



Published on *Marine Ecosystems and Management (MEAM)* (<https://meam.openchannels.org>)

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## Global Ocean Commission: "Need to act swiftly" on high seas governance

The Global Ocean Commission is an independent body of world leaders with the goal of reversing degradation of the high seas - areas of the ocean beyond national jurisdiction ([www.globaloceancommission.org](http://www.globaloceancommission.org)). Chaired by former Costa Rican President José María Figueres, South African cabinet minister Trevor Manuel, and former UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband, the Commission is focusing on four key issues facing the high seas: overfishing, large-scale loss of habitat and biodiversity, the lack of effective management and enforcement, and deficiencies in high seas governance.

Launched in February 2013, the Commission anticipates presenting a series of recommendations for improved high seas governance roughly one year from now. MEAM asked Simon Reddy, executive secretary of the Global Ocean Commission, for his thoughts on how ocean planning may factor into the Commission's recommendations. His responses are here.

### On what roles marine spatial planning and MPAs should play in sustainable high seas management:

**Simon Reddy:** All mechanisms that lead to sustainable and equitable management of the ocean are potentially valuable. Marine spatial planning, ecosystem-based management, and marine protection all fit that description when they are done well. It is important to note that the Commission is focusing on the high seas, and obviously the issues differ somewhat between high seas and coastal zones, particularly the legal regime.

One important issue is that the future of ocean industries is by definition unknown, so we cannot know whether, in 50 years' time, societies will want to use the high seas for energy technologies, geo-engineering, or something totally new. It is important that we have in place a governance regime under which all of these potential future uses would be managed in a sustainable and equitable way, on the basis of sound science and sound economics.

### On whether the Commission will lobby governments on its recommendations:

**Reddy:** Most of our Commissioners have a track record at the higher echelons of politics, and many are active now as parliamentarians or on the international stage. So they are in any case having conversations with governments. But what is really remarkable is the number of different constituencies that have an interest in reforming high seas management and governance: NGOs and scientists, of course, but also many businesses, security agencies, economists, faith groups, trade unions, and so on. The key to achieving change is probably to have all these groups talking to governments at the same time.

### On when he anticipates the Commission will deliver its recommendations:

**Reddy:** In the first half of 2014, probably in the second quarter. That is largely because the UN General Assembly will begin important deliberations on high seas biodiversity when it meets in September 2014, and some of our recommendations will probably bear on that issue. But there are also other international processes going on that offer a window of opportunity, such as the post-Rio discussions on sustainable development goals, into which our ideas can feed. Another reason for urgency is the ever-growing body of science indicating ecological peril in parts of the ocean. That tells us that we need to act swiftly.

#### For more information:

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