

BLUE  
AZORES

# FACTS & FIGURES

**NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED  
AREAS IN THE AZORES**

| RAMPA |

REVISION OF THE AZORES MARINE PARK

# BLUE AZORES

**The new Azores Marine Park will include ocean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that will make it possible to safeguard 30% of the Azores sea.**

The new RAMPA will include all the existing MPAs and those to be designated in the future, ensuring that there is a network of current areas, areas connected to each other and to an integrated management system.

Blue Azores was born in 2019 from a partnership between the Regional Government of the Azores, the Oceano Azul Foundation and the Waitt Institute, which came together around a common vision – to protect, promote and value the marine natural capital of the Azores.

# TARGETS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE AZORES SEA

## LEADERSHIP

### WHY 30% PROTECTION

#### 1 |

The ecosystems in the Azores sea are threatened due to climate change, pollution and overexploitation.

**Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are the most effective instrument for the protection and recovery of marine life. Using the best scientific information and the involvement of the community are the way to assure MPAs appropriate implementation and management.**

#### 2 |

The Azores sea has **unique natural assets**:

- > 300 shallow seamounts
- 9 hydrothermal vents
- 28 species of marine mammals
- 6 species of sea turtles
- 560 species of fish
- 10 species of nesting seabirds
- > 400 species of algae
- > 1000 species of invertebrates
- > 184 species of cold-water coral
- And more

#### 3 |

National and international policies define targets of **30% protection**:

#### 2020 |

EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

#### 2021 |

National Strategy for the Sea 2021-2030

#### 2022 |

UN Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

**For effective protection of our natural assets in 2030, it is essential to legally set up the MPAs now, so that they can be properly implemented and begin to have an effect.**

### WHY NOW

Science clearly shows the **urgency of protecting** the ocean. Each year of inaction is the equivalent of a loss of value, which impacts all the sectors linked to the sea.

Azoreans depend on their sea **socially, culturally and economically**, as well as for their collective identity.

The Regional Government of the Azores look to **lead by example** in the management and protection of their sea.

**It is critical to approve now the NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE AZORES (RAMPA) so that it can be implemented by 2030.**

While it will not come into force immediately, the support strategy needs to be developed, management plans approved and human and financial resources allocated to ensure effective management of this network.



## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE AZORES

Science produced in the Azores has supported sustainable management and conservation measures in recent decades.

Even so, **less than 5% of the territorial sea and the EEZ in the Azores has some form of protection status**, leaving important natural assets vulnerable. But, through the Blue Azores program, steps were taken to speed up the protection of the Azores sea.

### 2019 |

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the **12<sup>th</sup> Regional Government of the Azores**, the Oceano Azul Foundation and the Waitt Institute, creating the Blue Azores program, with the commitment to set up **MPAs fully protecting 15% of the Azores sea**.

### 2021 |

The **13<sup>th</sup> Regional Government of the Azores confirmed** its protection commitment and reinforced this ambition through the adoption of its target, **of 30% protection by 2023**, making this earlier than national and international targets.





# THE BEST SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE

## SCIENCE

### SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITIONS

Over the decades, science has identified unparalleled marine species and environments in the Azores.

**The expeditions in 2016 (eastern group) and 2018 (central and western groups) assessed the environmental condition of coastal, open sea and deep-sea ecosystems.**

**In 2019**, a report entitled **“THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN THE ATLANTIC”** was published, indicating the need for **urgent protection**.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE OCEANO AZUL FOUNDATION, THE WAITT INSTITUTE AND NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PRISTINE SEAS. WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE AZORES (OKEANOS-UAC), THE PORTUGUESE NAVY'S HYDROGRAPHIC INSTITUTE AND THE MISSION STRUCTURE FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE AZORES.

**45** researchers (regional, national and international)

**26** participants

**> 950** dives

**> 950** hours of diving

**1.481 Km<sup>2</sup>** covered

**182** sampling points

**21.469 Km<sup>2</sup>** of the seabed mapped

Discovery of the new **“Luso” hydrothermal vent field**.

**60 hours** of maritime exploration using the “Luso” ROV in **13** dives

**737** pupils from **8** countries took part in an Open Explorer Classroom lesson

### MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPEDITIONS

- | To increase the proportion of the Azores sea under protection;
- | To effectively implement the existing conservation areas;
- | To improve the measures for sustainable fishing;
- | To promote ocean education and literacy.



