

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR BLUE CARBON
Foundational Document
September 2016

To mark the inauguration of the International Partnership¹ for Blue Carbon (“the Partnership”), the initial Partners hereby outline the vision and structure for the Partnership, incorporating discussions at the first Partnership workshop in Indonesia, 23-24 August 2016:

Vision

Partners seek to protect and restore coastal ecosystems (mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses) in recognition of their value for climate change mitigation and adaptation and other ecosystem services.

The Partnership is a voluntary forum to facilitate learning and knowledge sharing, thereby strengthening the collective efforts of Partners in the areas of science research, coastal management and conservation, awareness raising, climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and related policy. Collectively and individually, Partners seek to contribute by 2020 to the protection and restoration of substantial and increasing areas of blue carbon ecosystems (mangroves, seagrasses and tidal marshes) in identified priority regional ‘hotspots’ for the benefit of communities globally.

Objective

To provide a forum for countries and organizations to benefit from the experience and expertise of the global community and develop an enabling environment for high quality, locally-relevant approaches to protecting and restoring blue carbon ecosystems (mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses).

Organization of Work

The Partnership intends to be focused around three core activities:

- Building Awareness
- Exchanging Knowledge
- Accelerating Practical Action

In its first year, the Partnership plans to conduct a stocktake of relevant information products, activities and programs, and an assessment of policy-maker and practitioner needs, to inform the focus of the Partnership’s activities. This analysis may also help develop regional and geographic priorities for the Partnership and inform a roadmap of activities that identifies timing, resource implications and any potential partner contributions.

¹ The terms “Partner” and “Partnership,” as used in this document and in any document in connection therewith, does not refer to a partnership under the law. Instead, it expresses the intention of the participants to work together in the limited manner described here for the purpose of achieving the common goals described herein. Accordingly, nothing in this document is intended to be construed as creating a relationship between the Partners of agency, partnership (in the legal sense) or joint venture or to render any Partner liable for any debts or obligations incurred by any other. There is no intent for any Partner to assume or create any obligation of any kind or to bind any other Partner in any respect.

Building awareness

Blue carbon ecosystems are increasingly becoming a part of the international dialogue in adaptation, mitigation, wetlands preservation and biodiversity conservation discussions. More needs to be done to ensure the role of these important coastal ecosystems is recognised in broader discussions about the blue economy, fisheries, reef health and anthropogenic impacts on oceans. This focus area captures the Partnership's potential to elevate the profile of blue carbon internationally, in the private sector and on national government agendas.

A key issue that has been raised has been the need for coordination and awareness at a government level. Policy responsibility for blue carbon is often held in multiple government agencies, such as forestry and fisheries. Connections can be drawn between the relevant agencies to enhance management and implementation.

Exchanging knowledge

There is an extensive range and depth of knowledge and expertise on blue carbon among members of the Partnership. The multi-stakeholder nature of the Partnership is a fundamental strength and offers an opportunity to establish networks across different actors – including from both the technical and policy side. This pillar aims to advance our global understanding of these ecosystems and leverage the scientific knowledge that exists in various fora. It builds on the Partnership's ability to catalyse action by bringing the 'right players' to the table to discuss barriers to action and lessons learned on how to overcome challenges. These lessons could support enhanced management of blue carbon ecosystems.

Accelerating practical action

Leveraging the expertise held within the Partnership, this pillar aims to develop and share approaches to protect and enhance coastal blue carbon. Drawing from the other pillars, the Partnership aims to share knowledge, expertise, and experience in implementing blue carbon-relevant management strategies. The Partnership also plans to seek to identify opportunities for synergies with existing projects and programs. In particular, it intends to seek to identify opportunities for scaling blue carbon solutions.

The range of activities under this pillar may range from sharing best practices to promoting and facilitating project development and identifying potential sources of finance. The Partnership's strengths stem from its convening platform and collaboration. There can be significant gains from sharing experiences and knowledge to enhance management and implementation of projects and policies.

Governance

For the initial establishment phase (expected to be around 12 – 18 months), the governance structure is expected to be comprised of a coordinator and a coordination group composed of up to four members, with an effort to reflect the geographic and sectoral diversity of membership (for example, governments, non-government organisations and research institutions).

The coordinator intends to work closely with the coordination group and be responsible for day-to-day management of the Partnership, including logistical support for Partnership activities and communication with Partners and other stakeholders. Australia has indicated it is in a position to support this coordinator role in the first year.

The coordination group is expected to be responsible for guiding the development and implementation of the strategic direction of the Partnership. Australia and the Blue Carbon Initiative (Conservation International, IUCN and IOC-UNESCO) have offered to serve on the coordination group, subject to internal approval and agreement by the other initial Partners.

During the initial establishment phase, all Partnership decisions are expected to be made by the full set of Partners. To facilitate timely implementation, decisions affecting governance, budget, staffing or implementation of activities are to be put forth on a “no objection” basis, with Partners having at least two weeks to react unless there are significant extenuating circumstances.

A strategic plan is intended to be developed to capture the structure, governance, and expectations of the Partnership and its Partners.

Following the initial establishment phase the governance structure is intended to be reviewed in light of the results of the stocktake and the refinement of the roadmap of activities. Should the coordination group continue, a rotational membership is expected to be considered with members selected to reflect the different stakeholder groups within the Partnership. Smaller task-groups may support implementation of activities. Additional principles for governance may be developed during the initial phase, for approval by all Partners.

Partnership membership and engagement

The Partnership values a diverse partner base which contributes to advancing holistically the state of knowledge, policy and practice around blue carbon. The Partnership intends to engage with governments, for-profit entities, civil society and international organizations that are committed to advancing the science, policy, and implementation of approaches to protecting and restoring mangroves, seagrasses and tidal marshes.

Those interested in applying for consideration as a Partner should email Zoe Sinclair, Department of the Environment and Energy, Australia, zoe.sinclair@environment.gov.au for guidelines for an expression of interest. Organizations seeking membership should be established entities with the capacity to contribute actively to an international effort; no funding for participation is available at this time. The expression of interest requires a letter from an official with authority to make such a request. The organization is expected to provide a summary of its work on issues relevant to blue carbon, primary thematic and geographic areas of focus, and potential contributions to the Partnership. The organization also is expected to designate a representative responsible for the relationship between the organization and the Partnership. Partnership applications are expected to be reviewed upon receipt and additional information may be requested. The application is then intended to be provided to Partners for approval on a “no objection” basis.

Support of Work

The Partnership is not a funding body but seeks to build a stronger enabling environment for blue carbon projects to be conceived to attract funding and support and to be successfully implemented.

Each Partner is responsible for the costs of its participation in the work of the Partnership, drawing on its own financial, human, technical or other resources. Where appropriate and by mutual decision, Partners may collaborate in an effort to obtain funding for proposed joint projects. Nothing in this document however is to be construed or interpreted as a commitment by any Partner to provide financial, human or other resources.