

A vibrant underwater scene featuring a diverse coral reef. In the foreground, there are various types of coral, including branching white corals, a prominent red sea fan, and patches of yellow and orange corals. Numerous small, bright orange fish with blue eyes are swimming in schools throughout the water column. The background shows a deep blue sea with sunlight filtering down from the surface, creating a shimmering effect on the water and the reef.

**YES Initiative Marine Ecosystem Committee**

# **First Meeting: Toward Collaborative Conservation of the Yellow Sea**

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# Marine Ecosystem Committee

## Structure

<b>Chair</b>	Prof. Yanli Lei
<b>Vice-chair</b>	Prof. Jaesung Rhee Director Okhee Park
<b>Coordinator</b>	Dr. Hojun Lee

## Mission

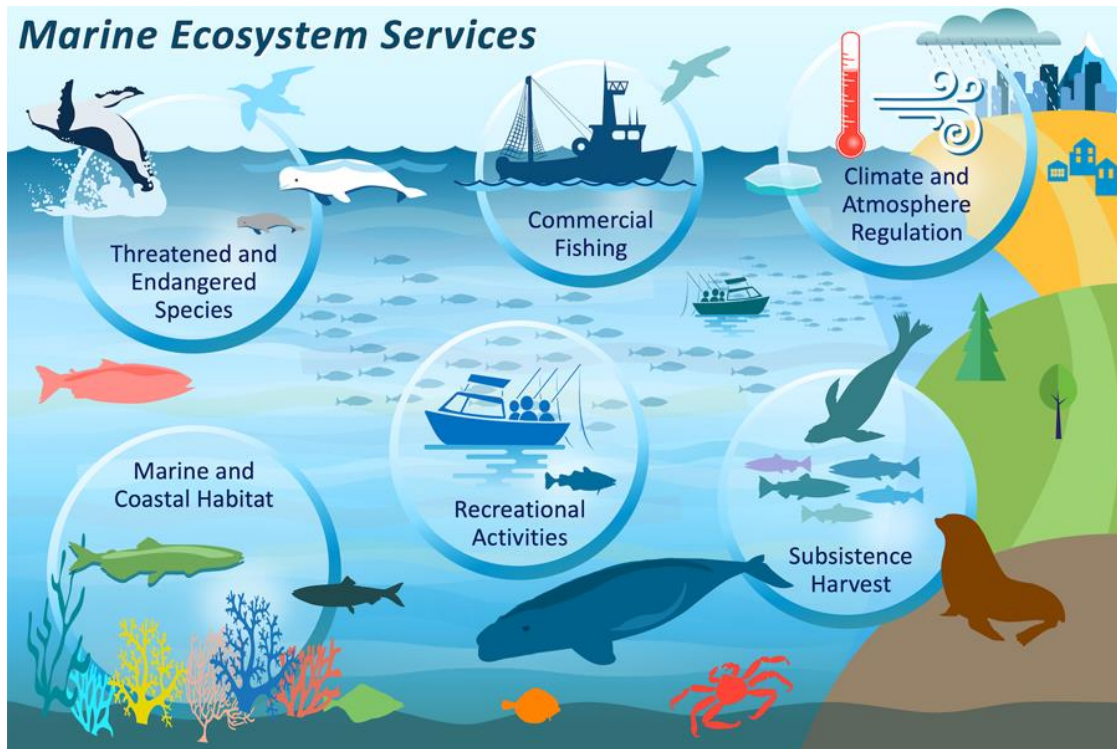
To lead sustainable marine conservation by advancing research, developing innovative conservation strategies, fostering active community engagement, and promoting collaboration among experts, citizens, and stakeholders—ultimately empowering future generations to protect marine biodiversity

## Role

- Research and analysis for marine ecosystem restoration
- Developing sustainable conservation technologies
- Enhancing community involvement and public participation
- Promoting expert and stakeholder collaboration

# Importance of marine ecosystems

**Marine biodiversity and ecological balance**  
**Climate regulation and carbon sequestration**  
**Economic and social values (fishing, tourism, etc.)**



<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/accurately-accounting-economic-value-marine-ecosystems>

**Major threats (climate change, pollution, overfishing, coastal development)**



<https://oceangeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/5-biggest-human-threats-the-Ocean-faces-OceanGeneration-1024x604.png>



# Global efforts 1 – UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3)



## An action-oriented conference

UNOC3 will be focused on « Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean » and will seek to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14), with three main priorities, in order to produce an ambitious Nice Ocean Action Plan:

### Third United Nations Ocean Conference, Nice 2025

(From June 9 to 13, 2025)

**At this conference, countries will adopt the "Nice Ocean Action Plan", committing to concrete actions for ocean conservation and sustainable use.**



