law by approving fishing quotas that lead to overfishing – a legal first for fisheries (ClientEarth).
- United Kingdom committed to fully protecting more than 20% of its waters from destructive fishing practices (Oceana UK).

Marine & coastal ecosystems

- Over 6,000 prospective and active regenerative ocean farmers and other industry stakeholders trained and supported (GreenWave).
- National scale mangrove restoration workshops conducted in Kenya, Ecuador, Indonesia, and Bahamas (Mangrove Action Project).

Climate communications

- Michigan introduced a new clean energy standard requiring the state to meet 100% clean energy by 2040, and California passed a \$54 billion climate budget and 17 climate bills, including legislative commitments to zero emissions energy targets and limitations on fossil fuel production (Potential Energy Coalition).

INTRODUCTION

When we started our foundation in 2006, we were primarily focused on alleviating human suffering globally rather than environmental issues. Over time, however, we've grown increasingly convinced that the way we exploit our planetary resources significantly contributes to this suffering. In 2019, we decided to re-evaluate the purpose of Becht Foundation, seeking to understand the role we could play in protecting and restoring our planet's biodiversity. Over the course of our investigation, we engaged with more than 30 experts, spanning scientists, policy makers, entrepreneurs, and leading organisations at the forefront of the battle against climate change and rescue of collapsing ecosystems.

Our research highlighted the ocean as a crucial yet untapped source of resilience against climate change and biodiversity loss. Drawing from our background in consumer marketing, we also recognised the potential of data-driven communications to catalyse shifts in consumer behaviour and reshape the narrative on climate change.

Becht Foundation now combines its efforts across two strategic pillars:

1

Marine conservation:

Protecting and restoring our planet's biodiversity

2

Climate communications:

Reshaping the narrative surrounding climate change

In the following pages, we outline how Becht Foundation leverages its resources to champion the protection and restoration of our planet's biodiversity through marine conservation and climate communications. While this report does not aim to exhaustively cover every philanthropic opportunity in these fields, it focuses on key areas where our foundation can effectively deploy its resources and capitalise on its core strengths.

OUR APPROACH

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Grants

Becht Foundation has a clearly defined scope with strategic priorities and goals centred on two main areas: marine conservation and climate communications.

We support projects and activities that utilise a range of interventions, including strategic litigation, policy reform, community engagement, capacity building, research and monitoring, technology and innovation, and communications.

Our primary focus is on results-oriented projects that drive tangible, measurable transformations in marine conservation and climate communications. We prioritise building long-term partnerships with organisations that have clear goals and measurable KPIs to monitor progress.

As a small and agile team, we operate without the constraints of annual funding cycles, allowing us to make swift decisions. Over time, we are strategically focusing our grants portfolio on fewer, high-impact organisations, while also selectively exploring partnerships with potential new organisations that align with the foundation's goals and milestones-driven approach.

Trustee involvement

Trustees and staff are involved in every stage of the project lifecycle, including due diligence in grant making, setting milestones and KPIs, and monitoring progress.

The trustees thoroughly assess proposals and engage in 2–3 rounds of evaluation for both new grants and renewals. They review grant report summaries every six months and evaluate all grant decisions annually.

Collaboration

We actively seek partnerships with charities, foundations, and governments, to drive systemic change. Our collaborative approach ensures that our efforts are amplified and are more effective.

Investments

Biodiversity and climate change are global challenges we wish to support for the foreseeable future. We have therefore established Becht Foundation's investment objectives to generate capital appreciation and provide liquidity, which over the long term should allow the foundation to maintain the real value of the assets, whilst funding its annual expenditure. The trustees have agreed an asset allocation strategy with investment managers, which is set to achieve this objective.

To this end Becht Foundation's assets are invested widely and diversified by asset class, by manager and by security. Asset classes can include cash, bonds, equities, property, hedge funds, structured products, private equity, commodities, and any other asset that is deemed suitable for the foundation.

