

La Plata dolphin or franciscana. Threatened species in the Patagonian Sea. Photo: Federico Sotomayor

## MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN ARGENTINA'S NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

A roadmap to guarantee its benefits

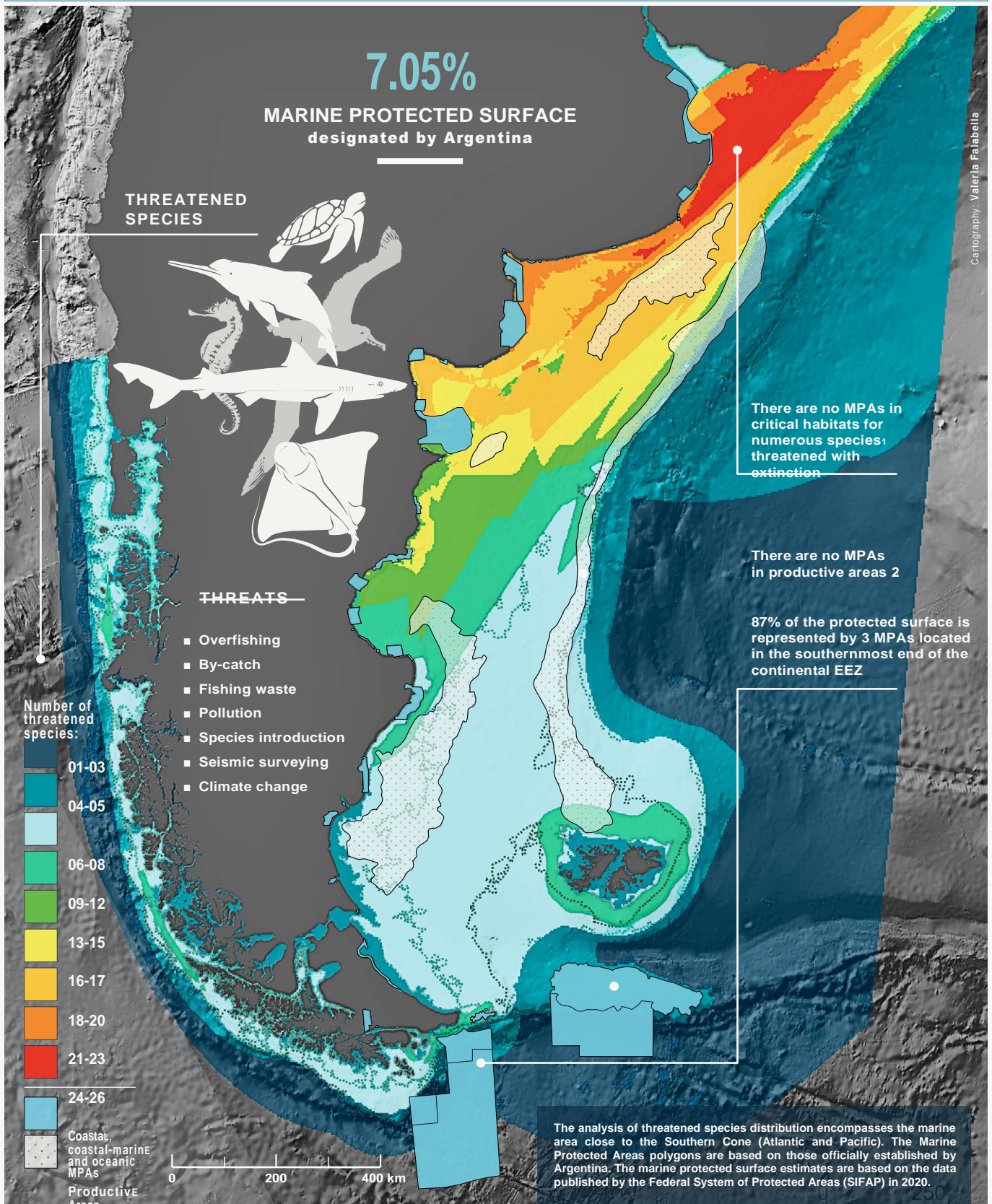


- Marine biodiversity is in deep crisis, affected by multiple *human factors*. Argentina pledged to ensure the conservation of biological diversity in the National Constitution, the General Environmental Act and by ratifying different international conventions.
- Declaring new Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MPA) and creating the National System of Marine Protected Areas (SNAMP) are significant improvements for the conservation of marine biodiversity, but there is still a lot to be done.
- In 2021, Argentina began updating its National Biodiversity Strategy (ENB). This document proposes to include at least 10% of each marine eco-region in an MPA by 2025.