#### Priority 1

Working towards completion of multilateral processes linked to the Ocean



#### Priority 2

Mobilizing finance resources for the SDG14 and support the development of a sustainable blue economy



#### Priority 3

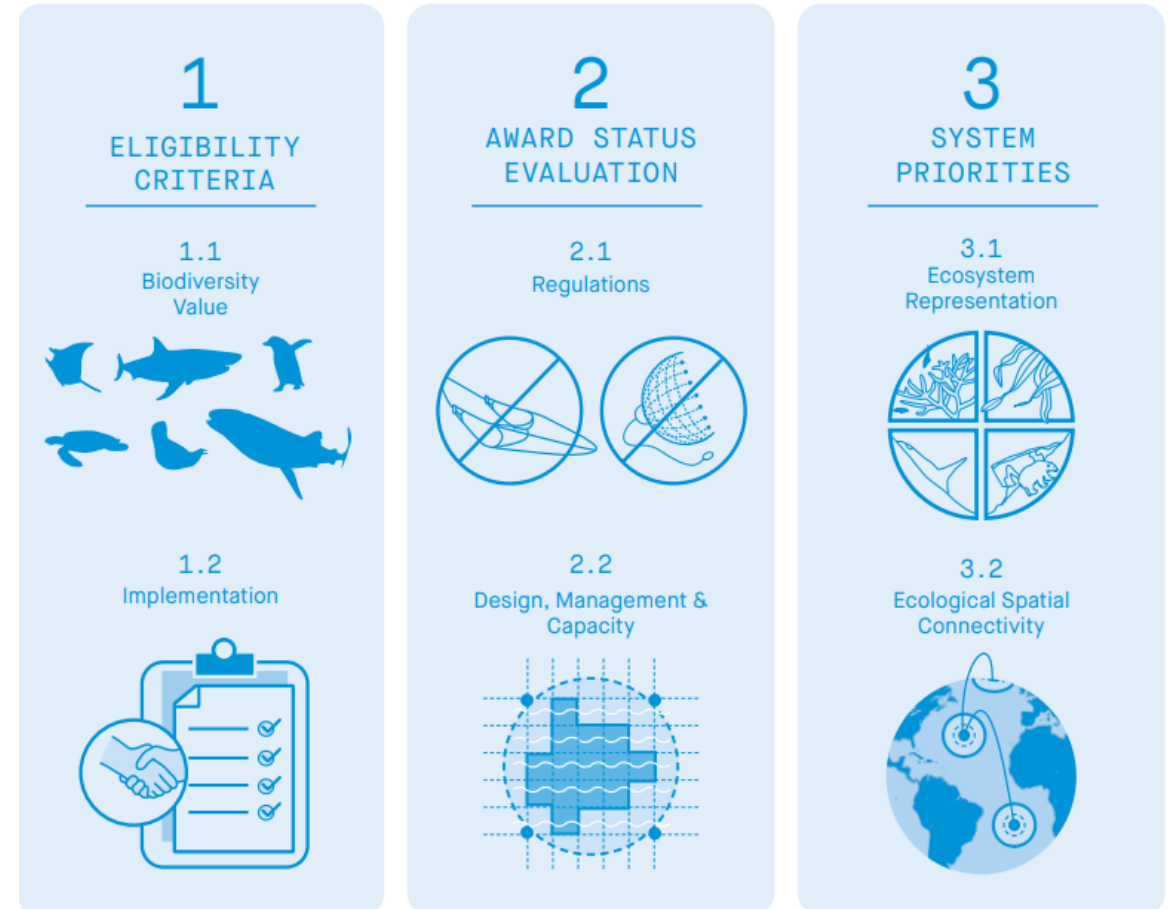
Strengthen and better disseminate knowledge linked to marine sciences to enhance policy-making.

# Global efforts 2 – Blue Park Award

- A Blue Park is an international certification awarded to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that meet rigorous scientific standards.
- The Marine Conservation Institute selects MPAs that enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainability.



## < Blue Park Award Criteria >



# Global efforts 2 – Blue Park Award

## What are the benefits of winning a Blue Park Award?

**Gains international recognition** – Recognized as a global model for marine conservation

**Increases financial support** – Additional funding from governments, corporations, and NGOs

**Strengthens conservation policies** – Implementation of stricter marine protection and management policies

**Promotes sustainable tourism** – Encourages eco-friendly marine tourism and supports local economies

**Expands research opportunities** – Facilitates marine ecosystem studies and long-term conservation strategies

## 2024 Awardees



<https://marine-conservation.org/on-the-tide/2024-blue-park-awards-at-9th-our-ocean-conference/>



# Marine conservation efforts in Yellow Sea (1/4)

## Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project (YSLME; ~2020)



### Background & Purpose

A joint regional initiative established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported by Korea (ROK), China, DPR Korea, Yellow Sea Partnership, and Global Environment Facility (GEF).