## HYDROTHERMAL VENT FIELD

### “LUSO” | A SINGULAR NATURAL ASSET

“Luso”, which was discovered in **2018**, is the eighth known hydrothermal vent field in the sea around the Azores archipelago.

This hydrothermal vent field, which was named “Luso” occupies an area of around **400 m<sup>2</sup>** and is made up of at least **26** hydrothermal vent chimneys.

**The environments in the hydrothermal vents replicate the conditions existing at the beginning of life on earth. They are also extreme environments, which organisms have become uniquely adapted to. This is why these locations are important for understanding how life on the planet began and are of interest to the blue biotechnology industry.**



## SCIENTIFIC ADVICE ON THE REVISION OF THE AZORES MARINE PARK

In **2019**, IMAR/Okeanos presented a systematic planning study on deep-sea conservation - **Blue Paper**, which was discussed and validated at a scientific workshop in Horta, Faial, in **2020**. Local and international scientists met to present and discuss the different protection scenarios for the Azores sea.

**Between 2019 and 2023**, the Technical and Scientific Committee was responsible for providing specialized scientific advice to Blue Azores.

**17** researchers  
**9** meetings  
**12** national and international entities

MADE UP OF SCIENTISTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE AZORES, THE OCEANO AZUL FOUNDATION AND THE WAITT INSTITUTE, AS WELL AS OTHER SCIENTIFIC PARTNERS, INCLUDING NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PRISTINE SEAS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA – SANTA BARBARA (EMLAB)

### SCIENTIFIC REPORT “BLUE PAPER” by IMAR and OKEANOS - UAc

This fundamental report consisted of a survey of the scientific knowledge regarding the **priority areas for marine conservation** in the Azores archipelago. In order to **reduce the socioeconomic impacts** of the conservation goals, a model was chosen for prioritizing the areas in order to **minimize the impact on the fishing effort**.

## DECISION-MAKING SUPPORT STUDIES AND ANALYSES

### 2019 |

Expedition reports

Economic assessment of the marine ecosystem services in the Azores.

### 2020 |

Bioeconomic model for demersal fishing.

Scientific workshop report.

“Blue Paper” scientific report.

### 2022 |

Situational Analysis of the fishing sector in the Azores in 2021.

### 2023 |

Report on the mapping of the coastal uses of the Azores.

