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NEWS & UPDATES

In Case You Missed It: Biden-Harris Administration Works with Global Partners to Drive Ocean Action to Combat the Climate Crisis and Boost Ocean Economy at UN Ocean Conference

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President Biden: “From Los Angeles to Lisbon, one global ocean links us as global neighbors. We celebrate its bounty even as we redouble our efforts to develop a sustainable blue economy now and into the future.”

During the United Nations (UN) Ocean Conference held in Lisbon, Portugal this week, the Biden-Harris Administration announced a number of steps the Administration is taking to work with global partners to combat the climate crisis and boost the ocean economy. These new actions included: the acceleration of efforts both across the U.S. Government and internationally to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and associated labor abuses; support for aquatic and blue foods contributions to food security; the announcement of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for ocean and coastal resilience, habitat restoration, and marine debris prevention; leadership on the development of an action plan to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage global coral reef ecosystems; and the release of a national Ocean Policy Committee Action Plan; among others.

This week’s actions build on President Biden’s proclamation declaring June as National Ocean Month and key announcements the White House made in June to conserve and restore the health and productivity of the ocean for the benefit of all Americans. These announcements included initiating the designation process for a new national marine sanctuary to conserve Hudson Canyon in the Atlantic Ocean; a phase out of the sale of single-use plastics in national parks and public lands; the launch of efforts to create America’s first-ever Ocean Climate Action Plan; and the launch of an initiative to center environmental justice in ocean science and technology activities and investments.

Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry led the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Ocean Conference, co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal. He was

joined by Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Monica Medina and the U.S. Ambassador to Portugal Randi Levine. The interagency delegation included White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Brenda Mallory, Deputy Director for Climate and Environment at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Dr. Jane Lubchenco, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator Dr. Rick Spinrad, and other high-level officials from across the U.S. Government. During the conference, the delegation highlighted U.S. leadership and engaged with government counterparts, private sector actors, and civil society partners to advance ocean efforts related to sustainable development, climate change, environmental protection, and nature conservation.

The Biden-Harris Administration made the following announcements:

Combating Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing and Supporting Sustainable Fisheries

On day one of the UN Ocean Conference, President Biden signed a National Security Memorandum (NSM) to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and related harmful fishing practices. IUU fishing is among the greatest threats to ocean health, contributing to overfishing and the collapse or decline of fisheries that are important to the economic growth, food systems, and ecosystems of numerous countries around the world. Left unchecked, IUU fishing and associated labor abuses undermine U.S. economic competitiveness, national security, fisheries sustainability, and the livelihoods and human rights of fishers around the world, and will exacerbate the environmental and socioeconomic effects of climate change.

The Biden-Harris Administration will address IUU fishing by increasing coordination with diverse stakeholders—public and private, foreign and domestic. The U.S. Government will use the full range of existing conservation, labor, trade, economic, diplomatic, law enforcement, and national security authorities to address these challenges.

The Administration is also taking the following actions to combat IUU fishing:

- The United States, United Kingdom, and Canada launched an IUU Fishing Action Alliance aimed at increasing ambition and momentum in the fight against IUU fishing. Those who join the Alliance pledge to take urgent action to improve the monitoring, control, and surveillance of fisheries, increase transparency in fishing fleets and in the seafood market, and build new partnerships that will hold bad actors accountable.

- The U.S. Interagency Working Group on Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing, comprising 21 Federal agencies, will release its *National Five-Year Strategy for Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (2022-2026)* by the end of July. The strategy prioritizes the Working Group's efforts to combat IUU fishing, curtail the global trade of IUU fish and fish products, and promote global maritime security, while working in partnership with other governments and authorities, the seafood industry, academia, and non-governmental stakeholders. The United States will engage with priority partners, including Ecuador, Panama, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Information on the member agencies and activities of the Working Group can be found [here](#).
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [has issued a proposed rule](#) to enhance and strengthen its ability to address IUU fishing activities and combat forced labor in the seafood supply chain. Specifically, the rule would enhance NOAA's ability to implement the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and the High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act. The rule proposes to broaden the scope of activities that NOAA can consider when identifying nations that engage in IUU fishing to include fishing in waters under the jurisdiction of a nation, without the permission of that nation, or in violation of its laws and regulations. This will ensure consistency with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's *International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing*.
- The United States [endorsed the Aquatic/Blue Food Coalition](#) and its Declaration, which will bring aquatic and blue foods to the forefront of our efforts to achieve food security. More than three billion people depend on fish as a key source of animal protein and nutrition. The Coalition will help to advance a blue foods transformation that will secure livelihoods, improve community resilience, ensure food security, and address gender equity.