**Objective:** Protect the Yellow Sea's ecosystem by reducing environmental threats (pollution, overfishing, habitat degradation) through transboundary cooperation.

### Collaborating Parties

Korea, China, DPR Korea (North Korea), Yellow Sea Partnership, and Global Environment Facility (GEF).

### Significance

- Establishes a collaborative framework for ecosystem-based management in the Yellow Sea.
- Promotes sustainable resource use, biodiversity protection, and regional cooperation.

# Marine conservation efforts in Yellow Sea (2/4)

## Yellow Sea Ecoregion Support Project (YSESP; 2007-2014)

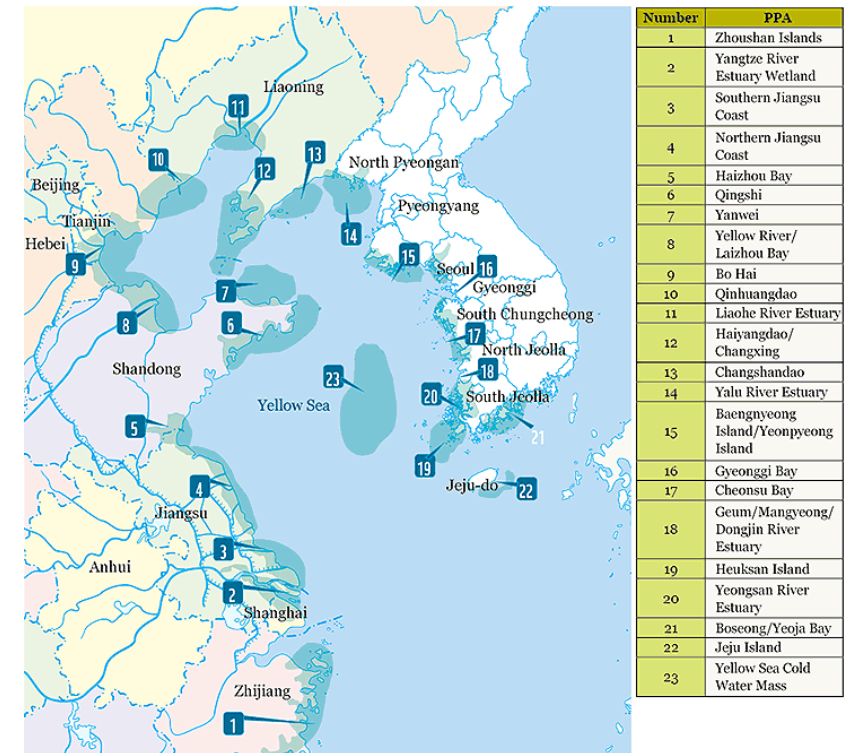
### Background & Purpose

Joint project by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST).

Aimed to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable management practices in the Yellow Sea region.

### Key Achievements

- Enhanced public awareness and participation in local conservation efforts.
- Developed practical models (EBM & CBM) for sustainable management of marine resources.
- Strengthened international collaboration among Korea, China, and other stakeholders in the Yellow Sea region.