The investment philosophy is also to invest a proportion of Becht Foundation's assets into profit seeking companies that have a social charter that is consistent with the purposes of the charity. On occasion this may include early-stage higher risk companies where the financial returns are not yet proven but the purpose is strongly aligned with Becht Foundation's objectives, particularly regarding the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems.



OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

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Marine conservation

Covering over two-thirds of the Earth's surface, the ocean is crucial for our planet's health. It provides half of the oxygen we breath, regulates climate, and supports a vast array of marine life, which is essential for the livelihoods and food security of billions of people.

Despite its importance to life on Earth, the ocean is under serious threat from human activities. Climate change is causing ocean warming and acidification, while pollution, overfishing, and habitat destruction are putting marine ecosystems at risk.

However, examples from around the world demonstrate the resilience of ocean ecosystems. With appropriate interventions, such as establishing marine protected areas, ending overfishing, and safeguarding marine and coastal ecosystems, ocean restoration efforts can yield faster results than land-based ecosystems. Yet despite its critical importance, marine conservation remains severely underfunded, receiving less than 1% of global philanthropic giving¹.

The ocean's remarkable resilience and the critical need for funding drive our commitment to marine conservation.

Our marine conservation funding focuses on three main goals:

- 1 Protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030
- 2 Fighting overfishing
- 3 Protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems

Protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030

The 30 by 30 conservation target aims to protect 30% of the Earth's land and ocean by 2030. It was introduced to address biodiversity loss and climate change, gaining global support at the 2021 UN Biodiversity Conference as a critical step towards preserving ecosystems and species.

Establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) is essential to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030. MPAs are designated parts of the ocean that receive legal protection and management to ensure the long-term conservation of marine ecosystems. When effectively managed, MPAs yield significant benefits. By excluding extractive and destructive practices, marine life thrives, leading to increases in population numbers, weight, and species diversity. This positive impact extends beyond the boundaries of the MPA, resulting in a spillover effect that enhances fishing yields for local communities.

Engaging stakeholders and communities is essential for creating sustainable and resilient MPAs that effectively preserve marine biodiversity and support local economies. Cabo Pulmo in Mexico is an example of how community-led conservation can make a difference. Once heavily impacted by overfishing, local communities pushed for the creation of the Cabo Pulmo Marine Reserve in the 1990s. Within a decade, fish biomass increased by over 460%, proving that

¹ Lewis, F., Saliman, A. & Peterson, E. Funding Trends 2023: Tracking the State of Global Ocean Funding. Our Shared Seas (2023).

well-managed marine protection can bring ecosystems back to lifeⁱⁱ.

Status of global marine protections

Figure 1 and the table below illustrate global progress in expanding marine protected areas.

The total ocean area is about 360 million km². To meet the 30 by 30 target, 108 million km² need protection, requiring 75 million km² of new protections.

In 2020, 7.9% of the ocean was protected, with 2.5% fully/highly protected and 2.8% lightly/minimally protected. The remaining areas were designated but lacked active management.

By 2024, protected areas increased to 9.2%, with 2.9% highly/fully protected.

Since 2020, an additional 4.7 million km² have been protected, including 1.4 million km² of new high/full protections.

		%	Area ('000 sq km)
Area of Global Ocean			
Area of Global Ocean	Total ocean	100%	361,071
	Target 30x30	30%	108,321
	Gap versus current protections	21%	75,103
Area of Global Ocean Protections from 2020 to 2024 ⁱⁱⁱ			
Total Area of Protections	2020	7.9%	28,525
	2024	9.2%	33,219
	New protections	1.3%	4,694
Areas of High/Full Protections	2020	2.5%	9,027
	2024	2.9%	10,471
	New protections	0.4%	1,444

