

Identify EBSAs in the World's Oceans

The Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) has established an online submission tool to accept information about ecologically or biologically significant areas in the open oceans and deep seas.

We invite you to explore this new tool at: www.GOBI.org.

The screenshot shows the GOBI website's submission tool. The header includes the GOBI logo and navigation links like Home, News, About, Our Work, Events, Partners, Library, FAQs, Workspace, and Proposed EBSAs. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area is titled 'Edit EBSA Proposal - Name & Location' and contains several sections: 'Name & Location' with a text input field containing 'The Saya de Malha Banks'; 'Oceanic region (check one, unless site straddles multiple regions)' with radio buttons for Arctic Ocean, North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean (selected), and Southern Ocean; 'Site Location' with a text area containing a detailed description of the Saya de Malha Banks; and a question 'Does this area cross into an EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone)?' with radio buttons for Yes (selected), No, and Don't know. A 'Save' button is at the bottom.

Call for submissions

The Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) aims to help countries, as well as regional and global organisations, to identify EBSAs in the oceans, with an initial focus on areas beyond national jurisdiction.

This online tool is part of a multinational, multi-organisational effort to identify ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs) in open ocean waters and deep-sea habitats. At this preliminary stage we are soliciting submissions for candidate EBSAs either based on expert opinion and/or scientific analysis. Submissions will help GOBI to focus its further work on the identification of EBSAs. Candidate EBSAs will be periodically forwarded to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for further consideration as EBSAs.

The GOBI online submission tool was developed by the Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI) and Duke University's Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab.

The screenshot shows the GOBI website interface. The main content area is titled 'Edit EBSA Proposal - Other Optional Criteria'. It contains two main sections for rating criteria:

MPA Network Considerations (optional)
Please rate the proposed site in the context of the following CBD MPA network guidance, if known...

	don't know	high	some	low
Representativity	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adequacy / viability	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connectivity	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Replication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Practical Criteria / Considerations (optional)
Please rate the proposed site according to the following practical criteria...

	don't know	high	some	low
1. Potential for restoration (if not damaged, tick "high")	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Degree of political/stakeholder acceptance	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Potential damage to the area by human activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Scientific value	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The first submission page (example on reverse) allows for general information about the candidate EBSA, including its name, location, if it adjoins waters of national jurisdiction, and a textbox about why this site is considered to be important. Subsequent pages allow the user to upload GIS files, images, and other relevant data, if available.

Central to the submission is the relative ranking of the area against the seven EBSA criteria, as adopted by the CBD in 2008 at COP 9 in Bonn, Germany. To qualify as a candidate EBSA, a site has to score "high" in at least one category.

While not required, the user may rate the proposed site according to the four marine protected area (MPA) network criteria, also adopted by the CBD in 2008 (example above). Practical considerations, such as its scientific research value, and stakeholder support may be entered, if known.

This is an example for purposes of illustration only, not an actual submission, where information may differ.

Background

In 2008, the Parties to the CBD adopted a set of seven scientific criteria to identify ecologically or biologically significant areas in need of protection in the open oceans and deep seas (CBD Decision IX/20, Annex 1):

- Uniqueness or rarity
- Special importance for life history of species
- Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
- Vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, slow recovery
- Biological productivity
- Biological diversity
- Naturalness

(Note: most important areas will likely qualify under multiple EBSA criteria)

The CBD EBSA criteria were first prepared at the Azores expert workshop in 2007 and their feasibility established at the Ottawa expert workshop in 2009. At SBSTTA 14 in Nairobi in 2010, GOBI was invited, along with other relevant organisations, Parties and other Governments, to work with the Executive Secretary "...to outline a process for creating and maintaining a CBD global inventory of ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs) in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, and to begin [to] provisionally populate such an inventory..." (SBSTTA Recommendation XIV/3.26).