

Cook Islands Marine Park to join Pacific Oceanscape

Planning for the world's largest marine park is set to benefit from technical and scientific assistance from a range of partners, including GIS company Esri and Conservation International.



Credit: ©Cat Holloway

Geographic information system (GIS) software company Esri has committed to building a database to aid the spatial planning of the one million square kilometre Cook Islands Marine Park. The park was officially declared earlier this year by Cook Islands Prime Minister, Henry Puna.

The park is a large addition to the Pacific Oceanscape project, a commitment by 16 Pacific Island governments to integrated marine conservation and sustainable management across approximately 40 million square kilometres of ocean.

The Esri commitment is in response to Prime Minister Puna's challenge, issued to the international community at an 'Eye on the Earth' summit in December, to provide support to developing countries who have expressed a commitment to protecting the oceans.

Esri, in partnership with the University of California and the United Nations' Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, agreed to assign two senior scientists to collate all available information on the marine park into a single digital platform, using the Esri software package ArcGIS Online.

Cook Islands people will also be trained to operate the database. The project begins in early 2012 with a stakeholder meeting in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands.

Conservation International (CI) has also pledged technical and scientific assistance to implement the Pacific Oceanscape since its inception.

‘The Pacific Islands are leading the world in marine conservation, and the commitment by the Cook Islands of one million square kilometres of its Exclusive Economic Zone to a marine park is the latest example of this,’ says Michael Donoghue, Executive Director of CI’s Pacific Islands Programme.

‘The support announced by Esri and the University of California, Santa Barbara, will make a crucial difference to achieving a globally significant conservation area, and will set the standard for future innovative developments in the Pacific Islands.’

Source: [Esri](#)

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