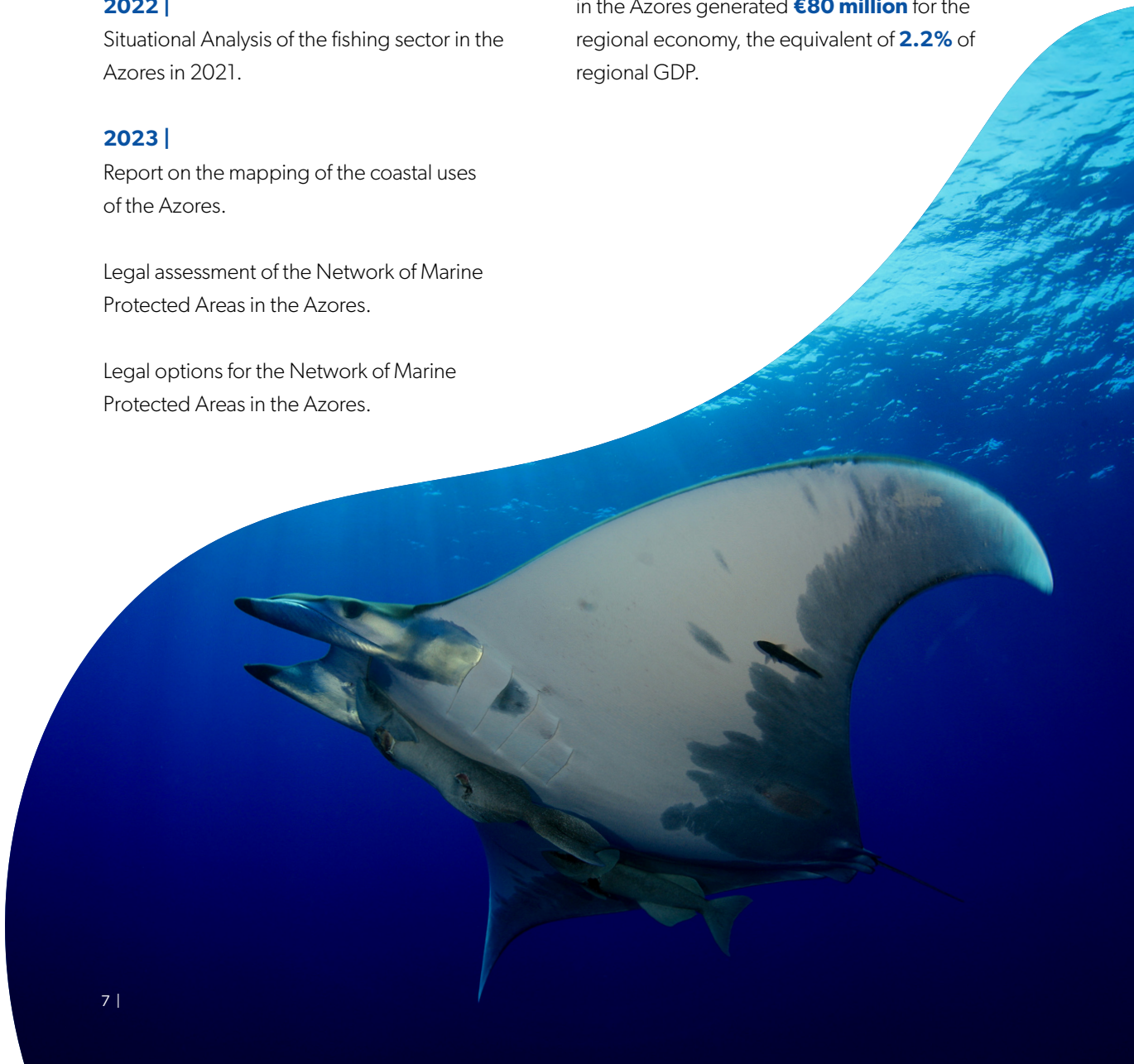
Legal assessment of the Network of Marine Protected Areas in the Azores.

Legal options for the Network of Marine Protected Areas in the Azores.

## ADDING VALUE TO THE AZORES SEA

A healthy sea is the basis of a sustainable blue economy. The sea brings benefits to all Azoreans, **providing a set of ecosystem services that drive the economy and bring well-being.**

The report on the **economic value of the ecosystem services** in the Azores sea (2017) highlights the total annual fishing value for the region (**€31.7 million per year**), as well as maritime tourism (**€22.5 to 67 million per year**), which is becoming increasingly important. Another study, (Ressurreição et al, 2022) mentions that marine ecotourism activities in the Azores generated **€80 million** for the regional economy, the equivalent of **2.2%** of regional GDP.





# THE INVOLVEMENT OF USERS OF THE SEA

## OCEAN PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

### 19 MONTHS OF MEETINGS

Between **2021** and **2023**, there were **43** participatory process meetings with a varied group of **representatives of different entities and sectors**. It provided for active, informed and transparent involvement in the decision-making process.

#### 43 MEETINGS:

**9** general meetings with **17** representatives of the different entities and sectors.

**30** interim meetings.

**4** meetings with the **Regional Directorate of Fisheries**, the **Fishing Federation** and **Fishing Associations** in order to identify the measures necessary for restructuring the sector.

