

Coral Reefs of the High Seas Coalition Charter

The ocean is our biggest hope to foster a positive future for our planet. The areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), also known as high seas, cover more than 60% of our ocean's surface. This vast area provides vital ecosystem services that are critical for sustaining life on Earth, providing essential resources that feed and employ hundreds of millions of people, and delivering ecosystem services that regulate our climate. Yet only 1% of the High Seas is protected, despite widespread threats from overfishing, destructive fishing methods, plastic pollution, and climate change, with seabed mining looming in the near future.

Up to 90% of coral reefs may disappear in the next 30 years in the absence of urgent conservation action; they have started to do so at unprecedented rates due to the latest ocean warming events, which keeps us firm in our endeavor to make all efforts to increase ecosystem resilience. Our purpose is to catalyze global actions to protect coral reefs on the high seas recognizing they harbor extraordinary biodiversity, provide many human benefits, and are highly vulnerable to human and climate impacts. Coral reefs are valuable ecosystems that connect communities with the ocean and remind us why we need to protect the high seas.

Understanding and protecting high seas coral reefs is necessary to secure ocean resilience and healthy fisheries for future generations. Protecting these remote ocean 'rainforests of the sea' will yield high conservation, food security, and climate resilience value and are therefore, strategic habitats to concentrate our efforts.

Our objective: Aware of the importance of a healthy ocean, the Coral Reefs of the High Seas Coalition (CRHS) is a partnership of experts and organizations from across the globe committed to protecting valuable and exceptional high seas sites to ensure human wellbeing. The Coalition seeks to generate the science, strategic communication, and political support that is necessary to catalyze action. We do this by convening experts and organizations focused on conservation that previously worked in isolation.

The CRHS works together using the different talents, skills, and visions of its members to create a joined force to support governments, and regional and international organizations to establish conservation measures to protect the high seas. We believe that together we maximize our positive collective impact.

Members of the CRHS commit to work together in the following strategic lines: **advancing science** to inform conservation measures in the high seas, **implementing strategic communication** to raise awareness about the importance of specific sites in the high seas, and **building political support** to achieve long term conservation goals.

We are currently developing strategies and actions towards the protection of coral reefs and associated ecosystems in the high seas. In a first phase, we will focus our efforts on the Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges and the Emperor Seamounts, while also exploring other priority sites in the high seas.

Values and Guiding Principles

The CRHS work is guided by the following core values.

Optimism: we are passionate about a healthy ocean, and we know that with our members and partners, we will consolidate the first generation of marine protected areas in the high seas that effectively ensure connectivity and resilience implementing innovative strategies.

Teamwork: we understand that together we are stronger, and we collaborate from our shared and different visions to build the pathway to effectively protect and manage exceptional sites in the high seas. Together we will develop and implement our strategy in a coordinated way and leverage fundraising campaigns to the extent possible.

Transparency: we are open in our communication, respect our collective strategy, and understand our role of supporting governments in their efforts to conserve the high seas.

The members of the Coalition **commit** to the following guiding principles:

- To advance CRHS objectives within their work on agreed upon sites and strategies.
- To be transparent and collaborative, sharing relevant information and treating strategy documents and discussions responsibly and with appropriate discretion. This includes reporting back from meetings and facilitating access to information and research to achieve common goals.
- To strengthen the work of the CRHS by providing in-kind contributions, including technical expertise, and supporting coordinated fundraising efforts for our collaborative efforts.
- To work in a coordinated way in agreed upon sites to ensure strategic interventions are aligned and messages to government and stakeholders are consistent.
- To support communication efforts to build awareness and promote CRHS goals and objectives, and to not undermine CRHS strategies or messaging in their work.
- To work together to minimize and resolve any conflict that arises among members, seeking the best interest of the CRHS and its members to achieve common goals.

CRHS Coalition Governance and operational framework

The CRHS is a supportive coalition of like-minded organizations and experts that respects the governance and individuality of its participants and organizations. The Coalition will promote collective efforts and strategies to consolidate a common voice to advise governments and international organizations in the conservation of key high seas areas.

Roles and functions

Director: The Director of the Coalition coordinates actions while ensuring transparent and effective communication with the planning team, working groups and the broader membership. The Director supports the discussion and codesign of scientific, communication, and political strategies, and assists the members to agree upon common actions and encourage assertive conflict resolution processes. In coordination with the membership, the Director promotes fundraising efforts in line with the approved strategies and identified roles of the Coalition members.

Planning Team: The Director and the CRHS members who are committed to contributing to strategy discussions and leading activities in sites, will participate in regular meetings as part of a planning team. Members are encouraged to attend and take active roles in these meetings. The Planning Team meets periodically to agree, revise, share, and pivot site strategies.

Working groups: Different working groups lead conservation actions in prioritized high seas sites according to the agreed strategies and in close coordination with the Director who oversees their work. The working groups will meet periodically to organize the implementation of the strategy, collaborative fundraising efforts and communications, and to report on actions and results, as well as to analyze potential risks and propose corrective measures. Currently, there is a working group for Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges co-led by the Director and the following partners: Oceana-Chile (on SPRFMO strategy), ESMOI (on science) and Pew (on MPA). Additional working groups will be formed as the scoping efforts progress.

Member organizations: Member organizations are those that have confirmed their membership of the Coalition by committing to the principles of this Charter. Members are encouraged to actively participate in meetings and activities, and strategy implementation.

There is no financial benefit or remuneration attached to the CRHS Coalition membership, nor payment required.

Becoming a member

To become part of the Coalition, please complete the following [form](#):



For more information

Send us an [email](#), visit our [webpage](#), or schedule a [call](#)