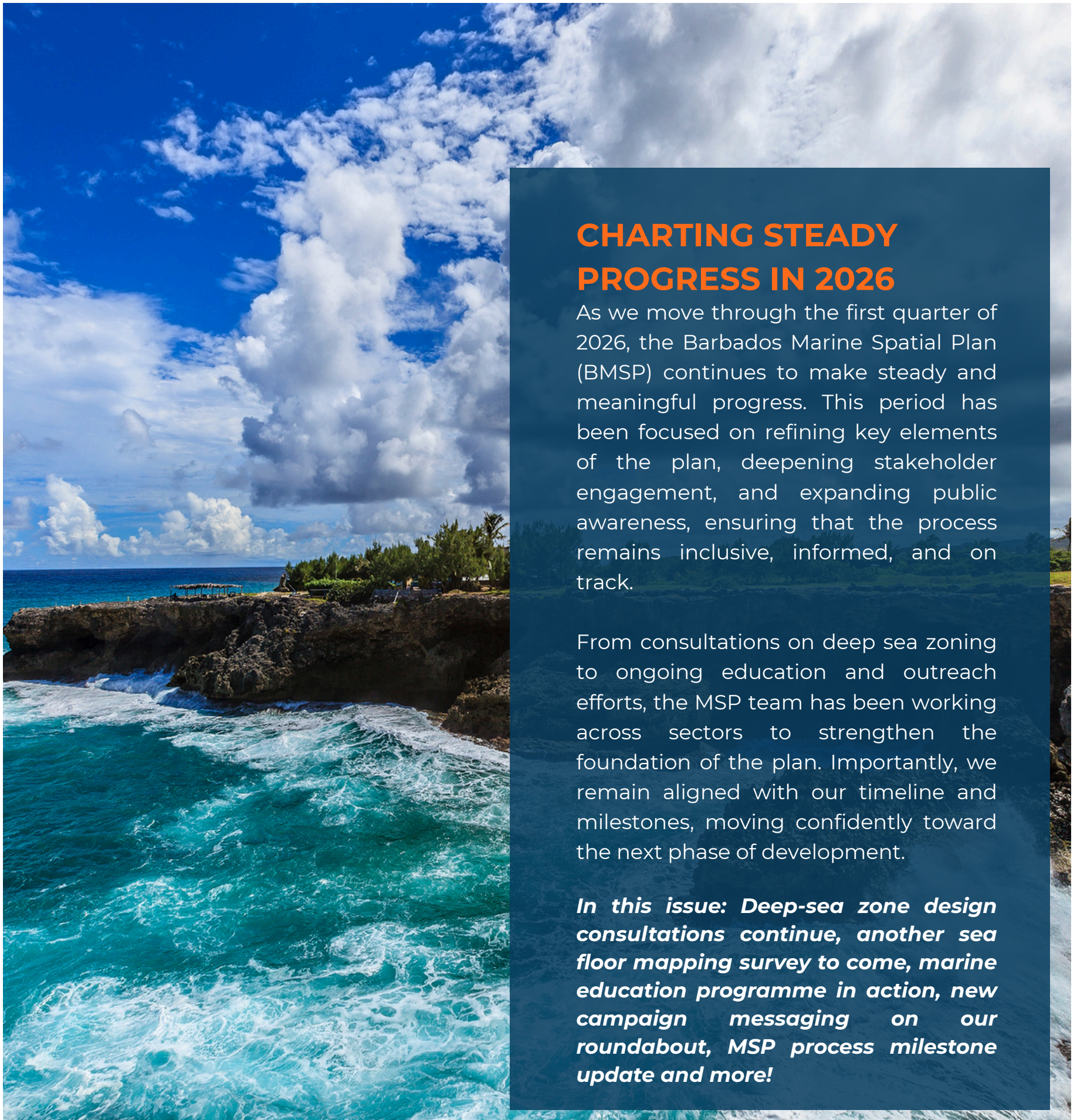




BARBADOS MARINE SPATIAL PLAN NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4 | MARCH 2026



CHARTING STEADY PROGRESS IN 2026

As we move through the first quarter of 2026, the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan (BMSP) continues to make steady and meaningful progress. This period has been focused on refining key elements of the plan, deepening stakeholder engagement, and expanding public awareness, ensuring that the process remains inclusive, informed, and on track.

From consultations on deep sea zoning to ongoing education and outreach efforts, the MSP team has been working across sectors to strengthen the foundation of the plan. Importantly, we remain aligned with our timeline and milestones, moving confidently toward the next phase of development.

