

Oceano Azul Foundation congratulates Azores for approving the largest Network of Marine Protected Areas in the North Atlantic

Oceano Azul Foundation congratulates the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of the Azores (ALRAA) and all Azoreans on the approval of the revised Network of Marine Protected Areas of the Azores (RAMPA). This milestone positions the region as a global leader in ocean conservation.

This pioneering decision, approved by a large majority of Assembly members, **protects 30% of the waters surrounding the Azores archipelago, spanning 287.000 square kilometres. Half of this area is fully protected**, prohibiting extractive or destructive activities. The remainder of the network benefits from high protection, allowing only traditional, low-impact fishing methods. This marks a significant milestone of global importance in ocean conservation, establishing the largest Network of Marine Protected Areas in the entire North Atlantic.

In 2021, the Autonomous Region of Madeira designated the largest fully protected area in the North Atlantic, in the Selvagens Islands, covering 2.677 square kilometers. The Azores' recent decision expands the fully protected area more than fiftyfold.

“This decision brings Portugal closer to meeting internationally established targets of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030 and will shift the global paradigm regarding ocean conservation,” said Tiago Pitta e Cunha, CEO of Oceano Azul Foundation. “We congratulate all Azoreans on this historic contribution, which will have worldwide impacts,” he added.

The recently approved legislative proposal resulted from a participatory process led by the Regional Government of the Azores, supported by the Blue Azores Programme – a partnership between the Regional Government of the Azores, Oceano Azul Foundation, and the Waitt Institute. Launched in 2019, the programme incorporated input from civil society, local communities, and ocean users, representing an innovative process that can serve as a global example.



About Oceano Azul Foundation

Oceano Azul Foundation is an international foundation based in Portugal, established in 2017. Under the motto ***From the ocean's point of view***, its mission is to contribute to a healthy and productive ocean for the benefit of all life on the planet. Guided by science, the Foundation's work helps to **protect, develop, and enhance Blue Natural Capital**, encompassing critical areas such as **Ocean Conservation; International Ocean Advocacy**; and the **Blue Economy**, while also focusing on Ocean Literacy, Education, and Civil Society Capacity-Building.

The Foundation's model for change enables the development of projects centred on Marine Protected Areas and sustainable fisheries while simultaneously advising governments and decision-makers to advance the international ocean agenda. This includes working with other foundations, civil society organisations, the UN, and the EU. The Foundation also conducts communication campaigns to amplify the impact of its actions by raising awareness and understanding of the importance of protecting and restoring the ocean.

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