Figure 1 Marine protected area coverage of the global ocean, by year

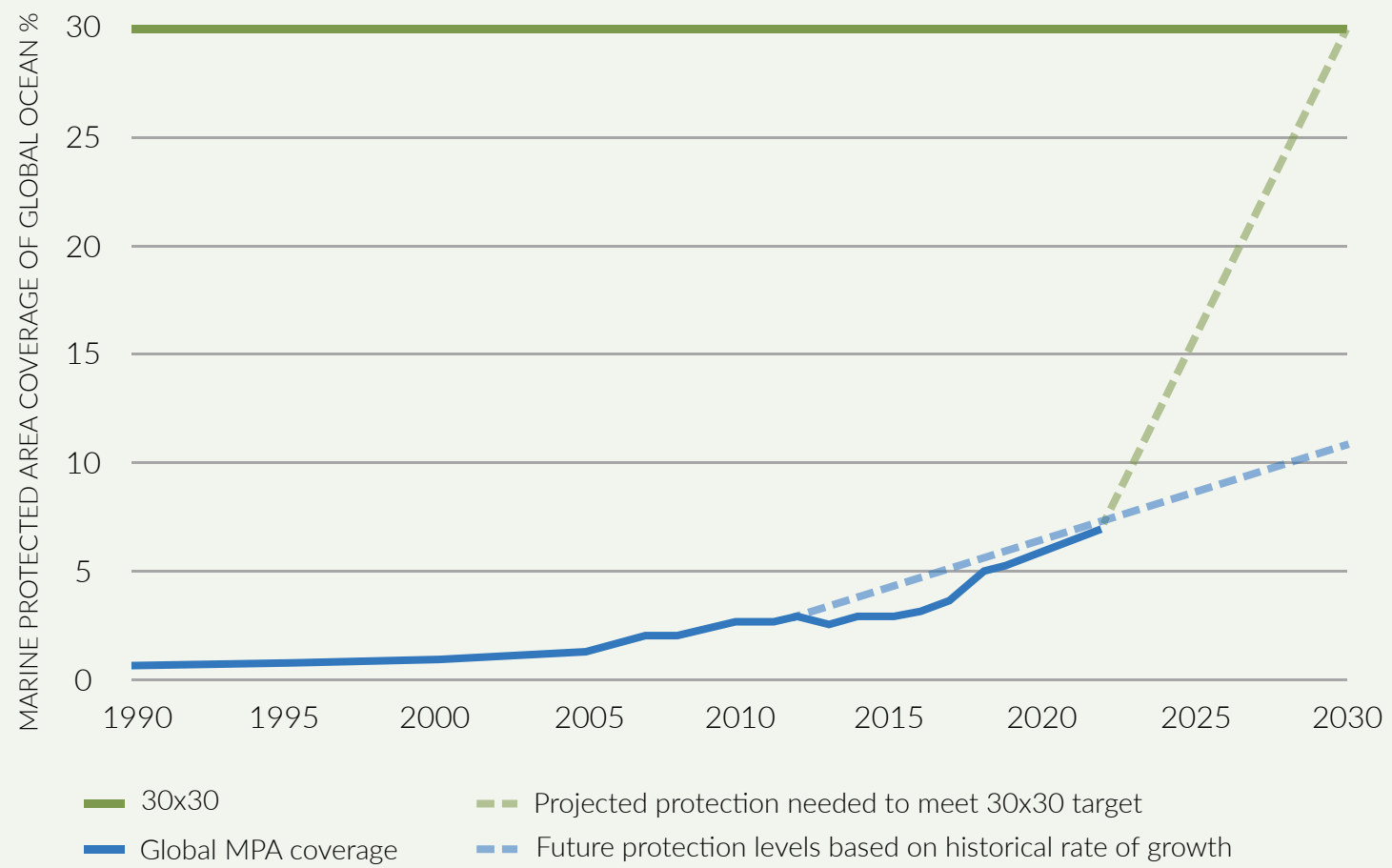


Figure reproduced with permission from Our Shared Seas^{iv}

While momentum to protect the ocean has increased recently, reaching the goal of 30% protection by 2030 within the next six years is a highly ambitious task. We recognise the significant challenges ahead and do not take them lightly. However, recent developments give us confidence that progress is achievable, bringing us closer to the 30% target:

- In December 2022, over 190 countries adopted the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) – an international commitment to protect our planet's

biodiversity. These countries have agreed to effectively protect and manage 30% of the world's terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030^v.

