The Nature Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

Asia-Pacific / Indonesia Program

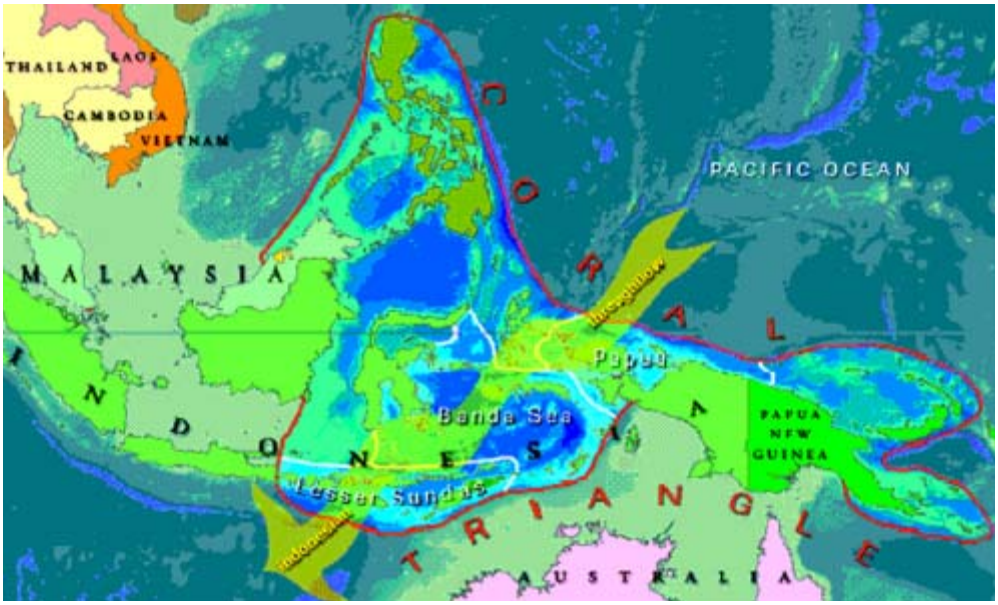
Developing Marine Conservation Priorities

Creating a Scientific Basis for Conservation Work in the Coral Triangle

Southeast Asia's best-preserved reefs are located in and around eastern Indonesia between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, in an area known as the Coral Triangle. In 2003, The Nature Conservancy's Southeast Asia Center for Marine Protected Areas (SEACMPA) held an experts workshop to identify the Coral Triangle's boundaries as well as the ecoregions and their subunits known as functional seascapes within the triangle. These areas contain large expanses of the world's most diverse coral reefs and are still in a relatively good condition.

Based on the workshop results, SEACMPA selected three priority ecoregions-the Lesser Sundas, Southeast Sulawesi, and Papua-and three priority functional seascapes in each ecoregion-the Lesser Sunda Islands, Southeast Sulawesi, and the Bird's Head Peninsula in Papua-on which to focus its marine conservation efforts. These functional seascapes would serve as the geographical unit to establish 'footprints' of MPA networks within the Coral Triangle and The Conservancy will gather scientific information through marine Ecoregional Conservation Assessments (ECA) in these sites.

The ECA is a powerful tool to guide future marine conservation work in Indonesia and help meet the Conservancy's ambitious goal of protecting the world's most biologically diverse corals.



Boundaries of the Coral Triangle, showing the Indonesian throughflow that connects the Pacific to the Indian Ocean ©The Nature Conservancy

During this scientific assessment, a team of experts from the Conservancy and partner organizations will use scientific principles to select areas that are important to conserve, set goals, assess viability, and map out conservation priorities. This will provide a firm scientific basis for conservationists, spatial planners, and development specialists to make informed decisions.

The Conservancy will partner with government agencies to ensure that the conservation priorities identified through this process are included in regional zoning and policy-making process. In addition, the team will work closely with local communities and stakeholders to build support for conservation.

The Conservancy will use the results of the marine scientific assessment to: plan networks of marine protected areas to preserve coral reef biodiversity in the three ecoregions; identify major environmental threats and strategies to guide site conservation; and, strengthen support for conservation among local communities.

Ultimately, the scientific information will be fed into a Conservancy-wide innovative effort to establish networks of Marine Protected Areas linked by ocean currents and designed to withstand the threats of global climate change.

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