< Yellow Sea Ecoregion and 23 potential priority areas >



# Marine conservation efforts in Yellow Sea (3/4)

## Marine Protected Areas in Korea (MPAs)

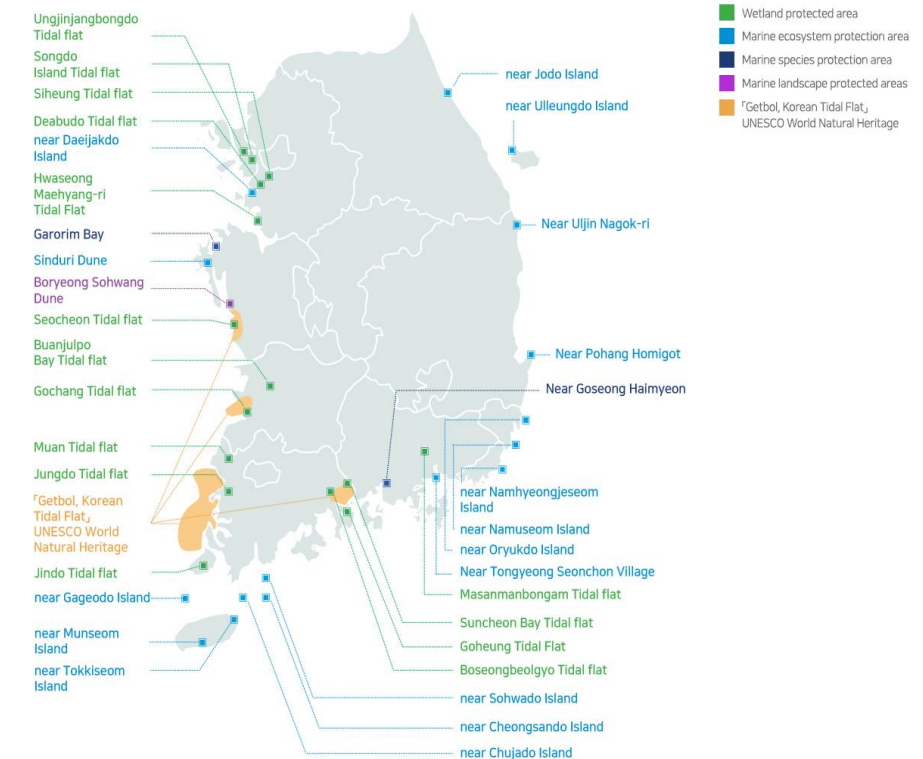
### Purpose & Current status

Established annually by the Korean government to preserve marine biodiversity and restore ecosystems.

Approximately 7,963.58 km<sup>2</sup> (2.12% of Korean waters) designated as MPAs (as of 2021).

### Achievements

- Improved marine ecosystem health and biodiversity.
- Enhanced community participation and sustainable use of marine resources.
- Implemented international-standard management systems and frameworks.



< Current status of the marine protected area >

# Marine conservation efforts in Yellow Sea (4/4)

## International Cooperation & Networking Efforts



### Background & Objective

Participation in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP).  
Protecting critical migratory bird habitats along the Yellow Sea.

### Key Activities

**Korea:** Songdo mudflats (Incheon), Hwaseong Wetlands, Daebu Island mudflats, Chilbal Island included in the EAAFP network.

**China:** Rongcheng Swan National Nature Reserve.

**North Korea:** Mundok and Kumya Wetland reserves designated.

### Achievements

- Establishment of internationally recognized migratory bird habitat networks.
- Enhanced collaboration between countries in conserving biodiversity hotspots.
- Promoted sustainable use of wetland resources through local community involvement.



# Key takeaways from Yellow Sea conservation efforts

## Insights & Lessons Learned

- ✓ **Regional Cooperation is Crucial**  
Effective collaboration among Korea, China, and DPR Korea (e.g., YSLME, EAAFP)
- ✓ **Community Engagement Drives Success**  
Proven effectiveness of local involvement (e.g., YSESP's community-based approach)
- ✓ **International Standards Boost Recognition**  
Certification and global standards (such as Blue Park) attract funding and strengthen conservation

## Remaining Challenges

- ✓ **Limited Integration Across Projects**  
Greater coordination needed among diverse conservation initiatives
- ✓ **Low Public Awareness and Ownership**  
Public participation and community ownership remain inadequate
- ✓ **Insufficient Long-term Governance**  
Current frameworks (mostly non-binding) hinder long-term, sustainable conservation efforts

# Discussion topics

## Strengthening Regional Cooperation

**what further diplomatic or institutional measures are necessary to ensure long-term collaboration among Yellow Sea-bordering countries?**

황해 연안 국가 간 장기적인 협력을 위해 필요한 외교적, 제도적 방안은 무엇인가?

## Increasing Community Engagement

**What specific strategies can we adopt to significantly enhance community awareness and active participation in marine conservation projects around the Yellow Sea?**

황해 지역의 해양 보전 활동에서 지역사회의 인식과 적극적인 참여를 크게 증가시키기 위한 구체적인 전략은 무엇인가?

## Achieving Integrated Conservation

**How can different conservation initiatives (past, present, and future) be better integrated or coordinated to maximize their collective impact?**

과거, 현재, 미래의 다양한 해양보전 활동들이 상호 통합되고 조정될 수 있는 구체적인 방안은 무엇인가?

## Establishing Robust Governance

**Considering the current weak long-term governance framework, what legal or policy frameworks should we propose to enable sustainable, long-term marine conservation in the Yellow Sea?**

현재의 관리체계를 극복하고 황해 지역에서 장기적이고 지속 가능한 해양 보전을 실현하기 위해 어떤 법적, 정책적 프레임워크가 필요한가?



A vibrant underwater scene featuring a diverse coral reef. In the foreground, there are various types of coral, including branching white corals, a prominent red sea fan, and patches of yellow and orange corals. Numerous small, bright orange fish are swimming in the clear blue water. The background shows more coral structures and a few larger fish, all under bright, natural light filtering down from the surface.

**YES Initiative Marine Ecosystem Committee**

**Thank you for your  
attention**

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