- The [High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People](#), which includes 119 countries, is dedicated to the global goal of effectively conserving and managing the world's land and ocean. Member countries such as Canada have shown leadership by protecting approximately 15% of their ocean areas.

ⁱⁱ Aburto-Oropeza, O., Erisman, B., Galland, G. R., Mascareñas-Osorio, I., Sala, E. & Ezcurra, E. Large recovery of fish biomass in a no-take marine reserve. PLoS ONE 6(8), e23601 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.002360>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://mpatlas.org/>: MPA Guide Assessment of Marine Protection (August 2024).

^{iv} Peterson, E., Lewis, F. & Saliman, A. Funding Trends 2023: Tracking Grantmaking in Marine Area-based Conservation. Our Shared Seas (2023).

^v UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Retrieved from <https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-final-text-kunming-montreal-gbf-221222> (2022)

- The 2023 adoption of the High Seas Treaty addresses the management and protection of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which cover 64% of the ocean. Achieving the 30% target is impossible without including the high seas. While the treaty still requires ratification and more work is needed to establish effective MPAs in these waters, it lays the groundwork for progress towards the 30 by 30 goal.
- Innovative mechanisms such as Blue Bonds (debt-for-nature swaps in the marine space), facilitate rapid progress by providing financial resources for nations to reach 30% protection, benefiting both ecosystems and local communities.
- Organisations such as ClientEarth, Oceana, and Ocean Vision Legal are holding governments accountable for failing to protect MPAs from extractive and destructive activities such as bottom trawling^{vi}.
- There is an increasing focus on protections led by Indigenous and local communities, whose generational ecological knowledge as long-standing ocean stewards is crucial for effective and sustainable conservation.

Closing the gap and ensuring the effective enforcement of MPAs are crucial priorities for Becht Foundation's marine conservation work. **Our goal is to contribute towards protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030 by creating new fully or highly protected marine areas and ensuring effective management of MPAs.** To achieve this, we fund organisations that

prioritise consulting with stakeholders to ensure their involvement and support in the planning and management process.

