

## THE BLUE CARBON INITIATIVE:

### The Importance of Coastal Ecosystems for Mitigating Climate Change

Human-caused carbon in the atmosphere and oceans is the most significant cause of global climate change. Curbing climate change means both removing carbon from the atmosphere and oceans and avoiding new carbon emissions. An important piece of this solution is preserving and restoring coastal ecosystems.

#### What is “Blue Carbon”?

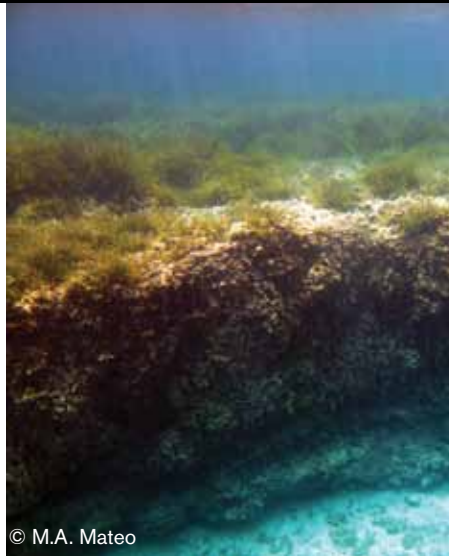
Blue Carbon is the carbon stored by coastal and ocean ecosystems. In particular, coastal ecosystems such as tidal marshes, mangroves, and seagrasses remove carbon from the atmosphere and ocean, storing it in plants and depositing it in the sediment below them by natural processes. These coastal ecosystems are very efficient at sequestering and storing carbon - each square mile of these systems can remove carbon from the atmosphere and oceans at rates higher than each square mile of mature tropical forests. Furthermore, coastal ecosystems have been found to store huge quantities of carbon in organic rich sediments - up to 5 times more carbon than many temperate and tropical forests. These ecosystems are found in all continents, except Antarctica.





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In the last 25 years, roughly 20 percent of Earth's mangroves have been lost. Salt marshes are being lost at an estimated rate of 1-2 percent each year. In the last two decades, about 50 percent of Earth's seagrass ecosystems have been lost. Draining or clearing for aquaculture and agriculture, coastal pollution, and inappropriate coastal development are some of the main drivers of this loss.



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## Why is Blue Carbon Important?

Preventing degradation and destruction and promoting restoration of coastal ecosystems is a significant tool we can use to mitigate climate change. The coastal ecosystems of mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrasses are some of the most rapidly disappearing natural systems on Earth. When lost they not only stop sequestering carbon but also release their stores of carbon and become new sources of climate change causing carbon emissions which can last for centuries.

## The Blue Carbon Initiative

The Blue Carbon Initiative is the first integrated program with a comprehensive and coordinated global agenda focused on mitigating climate change through the conservation and restoration of coastal marine ecosystems.

## International Cooperation

Conservation International (CI), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO is collaborating with governments, research institutions, non-governmental and international organizations, and communities around the world to...

- Develop management approaches, financial incentives and policy mechanisms for ensuring conservation and restoration of coastal Blue Carbon ecosystems;
- Engage local, national, and international governments to ensure policies and regulations support coastal Blue Carbon conservation, management and financing;
- Develop comprehensive methods for coastal carbon accounting;
- Develop incentive mechanisms such as carbon payment schemes for Blue Carbon projects; and
- Implement projects around the world that demonstrate the feasibility of coastal Blue Carbon accounting, management, and incentive agreements;
- Support scientific research into the role and importance of coastal Blue Carbon ecosystems for climate change mitigation.

For more information, please visit [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org) and [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