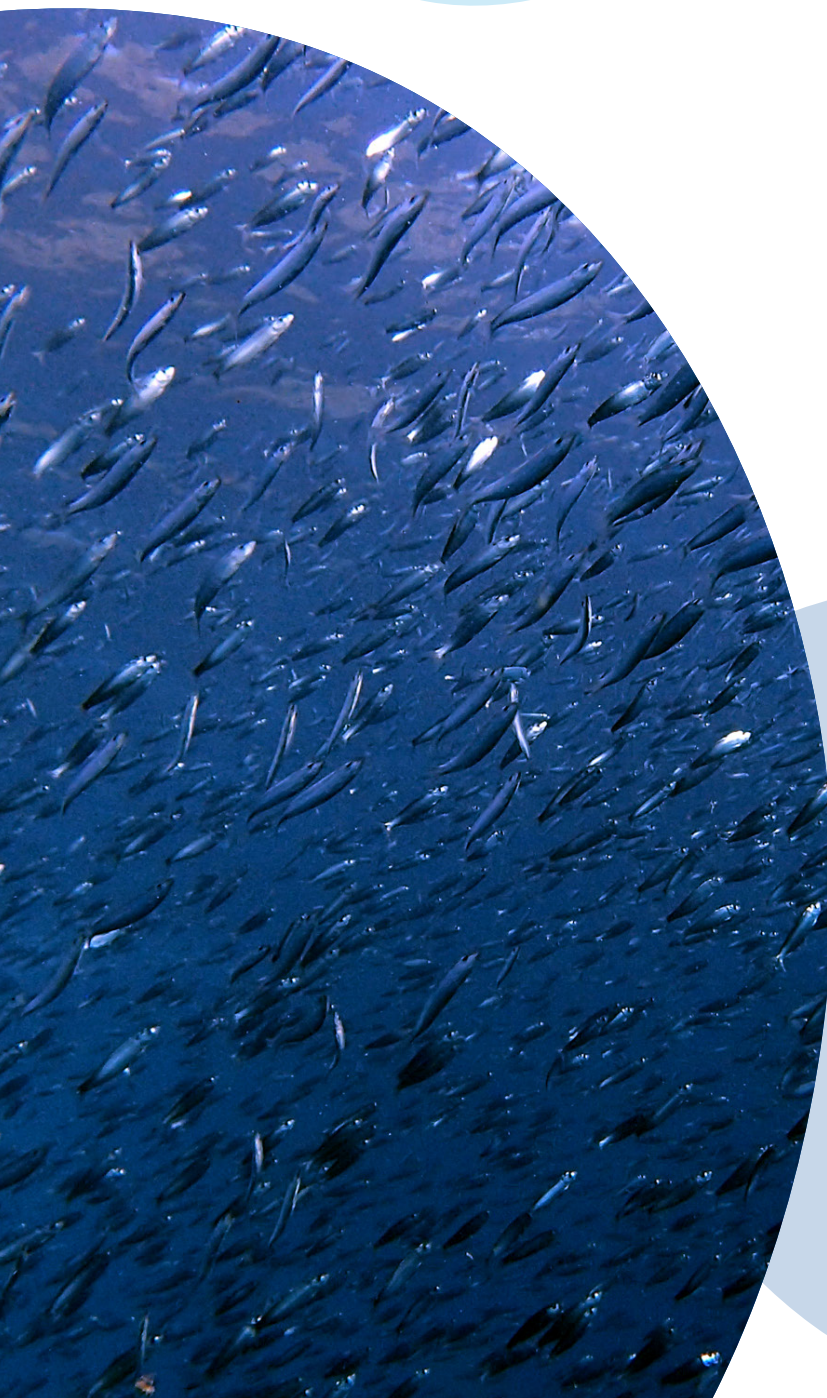
ASSOCIATION OF MARITIME TOURISM OPERATORS, MARITIME TRANSPORT, FISHING ASSOCIATIONS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZATIONS, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AUTHORITIES.

### THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FISHERIES SECTOR

The new map for the Network of Ocean Marine Protected Areas is the result of a **co-creation process with the users of the sea**. The goal was to **maximize conservation goals while minimizing the impact on fishing**. The proposals presented by the fishing sector are particularly important in the proposed network.

#### 2/3 OF THE PROPOSED AREA FOR THE NEW NETWORK IS THE RESULT OF PROPOSALS FROM THE FISHING SECTOR

In total, **27 meetings** were attended by the fishing sector.





## THE MAIN GOALS OF THE MEETINGS

- 1 | To develop an **integrating vision**.
- 2 | To present the **scientific data available** in the region, as the basis for the **priority marine areas to be protected, minimizing the impacts on fishing**.
- 3 | To present, discuss and **approve the conservation goals**.
- 4 | To create a **collaborative design** with all the parties involved.
- 5 | To identify **other measures and challenges**.

