

## Our Oceans Are Un-Owned, Un-Explored, Un-Protected - Updates from TED Oceans Mission Blue Conference

by [Graham Hill](#), New York, NY on 04. 8. 10



Photo by [the Tahoe guy](#)

The [Ted Oceans' Mission Blue conference in the Galapagos](#) is under full swing, and there are some big concepts being discussed among the attendees and speakers. The mission of the conference is to try to further [Sylvia Earle's TED wish](#) of expanding our marine protected areas. But that requires all eyes on the oceans, and when we focus our attention, we find that there are three main issues: ownership, exploration, and protection. Overall, it seems to be a fair amount of bad news with some glimmers of hope.



Photo by [ezioman](#)

**The Oceans have been decimated.** Even the seemingly bountiful not so recent past doesn't compare to how incredibly diverse and jam packed with life the ocean used to be. So, in short, it's worse than we even think it is due to our baseline perceptions having been lowered. For example, it's worse than tuna being down 90% since 1950, as the 1950's population was already much lower than it used to be. See [TED speaker Daniel Pauly](#).

**The Oceans are un-owned, therefore hard to regulate.** Almost 2/3 of the oceans are outside of national regulations and therefore most anything can happen, and does. In addition, this takes out of sight and out of mind to a new level as most of the oceans are very far away and very deep. What happens far out to sea and way below the surface, stays far out to sea and way below the surface... See TED speaker [Kristina Gjerde from IUCN](#) for more.



Photo via [NOAA National Ocean Service](#)

**Marine Protected Areas are tiny but proven to work.** Sadly we only have circa 1% of our oceans protected. That said, these are shown to work well environmentally, economically and socially. The main challenge is how to scale this up quickly. We are spending circa 35 billion in fishing subsidies (many towards destructive fishing practices) while it is estimated it would cost only 16 billion to protect 20% of the oceans. See TED speaker [Enric Sala](#) for more. And more info on [why MPAs work](#).

**We know surprisingly little about our oceans.** They are huge, unexplored and contain a plethora of unstudied species. The well known hammerhead shark to name one. The good news is that with tagging a [la topp.org](#) and [tagagiant.org](#), we are starting to gather really compelling data and with increased funding, could accelerate this easily. See TED speaker [Barbara Block's work](#) for more.



Photo via [woodleywonderworks](#)

**The oceans are headed in the wrong direction quickly but we have some great tools to reverse this trend.** All we need is the will to make it happen. Any particular area that you are passionate about? Start today by seeing [how you might fit in...](#)