In this issue: Deep-sea zone design consultations continue, another sea floor mapping survey to come, marine education programme in action, new campaign messaging on our roundabout, MSP process milestone update and more!



REFINING THE DRAFT DEEP-SEA ZONE DESIGNS

We're pleased to highlight the ongoing deep-sea zone design consultations, an important first phase in shaping how Barbados' ocean space will be managed for generations to come. As a country, Barbados has committed to conserving a minimum of 10% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with an aspirational goal of 30%. With the majority of our EEZ located in the deep sea to the east, and emerging data pointing to areas of potentially high biodiversity, careful planning is essential to ensure these spaces are protected while balancing sustainable use.



Following extensive engagement over the last eighteen months, including consultations with stakeholders across fisheries, tourism, energy, maritime transport, academia, and NGOs, as well as insights gathered through public ocean use surveys, the MSP team developed four draft deep-sea zone designs. These designs are not final, but part of an iterative process, now being refined through continued dialogue and feedback. The consultations have created space for thoughtful discussion, helping to test ideas, surface concerns, and move us closer to identifying the most balanced and effective option for Barbados' ocean future.



We are also delighted to share that a new landing page has been launched, providing stakeholders and the wider public with easy access to the draft zone designs and supporting information. [Click here to view](#) and see more details about the draft designs.



Once the deep-sea areas are completed, we will be moving into the nearshore. To stay up to date with upcoming consultations and engagements, we invite you to follow our social media pages and website.

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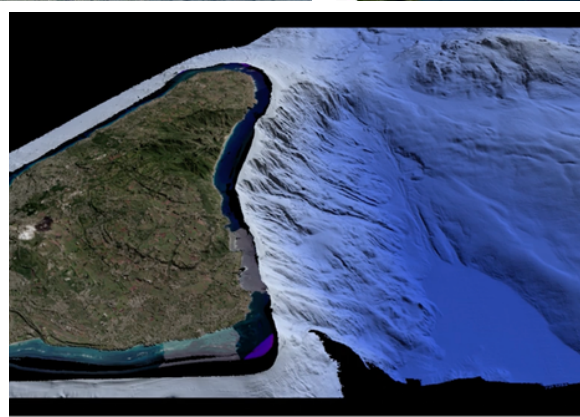
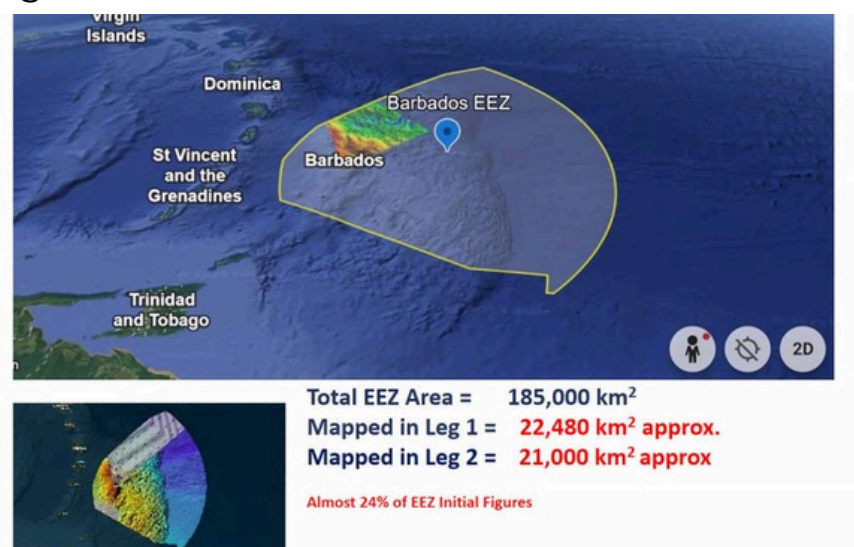
SECOND SEA FLOOR MAPPING SURVEY THIS YEAR

Barbados will be embarking on the second phase of its seafloor mapping survey, an ambitious effort to better understand the vast ocean space under our stewardship. During the first survey, the Celtic Explorer surveyed 24% of Barbados's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or 44,640 square km (almost the size of Dominican Republic and bigger than Denmark) from as shallow as 17m to 5736m. With an EEZ more than 400 times the size of the island, and one of the largest in the region, mapping this area is no small task; it will take multiple expeditions for the research vessel to fully capture the complexity of the seafloor.

Yet, these data are critical.

