

Niue Creates Large-Scale Marine Protected Area Encompassing 40% of the Nation's EEZ

The Government of Niue and Tofia Niue, National Geographic, Oceans 5 and others are proud and excited to announce the creation of a large-scale marine protected area around Beveridge Reef and Niue.

Alofe, Niue (Thursday, October 5, 2017)—The Government of Niue today announced the creation of a large-scale marine protected area (LSMPA) encompassing 40 percent of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone. The LSMPA will include Niue, a remote island nation in the South Pacific, and nearby Beveridge Reef, an uninhabited, semi-submerged atoll within Niue's waters that is home to the highest density of grey reef sharks in the world.

The announcement, made at the Our Ocean conference in Malta, is part of the Niue Ocean Wide (NOW) project. NOW is a multiyear endeavor by the Niuean community to sustainably manage the island's resources through a unique public-private partnership between the Government of Niue and Tofia Niue, a local nonprofit organization. As part of the LSMPA protection, Niue will also "lock up" a portion of its fishing area for conservation. This action — the first of its kind — ensures that the creation of the protected area contributes to an overall downsizing of global fishing, a critical act at a time of increasingly overexploited fish stocks.

The National Geographic Society's Pristine Seas project led an expedition to Niue and Beveridge Reef in September 2016, in partnership with the Government of Niue, Tofia Niue, Oceans 5, SPC and the Ridge to Reef project, to conduct a comprehensive biodiversity assessment of the remote ecosystem.

Quote from Niue Premier Sir Toke Talagi: This commitment is not a sacrifice, it is an investment in the certainty and stability of our children's future. We simply cannot be the generation of leaders who have taken more than they have given to this planet and left behind a debt that our children cannot pay. Climate change, plastic rubbish, pollution, overfishing – these are all debt collectors we cannot outrun. Our ocean needs to heal – it's not rocket science – she just needs the space and time to do it.

I have been a leader long enough to see that our collective global brainpower has been more fixated on the power squabble of today, rather than the sustainability of tomorrow. Let's turn that tide. And in that vein, I extend a call to action for all leaders to embrace a collective effort to reinvest in the natural capital that has, and continues, to underpin the basis of humankind and its survival. Niue's commitment may be seen as modest in the global sense, but it is hugely significant to us, and I want our future generation to enjoy the bounties that we have enjoyed and know that we care. The Government of Niue is happy to support this commitment, and we look forward to working with others who may want to help us protect our resources and accelerate our sustainable and resilient development efforts.

Quote from Brendon Pasisi, Director of the Niue Ocean Wide Project: *Giving up a proportion of commercial fisheries opportunities in order to safeguard our people's food security and livelihoods, build ecological resilience and pursue more sustainable economic, social and environmental opportunities for Niue, particularly through blue tourism, is the foundation of this commitment.*

After decades of contributing regionally to ocean conservation and management, and striving nationally to achieve sustainable development and management standards within our means, it is no small feat for a small island developing state to make such a tremendous and tangible contribution to ocean conservation that has significant global benefits.

Quote from Gary E. Knell, president and CEO, National Geographic Society: "National Geographic is committed to working with scientists and leaders from across the world to safeguard the planet's most pristine seas to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for generations to come," said Gary E. Knell, president and CEO of the National Geographic Society. "Today's action by the Government of Niue is proof that any nation, no matter its size or gross domestic product, can be a global leader in the protection of its natural assets."