## DESIGN OF THE PROPOSED MPA NETWORK

- | 9 general meetings with 17 representatives of the different entities and sectors.
- | After 8 general meetings, the network designed in the participatory process did not fully comply with the agreed conservation goals.
- | In order to comply with these goals, **required minimum areas were added**, with a view to minimizing the impact on fishing.
- | On June 29, 2023, the revision proposal for the Network of Marine Protected Areas in the Azores (RAMPA) was presented to the different entities and sectors.
- | This proposal was submitted for **public consultation** between July 24 and September 15, 2023.



# PROPOSAL FOR THE REVISION OF THE NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE AZORES | RAMPA | LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

## THE SEA OF THE AZORES ARCHIPELAGO

Located in the extreme west of Europe, the sea around this archipelago represents **56%** of the Portuguese sea and has an area of approximately **1 million** square kilometers. At the moment, there are **50 MPAs**, **15** oceanic (Azores Marine Park) and **35** coastal (Island Natural Parks).

## REVISION OF THE AZORES MARINE PARK

In 2023, the Regional Government undertook to revise the ocean MPAs in order to protect **30% of the Azores sea**. This revision came in the form of the **second** amendment to the Azores Marine Park legislation. The revision of the **coastal MPAs** is scheduled for **2024**.

The revision of the Marine Park increases the number of **ocean MPAs** in the **EEZ** (Exclusive Economic Zone) and in the **ECS** (Extended Continental Shelf) from **15** to **29**:

**23 MPA** in the **EEZ**  
**6 MPA** in the **ECS**.  
**498.000Km<sup>2</sup>** protected in the **EEZ** and **ECS**  
**287.000Km<sup>2</sup>** in the **EEZ**

The revised **Azores Marine Park** will make it possible to **protect 30% of the EEZ**:

- | with **16% fully protected areas**, without extractive activities (**9 areas**).
- | with **14% highly protected areas** (**14 areas**).

## RAMPA PROTECTION LEVELS

The oceanic MPAs within the EEZ will have two protection levels:

- | **Full Protection**: extractive or destructive activities are excluded, with the aim of minimizing all the pressures on the ecosystem. **According to IUCN classification (Category I), these MPAs are designated as natural marine reserves.**
- | **High Protection**: only extractive activities of low environmental impact are permitted and the other impacts are minimized. **According to IUCN classification (Category IV), these MPAs are for the management of habitats or species.**



### THE NETWORK OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE AZORES INCLUDES:

**Azores Marine Park (PMA)** including all the oceanic MPAs in the EEZ and on the continental shelf.

**9 Island Nature Parks (INPs)** including coastal MPAs.

**THE NEW RAMPA WILL FULLY PROTECT SOME IMPORTANT SEAMOUNTS, SUCH AS PRINCESS ALICE, DOM JOÃO DE CASTRO, FORMIGAS AND CONDOR**

### THE CONDOR SEAMOUNT: A CASE STUDY IN THE AZORES

It was **designated** as an **oceanic MPA in 2016** and **bottom fishing has been prohibited since 2010**. The Condor has seen clear benefits, as a result of the high degree of implementation.

**Monitoring has shown that since it was set up, there has been an increase in the abundance (400%) and size of blackspot seabream, considered one of the most commercially important species in the Azores.**

### THE RAMPA PROPOSAL INCLUDES

- | Coordination with the **National Network of Protected Areas**.  
MADE UP OF PROTECTED AREAS OF LOCAL, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL INTEREST, WHICH INCLUDE NATIONAL PARK, NATURE RESERVES, NATURAL MONUMENTS, PROTECTED LANDSCAPES AND AREAS OF BIOLOGICAL INTEREST
- | Coordination with the **Fundamental Nature Conservation Network**.
- | **Prohibited or restricted uses** and **activities** in the proposed MPAs.