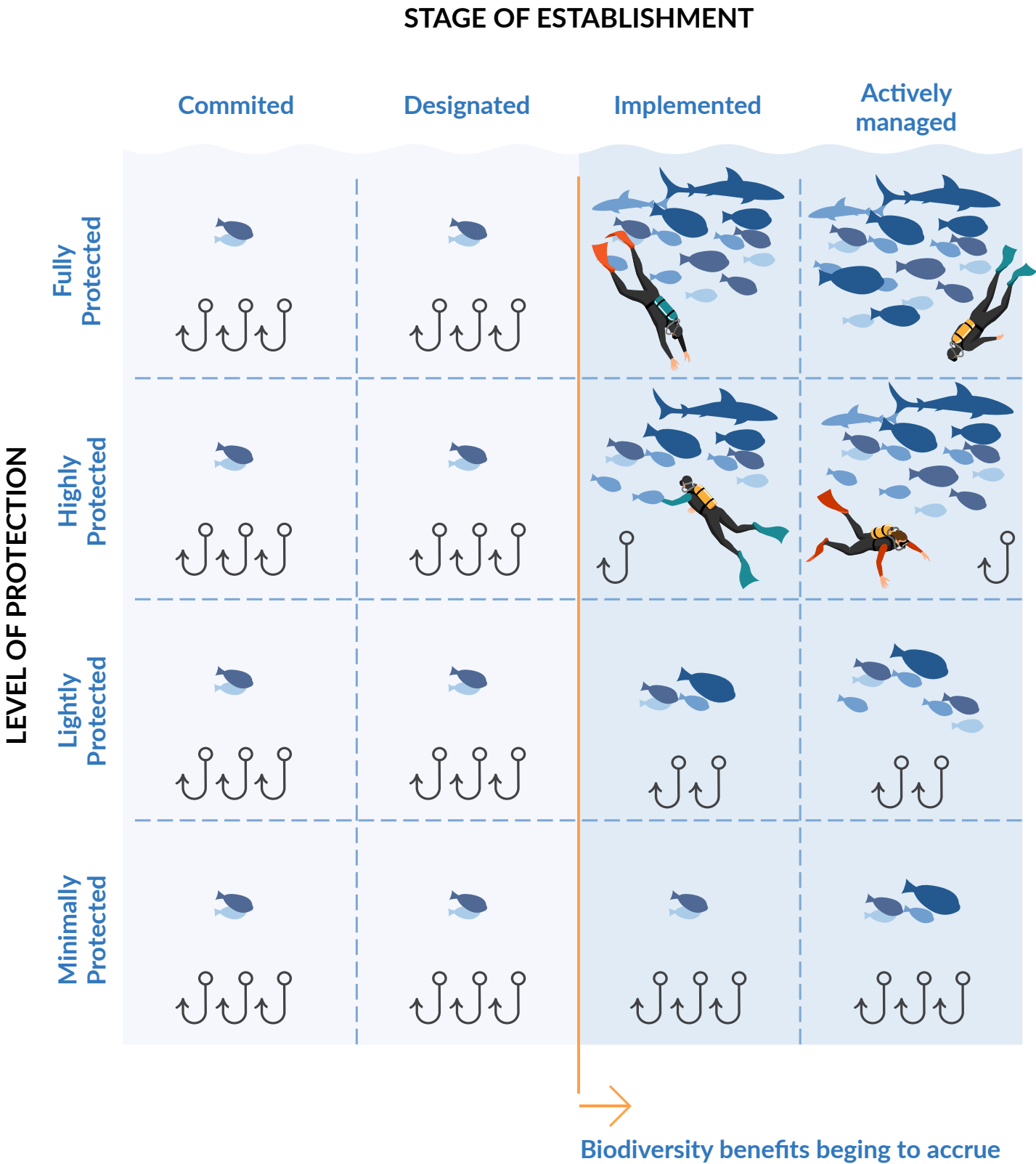
For example, we are proud to support The Nature Conservancy, which has helped countries such as Seychelles, Belize, Barbados, and Gabon to refinance part of their national debt, generating funds to protect 30% of their coastal waters. We are also supporting Oceans North to advance protections for up to 825,000 km² of marine and coastal habitat in Canada's Arctic and Antarctic regions. In Ireland, we fund the Fair Seas coalition, which is campaigning for the Irish government to develop ambitious legislation allowing for 30% of Irish waters to be protected.

Impact evaluation of Becht-funded MPA projects

We are led by science when assessing the impact of our projects and find [The MPA Guide](#) to be an essential science-based evaluation tool and framework. The guide identifies different types of MPAs and connects these to the outcomes they are expected to deliver^{vii}. The MPA Guide consists of four elements: Stage of Establishment, Level of Protection, Enabling Conditions, and Outcomes.

As shown in Figure 2, actively managed highly or fully protected areas deliver the most significant benefits for conservation and people. This is why Becht Foundation focuses on supporting projects that increase coverage of actively managed, highly or fully protected areas.

Figure 2 Matrix based on LEVEL of protection and STAGE of establishment of MPAs^{viii}:



^{vi} <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jul/10/threats-sea-humans-lawyers-fight-oceans-lawsuits-climate>
^{vii} Oregon State University, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, Marine Conservation Institute, National Geographic Society, and UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre. An Introduction to The MPA Guide. <https://mpaguide-protectedplanet.net> (2021).

