

50 years of the Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve

The Regional Government of Madeira creates the largest Marine Protected Area with full protection in the North Atlantic

Funchal November 29th, 2021 – Today, the **Regional Government of Madeira** announced the creation of the **largest marine protected area with full protection in Europe and the North Atlantic**, by means of the approval of a new legal designation of the **Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve**, significantly expanding the protection surrounding the waters of these islands, on the year of **the 50th anniversary of its legal establishment**.

This decision is supported by scientific, and legal studies and by data collected in scientific expeditions carried out in recent years.

The expansion of this reserve by the Regional Government strengthens Madeira's commitment to the protection of what is the most pristine ecosystem in the Northeast Atlantic.

The declaration of this fully protected marine area, covers a territory of 2,677 square kilometers, in an area of 12 nautical mile around the Selvagens Islands. In this extended reserve, all species are now fully protected against all extractive activities such as, but not limited to, fishing and mining.

Miguel Albuquerque, President of the Regional Government of Madeira, points out that, "Madeira has been a world reference in terms of Nature Conservation policies, this aspect being further strengthened with this measure." He adds that, "giving this example of capacity and determination to the world, he hopes to serve as an inspiration for other decision-makers to take similar measures, towards the preservation of our oceans".

Strengthening the protection of the Selvagens Islands will contribute to increasing the marine diversity, genetic richness, and reproductive capacity of the species, including many of commercial interest. It will also ensure the integrity of ecosystems contributing to better marine conservation throughout the entire Northeast Atlantic. This decision will also allow the promotion of economic development in the Autonomous Region of Madeira, through the valuation of its natural capital.

This leading decision is directly supported by the **Oceano Azul Foundation**, **National Geographic**, and the **Waïtt Institute**, which have all contributed to data collection that scientifically support the decision now announced.

For **José Soares dos Santos, President of the Oceano Azul Foundation**, "the natural value of the biodiversity of the Selvagens Islands is extraordinary and irreplaceable. Based on scientific studies and

the expeditions carried out, the decision by the Regional Government reinforces Madeira's positioning in the conservation and valuation of the ocean."

The global challenges of the climate emergency and species extinction crisis require exemplary actions at European and global level, and this decision by the Regional Government of Madeira is a response to these challenges.

In a context where the Ocean is one of the ecosystems most affected by climate change, and by overexploitation, this decision reinforces the commitment of Portugal at the 2017 United Nations Conference of the Oceans, to considerably increase its marine protected areas, and contributes to the European Union's 2030 Strategy for Biodiversity.

Media Contacts:

Oceano Azul Foundation

Maria João Soares | Mjsoares@ilma.pt | +351 914237487

Maria Roquete | Mariaroquete@ilma.pt | +351 962 068 300

Regional Government of Madeira

Lisete Rodrigues | lisete.rodrigues@madeira.gov.pt | +351 963388964

Juan Andrade | juan.andrade@madeira.gov.pt | +351 962984666

About the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Nature Reserve of the Selvagens Islands

With the goal of marking the anniversary of Portugal's oldest Nature Reserve an extensive transversal program has been elaborated, with the long-term goal of helping make the Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve as an inescapable global reference for nature conservation by 2071. This program is based on four key components:

Divulge- The value and importance of the Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve

Involve- The regional, national, and international community in its protection

Maximize- Maximize and improve management capacity of the area through the generation of empathy and knowledge dissemination

Transfer- Promote knowledge transfer

About Oceano Azul Foundation

The Oceano Azul Foundation was established in 2017, with the motivation to contribute to a healthier and more productive ocean. Under the motto "From the ocean's point of view", the Foundation works around three concepts: blue generation, blue natural capital, and blue network. Using a science-based approach, the model of change of the Oceano Azul Foundation integrates these three concepts supporting projects on literacy, conservation, sustainable fisheries, campaigns, blue economy, and capacity building namely working with governments, foundations and civil society organizations, within the UN and the EU systems, to advance the international ocean agenda.

Learn more oceanozulfoundation.org

About National Geographic

National Geographic Pristine Seas is an exploration, research and media project founded and led by National Geographic Explorer in Residence Enric Sala. The Pristine Seas team is comprised of determined scientists, policy experts and filmmakers who work to inspire the creation of protected areas where marine life can thrive—while ensuring effective management for years to come. Pristine Seas has helped to inspire the creation of 25 marine reserves, an area totaling over 6.5M square kilometers.

Learn more at nationalgeographic.org/pristine seas

About the Waitt Institute

Based in San Diego, California, the Waitt Institute is a non-profit organization that partners with governments to develop and implement plans towards a sustainable ocean that benefit communities, the economy, and the environment.

The Waitt Institute brings a world class team of technical experts focusing on four main pillars of work: Marine spatial planning, Blue Economy, Marine protection, and Sustainable fisheries to help governments around the globe protect their ocean and manage their resources sustainably for future generations. The Institute's sister organization, the Waitt Foundation, specializes in public-private partnership and supports high impact global ocean initiatives with the ultimate goal of sustainable, resilient and thriving seas that benefit all. Both organizations were founded and are chaired by Ted Waitt, co-founder of Gateway, Inc.

Learn more at waittinstitute.org