



**OCEANS
NORTH**



**WEST COAST
Environmental Law**



The High Seas Treaty and Canada: The Path to Implementation

Information Webinar, February 4th, 2025

Co-organized by Oceans North, West Coast Environmental Law, and the International Ocean Institute-Canada

Context

On 20 September 2023, the United Nations opened its new agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction—also known as the BBNJ treaty or High Seas treaty—for signature and ratification. This historic agreement offers the global community an opportunity to protect some of the abundant marine life and ecosystems in the two-thirds of the ocean that lie beyond any country’s jurisdiction.

Signatory countries must now ratify the treaty to ensure it comes into force as soon as possible. As of December 2024, 15 countries have ratified, with 45 more to go before the treaty comes into force. It’s a crucial piece in the global ocean governance puzzle that will allow countries to better protect oceans, assess the impact of industrial development, and share marine genetic resources.

Canada is uniquely positioned to champion the implementation of the High Seas Treaty and to do so, it must be one of the first countries to ratify. Canada’s international treaty ratification process is relatively streamlined, and our environmental commitments and history of ocean leadership have primed us to lead the way.

About the Webinar

This online event will introduce the High Seas Treaty to Canadians, discuss its implications, and identify opportunities and obstacles for Canada as it moves toward implementation. The Webinar will also shed light on what Canada’s priorities should be once the Agreement is ratified and enters into force. With the first preparatory Conference scheduled for April 2025 outcomes of this meeting will also be discussed.

The speakers will touch on issues across the BBNJ package: marine protected areas (MPAs), environmental impact assessments (EIAs), capacity building and transfer of marine technology (CBTT), and especially marine genetic resources (MGRs). A speaker will also explain Canada’s legislative process for ratification and its status.

Academics, ENGO representatives, government representatives, and other interested parties are welcome to attend.

Overview

Agenda

- 2:00 to 2:10 Introduction of the Webinar and the speakers/experts
- Moderator: Ernesto Fernandez Monge, International Oceans Director, Oceans North
- 2:10 to 3:10 History of the BBNJ treaty, its pillar (MPAs, EIAs, CBTT, MGRs), their connection to Canada and implications for Indigenous peoples.
- Speakers:
- Susanna Fuller, VP Conservation & Projects, Oceans North
 - Marjo Vierros, Head of Science Policy Research, Ocean Voices
 - Anna Metaxas, Killam Professor, Dept. Oceanography, Dalhousie University
 - Daniel Kachelriess, Cross Cutting Coordinator, High Seas Alliance
- 3:10 to 3:25 Canada's legislative process for ratification
- Nigel Bankes, Emeritus Professor of Law, University of Calgary
- 3:25 to 3:45 Q/A Open to audience for questions
- 3:45 to 4:00 Closing - final remarks

Date, Time, and Location:

- Tuesday, February 4, 2025
2:00 PM–4:00 PM ET
Via ZOOM [Link](#)

About the organizers:

Oceans North supports marine conservation and climate action in partnership with Indigenous and coastal communities. Our work addresses the unprecedented environmental changes in northern marine ecosystems and ensures they are protected within the framework of Indigenous knowledge, rights and consultation.

West Coast Environmental Law Association is dedicated to safeguarding the environment through law. Since 1974, our staff lawyers have successfully worked to develop proactive legal solutions to protect and sustain the environment. Our

marine program seeks to strengthen Canada's legal framework for ocean conservation.

IOI-Canada is a leading member of the International Ocean Institute's network of centres and focal points. Its mission is to promote responsible ocean governance and the stewardship and sustainable use of coastal and ocean resources in Canada and around the world, which it does through education and training, collaborative research and outreach.