# REPRESENTATIVE MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

## ESSENTIAL TO A HEALTHY SEA

In the face of the main threats of marine and coastal ecosystems, a **network of representative, well-connected and effective MPAs** helps to: preserve biodiversity, sustain nature's contributions to humankind and mitigate the impacts of climate change.



The current network of coastal and marine protected areas in Argentina does not protect the heterogeneity of their marine environments.

1. [www.marpatagonico.org/en/publications/](http://www.marpatagonico.org/en/publications/)  
2. <http://atlas-marpatagonico.org/espacios/33/productividad.htm>

## CHALLENGES

### ARGENTINA IS UNABLE TO ATTAIN THE AGREED INTERNATIONAL GOALS AND HAS NOT SET NATIONAL GOALS TO ACHIEVE A REPRESENTATIVE MPA SYSTEM

The conservation of 10% of marine and coastal zones by means of protected areas systems by 2020 is mentioned both in Goal 14.5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and in Aichi Target 11 of the 2010 Action Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which states that MPAs must be effectively and equitably managed, representative, and well connected. Once the deadline is met, specialists agree that achieving a protection minimum of 30% by 2030 is an interim scientifically supported and necessary goal.

The approach to marine and coastal ecosystems in the [ENB 2016-2020](#)—the main implementation tool of the CBD in Argentina—is very limited and sets goals below the global levels: 4% of marine and coastal protected surface.



*Even though the protected surface went from 2.6% in 2013 to 7.05%, Argentina has not achieved a representative nor effective protection of its marine biodiversity. There has not been any significant progress as regards the conservation status of threatened species either (Aichi Target 12).*

### THE HETEROGENEITY OF THE ECO-REGIONS AND BIODIVERSITY OF THE ARGENTINE SEA ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY PROTECTED BY CURRENT MPAs

87% of the marine protected surface is represented by only three MPAs located in the southernmost end of the continental Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

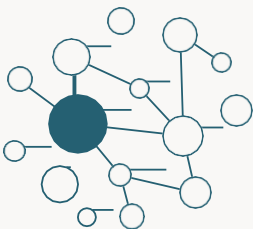


*There are key ecosystems in the Argentine Sea that do not have an MPA, such as all productive areas. The existing areas do not protect critical habitats for many endangered species, located in the northern zone of the continental platform where human activities are intensive.*

It is necessary to move forward to establish a representative MPA system ([Art. 1º, Act 27,037](#)) that includes main ecosystems and incorporates threatened species. To do so, it is essential to work on planning, creating, and expanding MPAs, as well as effectively implementing those that already exist.

### THE CONSERVATION OF THE SEA REQUIRES A FURTHER COORDINATION OF POLICIES ON PRODUCTIVE USES AND GOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PROVINCES AND THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Well designed and managed MPAs offer a variety of benefits to people, such as environmental services, economic benefits, and the capacity to mitigate climate change. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate them into the broader political framework of a sustainable sea use.



*There has not been any progress in incorporating MPAs into policies on fishing, energy and other sea uses. Another vacant area is the coordination and adoption of common standards by the national administration and coastal provinces governments.*

## OPPORTUNITIES

### THE COUNTRY HAS OUTSTANDING MARINE BIODIVERSITY AND THE CAPACITY TO PROTECT IT

Despite the fact that only some of the [Goals of the Strategic Plan for Biological Diversity 2011-2020](#) have been met, the governments' achievements and inter-jurisdictional agreements on sea protection create the opportunity to stop the loss of biodiversity in the Argentine Sea, which hosts species and habitats relevant to the world. The country has a legal and institutional framework that favors their conservation, along with professionals trained in science and management. In this scenario, it is important to:

- Consider the distribution and problems of [threatened species](#) when designing new MPAs.
- Move forward in protecting world-relevant sites, such as productive areas.
- Increase scientific and technical efforts regarding marine conservation, especially efforts aimed at defining the marine ecosystems map, identifying the gaps in terms of ecological representativity and planning MPA growth that considers non-represented ecosystems, climate change and the needs of threatened species.
- Promote the inclusion of key lines of research on MPA management among the National Scientific Priorities of research applied to Sea Sciences.
- Strengthen skill development programs for people in charge of MPAs, such as the [Southern Cone MPA Management School](#).