The first survey revealed that areas to the northeast of the EEZ contain several significant geomorphic features, structures that are likely rich in biodiversity and important to the health of marine ecosystems. These findings have already played a key role in informing the draft conservation zone designs currently under review. Building on this momentum, a representative from the Marine Institute, operators of the research vessel Celtic Explorer, visited Barbados during Bluefest in November to share preliminary insights from the survey.

For those who missed it, [click here to view the lecture on Youtube](#), offering a deeper look into the science shaping the future of Barbados' ocean planning.



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BUILDING OCEAN LITERACY: EDUCATION & OUTREACH IN ACTION

The MSP Education Team has continued to play a vital role in fostering ocean literacy and connecting young people to Barbados' marine environment.

Throughout the quarter, the team hosted gully tours with secondary schools, offering students a hands-on opportunity to explore the connection between land and sea, and understand how inland ecosystems impact marine health.



REGIONAL COLLABORATION

In early February, the Education Team welcomed students and their accompanying tutors from the Université des Antilles - Pôle Guadeloupe for a special marine education tour, part of an exchange program organized by The Barbados Language Center of the Barbados Community College (BCC). The shared interest in the marine environment sparked engaging discussions about the similarities and differences between our islands. While our focus remains on our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), it's important to remember that the ocean doesn't recognize borders. Fish, coral, and currents move freely throughout the Caribbean, and when one area thrives, it benefits us all.



During their visit, students explored Holetown, including an enlightening tour of the Folkestone Marine Park. Guided by the National Conservation Commission's (NCC) Folkestone Manager, Carlos Gilkes, the participants learned about the rich history of the town and the extensive efforts that went into establishing the Marine Park. They were also thrilled to experience our marine life up close aboard Atlantis Submarines, providing a unique opportunity to dive deep into the beauty of our underwater ecosystem.



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BUILDING OCEAN LITERACY: EDUCATION & OUTREACH IN ACTION

HIGHLIGHTING CAREERS IN THE BLUE ECONOMY

The team actively participated in several public events, including sessions at the Geography and Environmental Science Department of The Combermere School, the “Cool Careers in Geography” symposium, and the Ministry of Innovation, Industry, Science and Technology (MIST) Science and Technology Festival. During these engagements, they connected with diverse audiences ranging from secondary school students to educators, other government agencies, private entities and members of the wider public and shared valuable insights into marine spatial planning and the sustainable use of ocean resources.

Through interactive presentations, discussions, and real-world examples, we highlighted the wide range of career opportunities within the blue economy, from marine science and environmental management to policy development and technological innovation. These outreach efforts not only increased awareness of ocean-related careers, but also inspired participants to consider how they can contribute to the responsible stewardship and long-term sustainability of marine environments.

ADULT EDUCATION

Our adult education programme continues as well with exciting new endeavours coming in the next few months. If you missed round one of our adult education series, you can view all episodes of Seaside Chat on our Youtube channel.

[Click here.](#)



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DRIVING AWARENESS ABOUT MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

This quarter marked the continuation of a robust awareness-building campaign, with several initiatives designed to boost visibility and inspire a shared vision for the sustainable use of Barbados' ocean space.

Through a mix of digital storytelling, strategic partnerships, and public-facing activations, the Communications Team has been focused on making Marine Spatial Planning more accessible, engaging, and relevant to everyday Barbadians.

SUPPORTING CONSULTATIONS

Recognising that a clear understanding of the process is key to meaningful participation, we're delighted to showcase a video developed to support the ongoing deep-sea zone design consultations. Designed to demystify the process, the video walks viewers through what the consultations involve and how they can take part with confidence. Complementing this, the launch of the dedicated deep-sea consultation landing page provides a space to review the drafts and stay engaged as the conversation continues.

Click the image on the right to hear all about it.



MAKING WAVES LAUNCHED!

We're also proud to introduce Making Waves, a docu-series created to bring the story of marine spatial planning in Barbados to life. This series offers a behind-the-scenes look at the people, perspectives, and purpose shaping the plan as it unfolds. Episode 1, Charting the Course, sets the stage, inviting viewers into the journey and highlighting why this work matters now.

In this episode, we unpack marine spatial planning in the context of the Debt for Nature Transaction- the catalyst behind it all.

Click the image on the right to watch Episode 1.



