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New Version of Google Earth Features California's Marine Protected Areas –– As Part of Large International Effort to Inform a Global Audience

You don't have to get wet, or seasick, to find out what is going on in Marine Protected Areas worldwide. Just tune in through your computer.

This morning at 10 a.m. Pacific Time, Ocean in Google Earth –– available to computers everywhere –– was launched at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Scientists at UC Santa Barbara are involved in the project.

"The Marine Science Institute at UCSB played a key role in providing scientific guidance, intriguing content, and innovative web-based graphics for the Marine Protected Area (MPA) layer of Ocean in Google Earth," said Steven Gaines, director of the Marine Science Institute (MSI). MSI worked as part of a group called the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO).

Gaines explained that through Google, with contributions from many leading conservation organizations, scientists hope to inform a broad audience about important scientific research on Marine Protected Areas and fully protected, no-take

marine reserves.

Information, imagery, and stories on more than 4,500 Marine Protected Areas around the world are available through the newest version of Ocean in Google Earth, which enables users to dive beneath the surface of the sea and explore the world's oceans.

The new Google Earth feature also contains content from Protect Planet Ocean, a Web site that is coordinated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and found at www.protectplanetocean.org.

These exciting new Internet resources will draw a global audience, and will highlight research, conservation efforts, and policy processes occurring in California,according to Sarah Lester, project scientist at MSI.

The Marine Protected Area layer of Ocean in Google Earth includes an animation showing the effect of reserve protection on fish populations in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Protect Planet Ocean, the web portal, features case studies on the Marine Life Protection Act process that established a statewide network of Marine Protected Areas in California waters. Results can be found featuring the scientific monitoring conducted in the marine reserve at Anacapa Island.

Oceans cover more than 70 percent of the Earth, and yet less than one percent of our oceans are under any kind of protection. Oceans are facing unprecedented threats and the response to the crisis has been slow. Countries around the world have committed to establishing networks of Marine Protected Areas by 2012, yet at the current pace, that goal will not be reached until 2060 at the earliest. There is an urgent need to accelerate the establishment of Marine Protected Areas and, in effect, Protect Planet Ocean.

Case studies from no-take Marine Protected Areas around the world provide scientific evidence that full protection in marine reserves can boost the abundance, diversity, and size of marine species.

Key participants in the international effort include Google Earth, IUCN, National Geographic, the UN Foundation, the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Study of Coastal Oceans (PISCO), Natural England, the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, NOAA's Ocean Service International Program

Office, National Marine Sanctuaries, the National Marine Protected Areas Center, and MPA News.

Related LinksOcean in Google Earth
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