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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Geographic Teams Up with Barbados to Unlock the Secrets of the Ocean

Bridgetown, Barbados | July 9, 2026 - Over the next week, scientists from the National Geographic Exploration Technology Lab will join the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan (BMSP) team under the Coastal Zone Management Unit, on a scientific expedition to explore parts of Barbados' deep ocean that few people have ever seen.

From July 9 to 16, the team will survey areas off the island's west and south-west coasts to learn more about the underwater habitats and marine life that exist hundreds of metres below the surface. Using specialised imaging technology, they will photograph the seafloor, identify coral communities, fish and other marine species, and map underwater features that have never been fully documented.

The information collected will help build a clearer picture of Barbados' marine environment and provide important scientific evidence to guide the country's Marine Spatial Plan, which is well on its way to recommend the

best ways to protect the ocean while continuing to support livelihoods. This collaboration also brings a multitude of benefits including capacity building and knowledge transfer between local stakeholders and the international scientists.

A key feature of the expedition is the role being played by Barbados' local fisherfolk. Rather than relying on technology alone, the research team is drawing on generations of knowledge from fishers who have spent decades working these waters. Their experience has helped identify some of the most important locations to explore, based on where they have long observed reefs, fish populations and other underwater features.

That local knowledge will be used alongside the scientific data collected during the expedition, ensuring the research reflects both modern science and the lived experience of the people who know Barbados' waters best.

Dr. Leo Brewster, Director of the Coastal Zone Management Unit, said this partnership highlights the value of combining local expertise with world-class scientific research.

"Our fisherfolk have spent generations learning our waters. They know where fish gather, where reefs exist and how these ecosystems have changed over time. That knowledge is every bit as important as the technology being used on this expedition. By bringing the two together, we're building a much stronger understanding of our marine environment and creating a better foundation for decisions that will benefit both our people and our ocean."

This expedition with the National Geographic Exploration Technology Lab, with the kind support of the National Conservation Commission is one of several scientific activities supporting the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan. Along with research, stakeholder engagement and community input, it will

help ensure that decisions about Barbados' marine space are based on the best available information.

As Barbados continues developing its Marine Spatial Plan, partnerships like these are helping reveal what lies beneath the surface, so that future generations can continue to benefit from a healthy, productive and resilient ocean.

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About the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan

The Barbados Marine Spatial Plan (BMSP) is a national initiative that provides a science-based framework for managing Barbados' marine space in a way that balances environmental protection with sustainable economic development. Through research, stakeholder engagement and evidence-based planning, the BMSP seeks to protect marine ecosystems, support sustainable ocean industries, reduce conflicts among ocean users and ensure the long-term health and resilience of Barbados' marine environment.

The BMSP is administered by the Marine Spatial Planning Unit of the Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU) within the Ministry of Environment, National Beautification and Fisheries. The Plan is being developed with financial and technical support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and technical assistance from The Nature Conservancy (TNC).