^{viii} Figure reproduced with permission from Grorud-Colvert, K., Sullivan-Stack, J., Roberts, C., Constant, V., Horta E Costa, B., Pike, E. P., ... Lubchenco, J. The MPA Guide: A framework to achieve global goals for the ocean. Science 373(6560), eabf0861 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abf0861>

The table below summarises the actual and projected impact of Becht-funded projects contributing to the 30 by 30 goal. **These outcomes are made possible through the collaborative efforts of funders, NGOs, governments, and local communities all working together towards the progress outlined below.**

Becht Foundation is supporting the protection of approximately 3.7 million km² of ocean, which represents 1% of the global ocean and is roughly equivalent in size to India and Spain combined. Roughly 60% of these areas are expected to be fully or highly protected.

	Geography	Organisations	Total protections ('000 km ²)	High/full protections ('000 km ²)
1	Tristan da Cunha (UK Overseas Territory)	International Eco Fund RSPB & Blue Marine Foundation	698	698
2	Chile	Oceana	0.8	0.8
3	Canada	Oceans North	825	776
4	Honduras & Guatemala	Rare	15.3	1.2
5	Gabon, Barbados, Belize and pipeline	The Nature Conservancy (Blue Bonds)	1,129	TBD
6	Ireland	Fair Seas	39.4	TBD
7	Colombia	Enduring Earth	178.3	88
8	Australia	Pew	722.4	523.8
9	EU	EU MPAs Coalition	132	TBD
10	Argentina	Por el Mar	5.1	4.1
		Total	3,745	2,092



Fighting overfishing

Fish provide at least 20% of animal protein for over 3 billion people worldwide, and global fisheries employ millions of people. Our growing reliance on fisheries is depleting ocean life, with the percentage of stocks fished at unsustainable levels increasing from 10% in the mid-1970s to 37.7% in 2021. However, 62.3% of fishery stocks were still within biologically sustainable levels. Notably, for the ten marine species with the largest landings in 2021, 78.9% of their stocks were fished sustainably. **This confirms that effective fisheries management can make a difference and highlights the urgent need to replicate successful management measures in unsustainable fisheries^{ix}.**

Overfishing poses a severe threat to marine life and the health of ocean ecosystems. Harvesting fish faster than they can reproduce leads to population declines and ecological

imbalances, disrupting marine food webs and damaging habitats. This makes ecosystems less resilient to environmental changes. Key consequences include the collapse of fish stocks, loss of biodiversity, and negative impacts on the livelihoods of communities that depend on fishing for food and income. Indigenous and coastal communities dependent on traditional fishing practices are particularly vulnerable to the effects of overfishing.

Destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling not only impact biodiversity, but also contribute to climate change. Dragging heavy nets along the sea floor releases stored carbon, reducing the ocean’s ability to combat climate change and increasing greenhouse gases. A study published in January 2024 found that 55–60% of the carbon released by bottom trawling enters the atmosphere, while the remainder dissolves in the ocean, increasing acidity^x.

^{ix} FAO. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024: Blue Transformation in Action. Rome. (2024). <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0683en>

^x Atwood, T. B., Romanou, A., DeVries, T., Lerner, P. E., Mayorga, J. S., Bradley, D., ... Sala, E. Atmospheric CO2 emissions and ocean acidification from bottom-trawling. Frontiers in Marine Science 10 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2023.1125137>

Several factors drive overfishing. High global demand for seafood, driven by population growth and rising incomes, incentivizes overexploitation. Destructive fishing practices, such as bottom trawling, lead to significant bycatch and widespread destruction of biodiversity. Inadequate management and regulation, including poorly implemented quotas and weak enforcement, contribute to the problem. Economic incentives, such as government subsidies and the profitability of certain species, drive excessive fishing efforts. In addition, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities bypass regulations, further depleting fish stocks.

Becht Foundation recognises the urgent need to address overfishing to protect marine biodiversity and ensure sustainable ocean resources. Solving this problem requires a multifaceted approach. **Our goals are to ban destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling, enforce legal obligations to end overfishing, and support sustainable small-scale fisheries.**

For example, we support organisations such as ClientEarth in their efforts to legally enforce science-based catch limits, ensuring sustainable harvesting of fish populations. Through our support of Global Fishing Watch, we are helping to strengthen international cooperation and utilise advanced technologies, such as satellite monitoring, to track and deter IUU fishing activities. In Chile, Alaska, and the UK, we are funding Oceana's campaigns to ban the destructive fishing practice of bottom trawling. We also support Rare and Blue Ventures, organisations that work with local communities to manage their fisheries, integrating traditional knowledge with scientific approaches to

ensure sustainable practices that protect both marine life and the livelihoods of those who depend on fishing.

Protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems

Marine and coastal ecosystems are crucial for climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. Ecosystems such as mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrass meadows offer a range of benefits.

They act as natural barriers, protecting coastlines from storms, hurricanes, and rising sea levels, while also reducing erosion and property damage. They also serve as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide. Mangroves, for example, sequester carbon at a rate ten times greater than mature tropical forests^{xii}, making them critical in the fight against climate change. Similarly, tidal marshes and seagrass meadows store large amounts of carbon, often referred to as "blue carbon".

Coastal ecosystems play a crucial role in supporting the world's fisheries by providing breeding and nursery grounds for fish and other marine species, thereby enhancing biodiversity and sustaining marine lifecycles^{xiii}. Economically, they are vital for the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. They support fisheries, tourism, and leisure industries, contributing significantly to local and national economies.

Despite their importance, these ecosystems are under threat from human activities, climate

change, and pollution. Over the past five decades, 20–35% of mangroves have disappeared^{xiii}, leading to significant ecological and economic losses. By halting mangrove loss and initiating restoration efforts, we can offset carbon emissions and help coastal communities adapt to climate change impacts.

Our goal is to protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems, focusing on projects that benefit biodiversity and support livelihoods. Becht Foundation supports organisations such as Mangrove

Action Project (MAP) in its approach to mangrove restoration. Through its training and education programmes, MAP helps coastal communities to effectively conserve and restore these vital ecosystems. We are also proud supporters of the regenerative ocean farming organisation GreenWave, which is developing innovative and sustainable methods of growing seaweed and shellfish in the ocean. This farming technique is designed to restore marine ecosystems, absorb carbon dioxide, and provide sustainable food sources.

^{xii} Barbier, E. B., Hacker, S. D., Kennedy, C., Koch, E. W., Stier, A. C., & Silliman, B. R. The value of estuarine and coastal ecosystem services. *Ecological Monographs* 81(2), 169–193 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1890/10-1510.1>

^{xiii} From Grorud-Colvert, K., Sullivan-Stack, J., Roberts, C., Constant, V., Horta E Costa, B., Pike, E. P., ... Lubchenco, J. The MPA Guide: A framework to achieve global goals for the ocean. *Science* 373(6560), eabf0861 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abf0861>.



^{xii} Donato, D., Kauffman, J., Murdiyarso, D., Kurnianto, S., Stidham, M., & Kanninen, M. Mangroves among the most carbon-rich forests in the tropics. *Nature Geosci.* 4, 293–297 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1038/ngeo1123>

Climate communications

The field of marketing and communications has undergone profound changes in recent years. A decade ago, television was the dominant platform for advertising and communication. However, with the majority of the global population now equipped with smartphones, these devices have become ubiquitous in households worldwide. As a result, communication channels have shifted, with most marketing efforts now directed towards phones via social media, apps, and other digital platforms. This transition has transformed marketing and communications, evolving it from a primarily creative endeavour into a data-driven science.

In the business world, this approach is referred to as 'performance marketing', which allows for precise measurement of marketing returns on a weekly basis, segmented by detailed metrics including target audience, region, and campaign.

Regrettably, these powerful tools have been exploited by industries such as fossil-fuel companies to spread fear, obstruct progress, and protect profits. Similar tools have also been used in politics to polarise issues related to climate and biodiversity.

Our chairman Bart Becht has worked in the consumer marketing world for almost 40 years, including almost 20 years as the CEO of Reckitt Benckiser, one of the largest advertisers in the world. His extensive experience has given him an

awareness of the opportunities that effective communications present. **Acknowledging the potential of data-driven communications, our goal is to harness these methods to reshape the discourse surrounding climate change, leveraging these tools for positive change.** Climate communications is prioritised as highly as our '30 by 30' marine conservation pillar as part of our annual budget.

