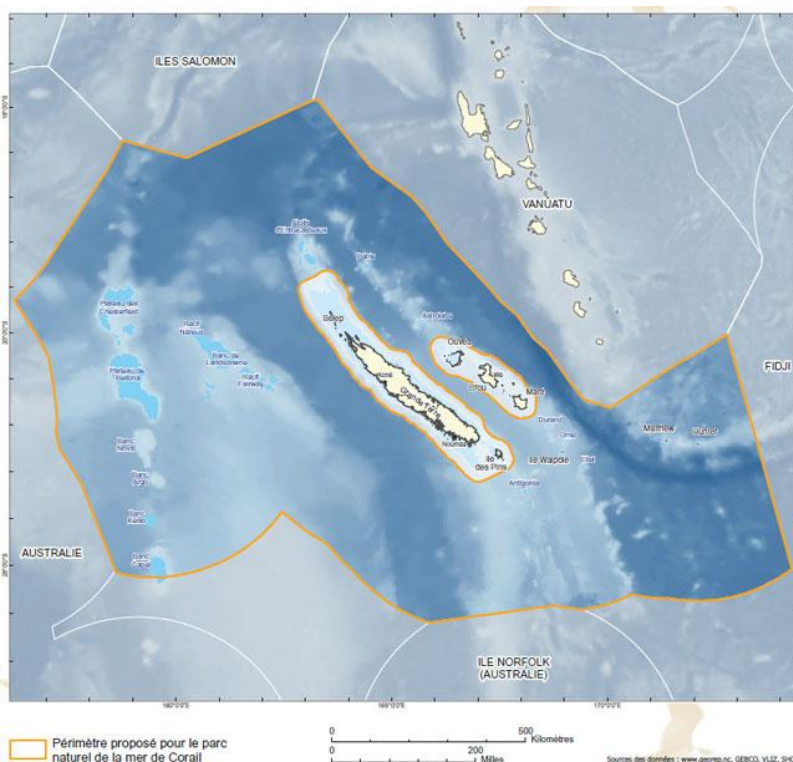


Press release

Nouméa, 23 april 2014

Creation of the Coral Sea natural park: the largest French Marine protected area, in New Caledonia.

The decree for creating the Coral Sea natural park was adopted on April 23, 2014 during the convocation of the Government of New Caledonia. “It gives me great satisfaction to see the establishment of Coral Sea Natural Park today. Since taking office, my government is fully mobilized so that New Caledonia adopts an integrated policy for managing marine areas under its joint responsibility with the state.” said President Harold Martin.



An ambitious marine area

The area covered includes all of the exclusive economic zone and territorial waters as well as islands and islets which are managed by the government of New Caledonia, nearly 1.3 million square kilometers (that is 3 times larger than the French mainland waters). The Coral Sea natural park is now one of the largest protected marine areas in the world. Its creation increases the protected areas from 4% to 16 % of the waters under French jurisdiction, thus contributing significantly to strengthen the French network of marine protected areas.

Management objectives

The park aims to protect the marine environment, to maintain services rendered to man by the different ecosystems present in its scope and to contribute to sustainable development of maritime activities.

The eight management techniques have three purposes:

- involve people at the heart of the project,
- create the conditions for sustainable development,
- allow New Caledonia to become an engine of regional progress for sustainable development.

Governance

The challenge is to establish a genuine shared management strategy to address the issues of protection and sustainable development at a large scale. For this, a management committee will be established in the coming months. The management committee will include representatives of all stakeholders involved in the maritime area of New Caledonia and it will have the responsibility to elaborate and implement the management plan of the park. It will be chaired by the High Commissioner of the Republic, representing the State, and by the President of the Government of New Caledonia. The Government of New Caledonia is actually competent in managing the resources of the maritime area, the State retaining sovereign functions related to sovereignty over these waters.

A collaborative project

Announced in August 2012 by Harold Martin, the President of the Government of New Caledonia, at the annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum, the project of creating a large MPA based on a strategic analysis of the maritime area of New Caledonia was officially launched with all stakeholders involved since 2012. Thanks to the technical support from the French Marine protected Areas Agency. The analysis aimed to identify issues of protection and sustainable development of the marine environment and provide management scenarios. Collaboration and dialogue, both at the technical and institutional level, were at the heart of the project from its initiation: it is a central point in the process of creating the natural park and marine protected areas in general.

Diversity and natural resources of the Coral Sea natural park

The area covered includes various diverse elements and an exceptional wealth such as: oceanic ridges detached from the ancient super-continent of Gondwana some 100 million years, deep sedimentary basins, an oceanic trench and many seamounts some of them emerging to form reef, lagoon or volcanic structures, the "Outlying Islands". One can also find Deep-sea ecosystems inside the park (up to 7919 meters, the deepest area of French waters), pelagic ecosystems and coral reefs. Moreover the area consists of 25 species of mammals, 48 species of sharks, 19 species of breeding birds and 5 species of turtles.

For more information please visit the site: www.aires-marines.fr (main story on the home page)

Note to editors: to download maps and pictures for illustration use the following link:

<http://mediatheque.aires-marines.fr/identification?token=1-K3EEHOELV60>. Files will be available until May 15. If the link does not work, please visit the following address: <http://mediatheque.aires-marines.fr/identification> and use the following code: 1-K3EEHOELV60.

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