

GOVERNING COASTAL RESOURCES

IMPLICATIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

International Resource Panel 2021

"The report draws together an evidence base that demonstrates beyond question the need for enhanced governance coordination between terrestrial activities and marine resources."

Izabella Teixeira and Janez Potočnik, Co-Chairs of the International Resource Panel

"I believe this important report of the International Resource Panel will make valuable contributions to an urgently needed shift towards more comprehensive and effective ocean stewardship, placing us on a sustainable ocean trajectory that we are all relying on."

Ligia Noronha, Director, Economy Division, UN Environment Programme (April 2021)

Key messages for policy makers

- 1. Living coastal resources are most threatened by land-based activities.** Land-based activities generate most impacts on living coastal resources, with agriculture, ports and harbours, and aquaculture being particularly impactful land-based activities. Biodiversity is the coastal resource most impacted by land-based activities. Although evidence is comparatively limited, it appears that non-living coastal resources are largely unaffected by land-based activities.
- 2. All parts of the blue economy are vulnerable to changes in coastal resources, particularly fishing, aquaculture and tourism.** The transition to the sustainable blue economy can be undermined by the negative effects of land-based activities on coastal resources. The governance of land-based activities is therefore critical to achieving a sustainable blue economy.
- 3. Existing land-sea governance approaches cannot cope with the impacts on coastal resources created by land-based activities.** Fragmented governance impedes coordinated action to reduce the effects of land-based activities on coastal resources. This problem is magnified when land-based activities originate in other countries or contribute to the degrading of coastal resources at a regional scale.
- 4. Land-sea governance urgently needs to be strengthened to protect coastal resources from the impacts of land-based activities and to support the transition to a sustainable blue economy.** New governance frameworks are required that connect land and sea together into coherent governance systems that enable impacts to be considered from their source through to where they generate impacts.
- 5. Tackling the impacts of land-based activities on coastal resources is a global priority.** The most impactful land-based activities on coastal resources should be prioritized for urgent action as these will generate the most benefit most quickly to the sustainable blue economy.



Strengthening existing land sea governance structures and new insights

The report provides policy makers 5 concrete options for strengthening the existing land-sea governance structures and 7 new insights into land-sea resource governance approaches. These governance approaches are essential to reduce the effects of land-based activities on coastal resources and to support the transition to a sustainable blue economy.

Strengthening existing land sea governance structures

- **Ecosystem-based management** should be a guiding principle of coastal resource governance, as it provides a holistic approach to the consideration of all influences on coastal resources (with an emphasis on a healthy underpinning ecosystem).
- **Existing area-based management tools**, with enhancement and adaptation, should be used to counteract the impacts of land-based activities on coastal resources (such as marine protected areas, marine spatial planning, integrated land-use planning and integrated coastal management).
- **Improved coordinating mechanisms** are needed to overcome fragmented governance between sectors and between terrestrial and marine governance arrangements.
- **Implementation-focused capacity development programmes** should be formulated and disseminated to target land-sea governance practitioners.
- **Filling evidence gaps**, particularly related to the impacts of land-based activities on abiotic coastal resources, should be prioritized and their implications for effective governance determined.

New Insights

- **Coastal governance should focus on the pathways connecting multiple land-based activities to coastal resources**, and should not be constrained by legal or administrative boundaries that disconnect causes from effects and hinder coordinated governance responses.
- **Regional regulatory frameworks that place a legal obligation on land-based activities to take account of coastal resource impacts should be developed** to reduce the impacts of land-based activities on coastal resources.
- **Natural capital safeguarding on land and at sea is a unifying principle** that could be used as a common cause to connect otherwise fragmented governance systems.
- **Coastal natural capital needs to be mapped and protected**, as there is currently a substantial evidence gap.
- **A stakeholder community must be constructed** to reflect the pathways connecting land-based activities to coastal resources, rather than the typical area-based stakeholder partnerships currently in place.
- **Monitoring and evaluation should focus on impact pathways**, and not merely on the condition of coastal resources.
- **A decision-support tool is required to support land-sea governance** focused on impact pathways that take account of different geographical contexts.

Sustainable Blue Economy: working definition adopted in this report is *an ocean-based economy that provides equitably distributed social and economic benefits for current and future generations, while restoring and protecting the intrinsic value and functionality of coastal and marine ecosystems and is based on clean technologies and circular material flows* (adapted from WWF, 2018).

The full report, summary for policymakers, video and factsheet can be downloaded at:

<https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/governing-coastal-resources>.

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