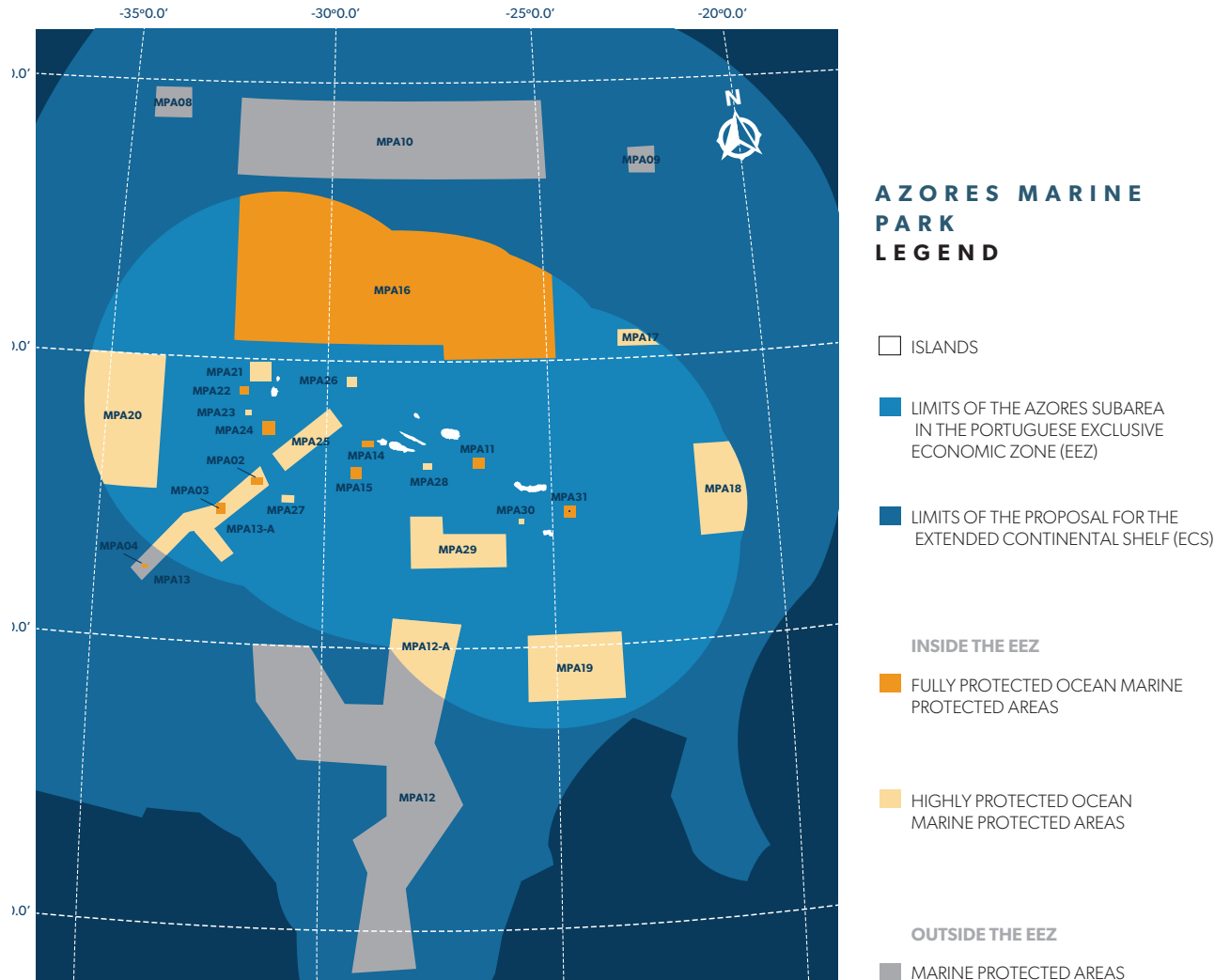
### PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Regional Government of the Azores held a Public Consultation for the **project to amend the Regional Legislative Decree** in force for the **Azores Marine Park**. From **July 24 to September 15, 2023**, the RAMPA was open to **public discussion** with:

A total of **56 calendar days**  
**22 days more** than legally required  
**> 400** participations  
**3** in-person clarification **sessions** in **Faial, Terceira** and **São Miguel**, attended by **> 120 participants**



# PROPOSAL FOR THE REVISION OF THE AZORES MARINE PARK



<b>MPA02</b>	Menez Gwen Hydrothermal Vent Field Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA03</b>	Lucky Strike Hydrothermal Vent Field Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA04</b>	Rainbow Hydrothermal Vent Field Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA08</b>	Altair Seamount Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA09</b>	Antialtair Seamount Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA10</b>	MARNA Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA11</b>	Dom João de Castro Seamount Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA12</b>	Meteor Submarine Archipelago Marine Protected Area (ECS)
<b>MPA12-A</b>	Meteor Marine Protected Area (EEZ)
<b>MPA13</b>	Resource Protection and Management Perimeter of the Marine Protected Area Located southwest of the Azores (ECS)
<b>MPA13-A</b>	Southwest Azores Marine Protected Area (EEZ)
<b>MPA14</b>	Condor Seamount Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA15</b>	Princess Alice Seamount Natural Marine
<b>MPA16</b>	North Azores Natural Marine Reserve

