



# SCIENCE-BASED TARGETS CAN PROTECT OCEANS

## OCEAN LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND KEY TAKEAWAYS (FOR SELECT MARINE-BASED INDUSTRIES)

Photo Credit: Matjaz Krivic / Climate Visuals Countdown

In the backdrop of the need for establishing science-based targets (SBTs) that can guide corporate engagement in ocean conservation, WWF conducted a study which aims to provide insights into the current frameworks addressing ocean health and to propose actionable recommendations for SBTN as well as call to action for companies, policymakers, and conservation groups. The study analysed 25 existing frameworks relevant to marine-related industries, including four key sectors - **marine renewables, shipping, tourism, and coastal development** and then performed a gap analysis to identify deficiencies in applicability and effectiveness\*.

We observed a growing recognition of the need for integrated approaches to ocean conservation, with frameworks such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) beginning to incorporate ocean health metrics into broader environmental standards. While numerous frameworks exist—developed by industry groups, NGOs, and governmental bodies—many address ocean health only tangentially, lack specific guidance tailored to sectoral challenges, or lack granularity in addressing specific ocean pressures. This fragmentation can lead to overlapping mandates and diluted efforts among stakeholders. A few other frameworks stand out for their targeted focus on oceans—such as “Setting Sail,” “Turning the Tide,” and “Bonds to Finance the Sustainable Blue Economy”—each

making significant contributions to marine conservation, though there are still additional aspects of marine conservation that these frameworks could address.

Despite these advancements, enforcement remains a challenge, and many countries struggle with compliance due to limited resources or political will. There is also an imbalance in how frameworks approach mitigation strategies; while fundamental avoidance and reduction strategies are typically well represented, restoration, regeneration, and transformation efforts are often overlooked due to their complexity. It is critical that the private sector take a holistic approach in contributing to a nature-positive future.

\* A prior analysis focused on fisheries and aquaculture, which informs the current SBTN Ocean Hub draft guidance.



Based on our understanding of the landscape, we recommend that the science-based targets for the future should be focused on three key pillars— **Capabilities, Collaboration and Communication**.

## Capabilities



First, the target-setting methodology should balance ambition with feasibility, ensuring that ocean health targets align with international frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Biodiversity Framework while being tailored to industry-specific conditions. Standardization of the classification and measurement of ocean pressures across industries is crucial for consistent reporting and monitoring. There is also a need to strengthen restoration efforts by moving beyond a 'do no harm' approach to incorporating long-term regeneration strategies, allowing businesses to adapt gradually while committing to ocean health.

## Collaboration



Additionally, aligning SBTN methodologies with existing reporting standards such as TNFD and EU CSRD will streamline compliance processes and reduce duplication of efforts. Collaborative partnerships among ecosystem actors and the private sector are essential for effective data sharing and reporting, which can be facilitated through a centralized ocean data hub. To reinforce the business case for sustainability, it is important to link ocean pressures to tangible financial risks and opportunities, promoting a holistic approach that addresses both ecosystem resilience and community well-being. Tailored resources should support corporate implementation of targets, drawing on in-sights from pilot programs to update toolkits and foster peer learning.

## Communication



Finally, engaging policymakers and financial institutions to promote company action to reduce pressures on nature will enhance collective action. Multiple tools can be considered including compliance-based and voluntary measures and green financing options for companies committed to sustainability targets.

All stakeholders can get involved by advocating for the adoption of SBTs, joining the Ocean Hub's initiatives, and collaborating on projects that drive positive change. Businesses should integrate ocean health into core strategies, implement industry-specific sustainability measures, invest in habitat restoration, and foster collaboration across sectors. Policymakers should incorporate ocean targets into national and international frameworks, strengthen regulatory measures, promote public-private partnerships, and increase investments in ocean research. Non-profits and conservation groups should align conservation programs with SBTs, mobilize financial resources, monitor progress, engage local communities, and advocate for policy changes to ensure long-term ocean resilience and sustainability.

**There is an urgent need for cohesive, science-based targets for nature to safeguard ocean health. Developing comprehensive guidelines with actionable metrics across all sectors is essential for protecting marine ecosystems, while also boosting global economic resilience and social well-being.**



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