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DRIVING AWARENESS ABOUT MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

Under the campaign theme *Destination: Sustainable Seas*, new roundabout signage brings the message home in a way that feels instantly familiar and distinctly Barbadian. Using the language of the road, the campaign meets people in a space they navigate every day. The approach is simple but intentional: grounding marine spatial planning in everyday experiences, using relatable expressions to spark awareness, shift perspectives, and remind Barbadians that the journey to sustainable seas is one we all have a role in driving forward.



MUST WATCH!

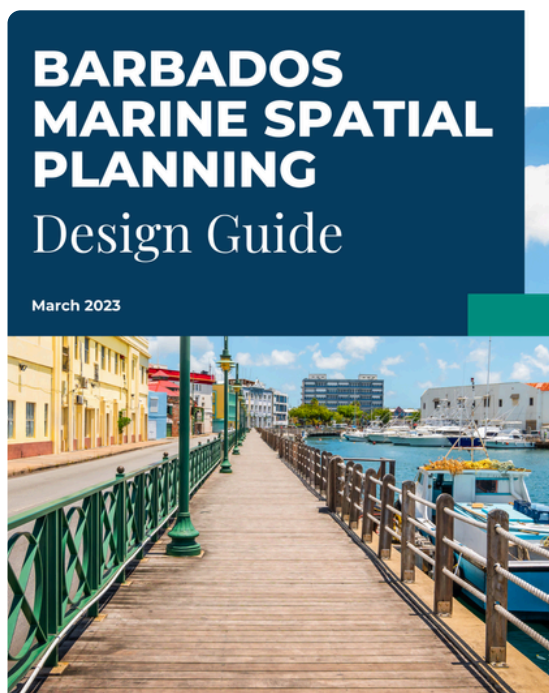
What does track and field have to do with marine spatial planning? [Click here](#) to watch our video created and shown during the finals of the Barbados Secondary Schools Athletic Championships (BSSAC) on CBC TV8.

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GOOD READS!

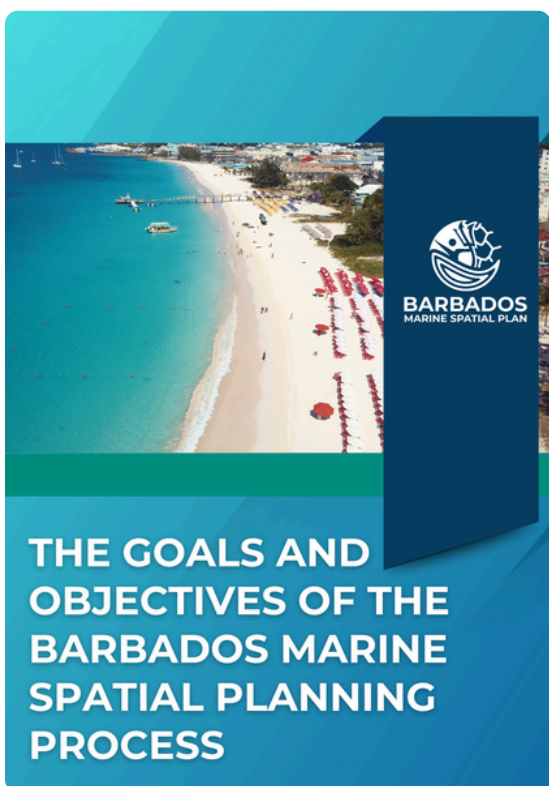
Stay informed and dive deeper into the work shaping Barbados' ocean future. In this section, we highlight some of the documents and reports published on our website, each offering insights into the data, decisions, and direction behind the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan.



DIVE INTO THE BARBADOS MSP DESIGN GUIDE

The BMSP Design Guide is the foundational document of Barbados' Marine Spatial Plan. Serving as the blueprint for decision-making, the guide ensures that the planning process is transparent, science-based, and aligned with national goals for sustainable ocean use.

[Click here to access this document.](#)



READ ABOUT OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives document outlines the vision for Barbados' ocean and defines what the Marine Spatial Plan aims to achieve. It establishes clear priorities across environmental protection, economic development, and social well-being, providing a framework to guide all planning decisions. By outlining these targets, the document ensures that every aspect of the plan contributes to a balanced, sustainable, and forward-looking use of Barbados' marine space.

[Click here to access this document.](#)



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WE'RE ON TRACK!

We've successfully delivered the first two milestones of the Marine Spatial Plan on schedule, marking strong progress in this national effort. Work is now underway on milestone three, with delivery set for March 2027. We remain committed to maintaining this momentum as we advance toward a comprehensive and sustainable plan for Barbados' ocean space.





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