



# CTA-118-MPA Valued in Billions-Bahamas

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## Report: Bahamas Marine Protected Areas Valued in Billions – Builds Case For Network Expansion

Posted on 20 February 2018. by Jones Bahamas

An evaluation of the marine protected areas in The Bahamas puts the economic value of ecosystem services in the billions of dollars and helps to build the case for expanding the network of these spaces in our country.

The report “Economic Valuation of Ecosystem Services in Bahamian Marine Protected Areas” was commissioned by Bahamas Protected, a three-year initiative to manage and expand marine protected areas in the country, which is an effort to safeguard the economic value of marine ecosystems.

The more than 6 billion dollar value includes not only national benefits from these areas that provide nursery habitat for the spiny lobster, protect shorelines from storm damage, and support tourism, but also benefits to the international community such as the carbon storage in these areas that mitigate the worldwide carbon footprint and protect against climate change impacts.

The report only calculated the value of some services provided by protected areas so the total value is likely to be higher. Traditional approaches to MPA management focus on ecological considerations, such as sensitive habitats but this report goes further.

“The marine environment of The Bahamas is under increasing threat every day by human activities that not only risk the collapse of some fishing industries but also put residents at risk because of the loss of storm protection and even the destruction of some touristic attractions,” said BREEF Executive Director Casuarina McKinney-Lambert. “If we can put a value on the environment our hope is that people become more willing to help protect the environment in our country.”

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The report not only focuses on the immediate economic value of protected areas but also the intrinsic benefits from them as well. “Tourists come to The Bahamas to swim in the ocean, to enjoy the beaches, and to explore the reefs; without those attractions we are going to lose visitors,” McKinney-Lambert adds. “Many of these marine protected areas serve as breeding grounds for fish to sustain our fisheries and in this way support the livelihoods of people living in the islands.”

Dr. Katie Arkema, the principle researcher on the report, points to the global shift from focusing on the negative impact on the environment from human intervention more so to the positive impacts that saving the environment will have on those who live there.

“In recent years there’s been growing interest in the benefits that nature provides to people- so not just thinking about the negative impacts but also accounting for the positive effects of the ecosystems on things like food security, fresh water, coastal protection from storms and a whole host of different goods and services,” said Dr. Arkema.. Her research focuses on the way the environment helps to protect communities around the world. “The idea is to close the loop between people and the environment and account for not only the ways in which people affect ecosystems but also how changes in ecosystems in turn affect people”

The Bahamas formally signed on to the CCI in 2008, joining 10 other Caribbean countries in pledging to protect 20% of marine and coastal habitat by 2020 and also work towards active management of these areas. The Bahamas Protected initiative is looking at the relationship of people and the environment as part of efforts to achieve the goals of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI)in the Bahamas. .

The Economic Valuation of Ecosystem Services in Bahamian Marine Protected Areas report looked at the economic value of many aspects of the environment from coral reefs to creeks to mangroves and even sea grass. “There’s been a lot of focus on ecotourism and fisheries,” Dr. Arkema said, “but there’s actually a whole suite of services that are provided by ecosystems within Marine Protected Areas including for example coastal protection from storms and sea level rise.”

Bahamas Protected is a joint effort between The Nature Conservancy, The Bahamas National Trust, The Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation in collaboration with other national stakeholders, with major funding support from Oceans 5. This study also had support from the Disney Conservation Fund and the Perry Institute for Marine Science.

With about 10% of the Bahamas marine environment being declared a protected area, there is still much to do to add your-support-for-bahamian-marine-protected-areas the next phase of protected areas and reach 20% protection by 2020 Follow Bahamas Protected facebook page for more information (@242protected), and sign the petition at

[https://www.change.org/p/sea-the-future-show-now?recruiter=684490076&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=copylink&utm\\_campaign=share\\_petition](https://www.change.org/p/sea-the-future-show-now?recruiter=684490076&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=share_petition) if you want to get involved in protecting The Bahamas for today and the future.

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