Strengthening Coastal and Climate Resilience, and Advancing the Ocean Economy

On Thursday June 30, Commerce Secretary Gina M. Raimondo [announced](#) funding opportunities from NOAA's \$2.96 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds to address the climate crisis and strengthen coastal resilience and infrastructure. Over the next five years, NOAA's targeted investments in the areas of habitat restoration, coastal resilience, and climate data and services will advance ongoing Federal efforts toward building climate resilience.

NOAA will select high-impact projects that will incentivize investments in communities, states, and regions that can drive additional funding to complementary projects. Funded

projects will support three major initiatives:

- Climate Ready Coasts will help coastal communities build the future they want to see, investing in natural infrastructure projects that build coastal resilience, create jobs, store carbon, remove marine debris, and restore habitat. (\$1.467 billion over 5 years)
- Climate Data and Services will support a whole-of-government effort to address the climate crisis by getting critical information and tools in the hands of decision-makers, particularly to address floods, wildfire, drought, and ocean health. (\$904 million over 5 years)
- Fisheries and Protected Resources will advance efforts to restore important fisheries habitat and promote community economic development. (\$592 million over 5 years)

These funding opportunities are designed to help coastal communities invest in and optimize green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to increase resilience to climate change and extreme weather events. The White House Coastal Resilience Interagency Working Group, co-chaired by NOAA and the Council on Environmental Quality, developed a resource guide to build climate resilience on the coast, the “Compendium of Federal Nature-Based Resources for Coastal Communities, States, Tribes, and Territories.” The investments will be scalable, leverage partnerships, and be responsive to the need for better climate information. NOAA will ensure the impact of this funding is equitable, coordinated, and results in projects that benefit Tribal Nations and underserved and underrepresented communities.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in June also announced the implementation of nearly \$60 million in funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law’s new Gulf Hypoxia Program. This funding will allow EPA, for the first time, to invest in strategies to improve water quality in the Mississippi River, Atchafalaya River Basin, and the Gulf of Mexico, and reduce the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf. Through the Gulf Hypoxia Program, EPA will support the 12 Hypoxia Task Force states (the 10 mainstem Mississippi River states and Ohio and Indiana) as they meet the Task Force goal to reduce nutrients delivered to the Gulf of Mexico and shrink the size of the dead zone. This program will support collaborative action by states, farmers, Tribes, and other stakeholders. Through improved water quality, communities across the basin will benefit from safer drinking water, protected fisheries, and a more stable economy. Partnerships will provide farmers and urban communities with a more resilient landscape and improved local water quality as they have the support they need to implement watershed plans and expand business plans to include conservation systems.

Protecting and Restoring Coral Reefs

Members of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), celebrated the adoption of the 2021–2024 Plan of Action, Turning the Tide for Coral Reefs. ICRI is currently co-chaired by the U.S. Department of State and NOAA. Over the course of the next three years, ICRI proposes to maintain progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 14 (conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas, and marine resources) and Goal 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts). The Plan of Action highlights the need for continued collaboration and action at the international level to conserve, manage, and restore coral reefs. The plan gives context to the challenges associated with coral reef conservation, suggests concrete actions to overcome these challenges, and gives guidance to the coral reef community to help turn the tide for coral reefs. The Plan of Action will guide and encourage actions taken by the ICRI Secretariat and its members and is structured around the following four themes:

- Theme 1: Preparing for the Future: Promoting Resilient Coral Reefs
- Theme 2: Coral Reef Science and Oceanography: Advancing and Utilizing the Latest Science and Technology
- Theme 3: Local Threat Reduction: Integrating Response Planning Frameworks
- Theme 4: Diversity and Inclusion: Expanding the Coral Reef Community

Mapping the World's Ocean

On June 29, NOAA Administrator Dr. Rick Spinrad signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in conjunction with the UN Ocean Conference that formalized U.S. participation in the multinational and cross-sectoral Nippon Foundation-General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Seabed 2030 Project. The MOU is intended to facilitate cooperation on the exchange of information and the promotion of joint efforts to bathymetrically map the world's ocean by 2030. Acquisition of global water depth measurement supports NOAA's many mission areas reliant on bathymetry, as well as broader U.S. national interests and global governance. The MOU is expected to build positive collaboration between all involved countries and partners.