<b>MPA17</b>	Northeast Azores Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA18</b>	East Azores Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA19</b>	South Azores Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA20</b>	West Azores Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA21</b>	Albert of Monaco Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA22</b>	Cachalote Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA23</b>	North Bugio Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA24</b>	Diogo de Teive Natural Marine Reserve
<b>MPA25</b>	Gigante Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA26</b>	Óscar Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA27</b>	Voador Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA28</b>	Southeast Pico Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA29</b>	Tridente Marine Protected Area
<b>MPA30</b>	South Prata Sea
<b>MPA31</b>	Formigas Islets Natural Marine Reserve

# SUPPORT ACTIONS

## LITERACY

### EGA

The “**Educating a Blue Generation**” program provides elementary school teachers with the tools they need to train a Blue Generation. **Training and education resources** are provided, which include a **textbook** about the ocean, **a supplement with content about the Azores sea and educational materials** for doing practical activities. These resources make it possible to include ocean topics in the elementary school curriculum and in the areas of curricular autonomy.

Since **2019** in the Azores  
**439** teachers trained  
**109** schools involved on the **9** islands  
**> 6.500** schoolchildren

DEVELOPED BY THE OCEANO AZUL FOUNDATION AND BY OCEANÁRIO DE LISBOA, THIS PROGRAM IS IMPLEMENTED IN THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF THE AZORES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE AZORES THROUGH THE REGIONAL DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION.

### LITERACY FOR FISHERS

In **2021**, the implementation of the **Program on Ocean Protection and Valorization** began, with the aim of increasing ocean literacy in the **fishing community**, valuing the natural marine capital in the Azores and raising awareness of the need to protect the ocean, through sustainable fishing and the implementation of Marine Protected Areas.

Program on Ocean Protection and Valorization  
(**2021/2022**)

**7** literacy sessions

**4** islands: Faial, São Miguel (Rabo de Peixe), Graciosa and São Jorge

**74** participants

THIS PROGRAM INVOLVED OWNERS, FISHERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS FROM FISHING ASSOCIATIONS.





## BLUE BIOECONOMY

### AZORES IDEATION SPRINT – 2020

Initiative under the scope of the **Blue Bio Value** program, an accelerator for **startups** and **R&D** projects in the area of marine biotechnology, focusing on adding value to the natural capital of the Azores sea.

**5** teams

**17** participants

**1** team in the **Blue Bio Value Acceleration**.

**3** award-winning projects

### BLUE BIOTECH ROADSHOW TO AZORES – 2023

This was held in partnership with **Blue Bio Alliance** and allowed the make actors linked to the blue biotechnology value change to make connections. The goal was to generate opportunities for developing and boosting the blue bioeconomy, assuring the protection and promotion of marine resources and adding value to them.

**4** sessions on **3** islands

**240** participants

**2** award-winning projects

**65** entities linked to the blue bioeconomy were mapped



## INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

### COOL

The **Clean Ocean Organizations Convention** encourages and supports the Azorean organizations working towards the protection and conservation of the ocean through their involvement in the national network of organizations.

**30** organizations mapped

**2** meetings devoted to Azorean organizations.

“Contributions of Azorean organizations to a Clean and Healthy Ocean” **report** handed in to the Regional Secretary for the Environment and Climate Change. Participation of **8** organizations in **COOL Nacional 2021** in Lisbon,

Participation of **18** organizations on **6** islands in **COOL Academy 2022** in Lisbon.

### INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEAN-UP DAY

**Dozens of entities** (NGOs, schools, citizens' movements and governmental bodies) take part every year. This increasing mobilization and commitment shows the increasing awareness of Azoreans about the protection of the ocean.

**In 2023**

**41** clean-up campaigns

**860** volunteers

**> 60 entities** involved (NGOs, schools, citizens' movements, companies and government bodies)

**6.8** metric tons of litter







NOVEMBER 2023

# BLUE AZORES