### THE NEW NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY CAN INCLUDE AMBITIOUS MPA GOALS, AGREED THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND INTERAGENCY WORK

In 2021, Argentina began the process of updating its ENB. An opportunity opens to strengthen the marine and coastal agenda in general and, especially, that of MPAs.

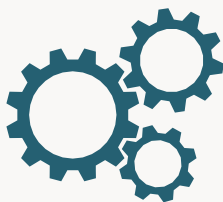
In this context, it is essential to move toward an increase of the eco-regional coverage of marine protected sites that are well connected and representative, throughout the entire Argentine jurisdiction; improve governance, design, effectiveness, and financing of MPAs. Moreover, it is necessary to restore degraded habitats in the coasts and the ocean.



### THERE ARE ARTICULATION MECHANISMS THAT CAN BE USED TO CREATE MORE REPRESENTATIVE AND EFFECTIVE MPAs

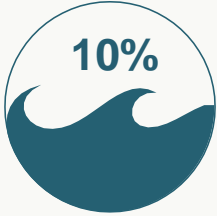
It is time to strengthen the articulation between all sea relevant institutions and, more specifically, to implement the cooperation principle provided by the General Environmental Act. It is necessary to foster discussion and the participation of stakeholders, including the scientific sector and civil society organizations, to transform conflicts and reach agreements that ensure representative MPAs. The following organizations are available to such end:

- **National Advisory Commission on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity - CONADIBIO**, an interinstitutional and multisectoral articulation space in charge of preparing the ENB.
- **Pampa Azul Inter-ministerial Committee**, consisting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship; Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; Ministry of Tourism and Sports; Ministry of Defense and Security, as well as the CONICET.
- **SNAMP Permanent Advisory Committee**, a standing mechanism for interinstitutional coordination directed by the National Parks Administration, in which the afore mentioned national ministries and public agencies participate, as well as the Federal Fisheries Council, the National Institute of Fishery Research and Development and the Naval Hydrographic Service.
- **Protected Areas Federal System (SIFAP)**, federal coordination between provinces and the national administration to implement policy regarding Protected Areas.



## A PROPOSAL TO ANALYZE

Argentine organizations that participate in the Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea offer an **MPA goal proposal** to be considered by the CONADIBIO with the aim of including it in the policy strategic document on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at a national scale:



*By 2025, at least 10% of each marine eco-region will be effectively protected by a national and provincial network of MPAs, under the framework of a multisectoral plan based on the best available science, that considers the effects of climate change.*



Today, there are negotiations taking place to define a global framework for *post-2020 biodiversity* that will replace the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 by the CBD. The reactivation of the CONADIBIO and the pledge made by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development to move forward with updating Argentina's ENB in 2021 offer the possibility to push forward the strengthening of a marine conservation agenda and a robust MPA network with an interinstitutional, multisectoral and federal framework.

The Forum will continue contributing to the articulation of marine biodiversity conservation efforts between stakeholders and providing technical assistance with a holistic approach for an effective MPA management.

\* The series **MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE PATAGONIAN SEA: Challenges and Opportunities**, is based on the project **Marine Protected Areas in the Patagonian Sea: Coverage Enhancement of all Marine Biodiversity (2020-2023)**, funded by **Oceans5** and co-funded by **The David and Lucile Packard Foundation**, through which the *Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea* intends to collaborate to strengthen MPAs in Chile and Argentina.

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### Contact:

Alexandra Sapoznikow - Coordinator  
Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea  
[fomarpat@gmail.com](mailto:fomarpat@gmail.com)