Leading on Ocean Policy

The White House is leading on coordination of U.S. ocean policy, as directed by Congress in its 2021 authorization of the Ocean Policy Committee (OPC), a Secretary-level interagency body mandated to coordinate ocean science, technology, and management policy across the Federal Government. The Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Council on Environmental Quality, who co-Chair the Committee, announced the 2022-2023 OPC Action Plan this week, which describes actions across the Federal Government to use the ocean to help solve our

greatest challenges: using green shipping, blue carbon, wind energy, and other ocean-climate solutions to mitigate and help us adapt to the impacts of climate change, sustainably managing ocean and coastal resources for the prosperity and security of the nation, employing new science and technologies to map, explore, and better understand the ocean, ensuring that the benefits of ocean actions are accessible to all Americans, and collaborating with coastal and Great Lakes State and Tribal Nations in taking these actions. More information on OPC initiatives, including ongoing work and public engagement opportunities, can be found on the [OPC website](#).

International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification

This week, Special President Envoy for Climate John Kerry and NOAA Administrator Dr. Rick Spinrad announced that the United States will join the [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#) (OA Alliance”). Ocean acidification is a major threat to marine ecosystems and the communities around the globe that depend on them. The OA Alliance, launched at the 2016 Our Ocean Conference, is a voluntary coalition that works to build international momentum for actions that address the causes of ocean acidification, increase research and monitoring efforts, and advance the resilience of coastal communities. The United States is a global leader on ocean acidification observations, research, modeling, scientific capacity building, and adaptation responses. Joining the Alliance highlights our leadership in reducing carbon emissions, strengthening monitoring efforts, and investing in adaptive measures.

Greening Ocean-Based Shipping

The Biden-Harris Administration is leading on the transition to [green shipping](#). Emissions from the shipping sector are significant, rising, and on a trajectory incompatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement. If shipping were a “country,” it would be the world’s eighth-largest emitter. In May, the United States and Norway announced the launch of a Green Shipping Challenge for COP27. This past month, nine additional economies expressed support for the initiative during the Major Economies Forum. The Challenge will encourage countries, ports, companies, and others in the shipping value chain to come forward with concrete announcements at COP27 to help put the shipping sector on a pathway this decade toward full decarbonization no later than 2050. These could include steps to produce zero-emission fuels; develop zero-emission bunkering and recharging capabilities; deploy low- or zero-emission vessels; and create, or provide financial and technical support for, green shipping corridors.

Protecting the Ocean from Plastic Pollution

Last week, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Samantha Power announced the launch of USAID's new flagship initiative to combat ocean plastic pollution globally—the Save Our Seas Initiative. Administrator Power was joined at the launch event by Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK) in-person and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) virtually, co-sponsors of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act of 2020, the bipartisan legislation that inspired this initiative. The initiative will include \$62.5 million in initial funding and will launch 14 new country and regional programs in key countries and regions that represent 40 percent of total global mismanaged plastic waste. USAID is combating ocean plastic pollution by creating inclusive circular economies together with local and national governments, communities, and the private sector. The Save Our Seas Initiative builds on successes and lessons from USAID's six years of experience in improving solid waste management systems and strengthening policies and practices for the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), while scaling these approaches within key countries and to additional geographies for greater impact.

The EPA is taking steps to improve recycling infrastructure and reduce land-based sources of plastic waste to the marine environment, including, through the new Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant program, which is authorized by the [Save Our Seas 2.0 Act](#) and funded through \$275 million in the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These funds will be used to provide grants to [implement a strategy to improve post-consumer materials management and infrastructure](#); support improvements to local post-consumer materials management and recycling programs; and assist local waste management authorities in making improvements to local waste management systems. On June 9, the EPA announced a [request for information to inform the development of the SWIFR program](#).

Our Ocean Conference

In addition to the ocean actions announced in June, the United States co-hosted the seventh [Our Ocean Conference](#) with Palau in April 2022. The Conference, which brought together governments and non-state actors to make concrete commitments to protect ocean health and security, catalyzed more than 400 commitments worth more than \$16 billion. For its part, the United States made [more than 110 announcements, from 14 agencies and offices](#), worth nearly \$2.64 billion. These commitments spanned the issue areas of the conference, including climate change, sustainable fisheries, sustainable blue economies, marine protected areas, maritime security, and marine pollution. The United States welcomes Panama as the host of the eighth Our Ocean Conference, Greece as the host of the ninth, and, as announced this week during the UN Ocean Conference, the Republic of Korea as the host of the tenth.

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