The power of data-driven communication and the urgent need to counter climate misinformation drive our commitment to climate communications.

We collaborate with organisations that use performance marketing tools typically employed by the private sector. Our focus is on campaigns that are highly data- and science-driven, enabling the strategic allocation of budgets to communication strategies that deliver the highest impact.

Becht Foundation supports Potential Energy Coalition in this effort. Potential Energy brings together leading creative and media talent to reshape the narrative on climate change, significantly enhancing support for urgent climate action from governments and businesses.

A global study conducted by Potential Energy across 23 countries found that, on average, 77% of people agree that "It is essential that

our government does whatever it takes to limit the effects of climate change", while just over 10% disagree^{xiv}. Although global support for climate action is high, effective action relies on individual policies, where public support can be more nuanced. Messaging that resonates with people's motivations can strengthen existing support and counter resistance.

For example, in California, Potential Energy Coalition and its partners led a campaign that increased citizen support for state legislation regulating oil and gas companies to protect Californians from pollution. This effort contributed to California passing a \$54 billion climate budget and 17 climate bills, which included commitments to zero-emission energy targets and limits on fossil fuel production.



^{xiv} Global Message Testing Studies on Climate Change conducted by Potential Energy Coalition, Yale Program on Climate Change Communications, The Melior Foundation and Zero Ideas (2023).

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

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In selecting projects, we are guided by science but recognise the importance of macro-factors such as governance, financing, and the socio-political landscape in achieving successful implementation of goals. We are interested in projects that lie at the intersection of science and macro-factors.

Highlighted below are some of the key strategic interventions supported by Becht Foundation:

Strategic litigation and policy reform

Science should drive policy change, with strategic litigation and lobbying helping to bridge the gap. Many harmful fishing practices persist due to outdated or poorly designed government policies, such as excessive fishing quotas. For example, ClientEarth has used legal actions to enforce sustainable fishing quotas in Europe, while the High Seas Alliance plays a crucial role in advocating for a global treaty to protect the high seas.

Community engagement and capacity building

Community engagement is essential for marine conservation as it integrates traditional knowledge and supports local stewardship. When communities take the lead in managing their marine resources, conservation strategies become more effective and are better tailored to their unique ecosystems. Involving local fishers helps preserve cultural heritage while promoting the economic stability of

coastal communities, ultimately contributing to healthier marine ecosystems and more resilient populations. Blue Ventures, Rare, and Oceans North work directly with coastal and Indigenous communities to promote locally led conservation efforts, which have proven successful in rebuilding fisheries and protecting marine biodiversity.

Technology and innovation

Advances in technology, such as satellite tracking and AI, enable effective and cost-efficient monitoring and enforcement of marine and fisheries policies. For instance, Global Fishing Watch promotes ocean sustainability through transparency by using technology to track and share global fishing activity in near real-time. Activists and governments can use this data to prevent illegal and unethical fishing practices.

Communications

Raising awareness is not enough; we must also drive action. By focusing on actionable steps and leveraging influential media, we aim to transform awareness about climate change and biodiversity loss into meaningful behaviour change. For example, we are funding Only One to use strategic communications to compel policymakers in Europe to take action against the destructive fishing practice of bottom trawling. This initiative highlights how targeted efforts can move from raising awareness to enacting real-world environmental policy changes.

CONCLUSION

Becht Foundation is committed to making a measurable impact to protect and restore our planet's biodiversity, through marine conservation and climate communications.

Within these focus areas, we expect our approaches and interventions to evolve as we learn more, and as new challenges and opportunities appear.

We are grateful to the experts who generously shared their time and insights during our strategy review and continue to do so on an ongoing basis.

We welcome feedback and thoughts on our approach and invite partners to join us in driving tangible change for a healthier, more resilient world.

