

EXTENDING THE OSPAR MARITIME AREA TO INCLUDE MACARONESIA

Why is this important?

Macaronesia, an area that includes the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands, is diverse and renowned for its unique biogeography. The islands' shared ocean includes highly important habitats such as seamounts, coral gardens, sponge aggregations and maerl beds. These diverse ecosystems host a huge array of marine species, including 80% of all cetacean species in the Atlantic Ocean, turtles, manta rays and several shark species.

What is OSPAR doing?

In 2025, based on a proposal from Portugal and Spain, OSPAR will welcome Macaronesia, enlarging the OSPAR Maritime Area by more than 2.5 million square kilometres of ocean. Of this, nearly 1 million square kilometres are within Portuguese and Spanish Exclusive Economic Zones and territorial waters, with the rest in international waters. Given the richness of the area, it is not surprising that a number of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) have already been designated by Portugal and Spain in this area and will be integrated into OSPAR's network of MPAs. Additionally, the water column suprajacent to the Extended Continental Shelf of Great Meteor (MPA south of the Azores) will be proposed for designation by OSPAR as a High Seas MPA (with OSPAR collectively protecting the water column, complementing Portugal's protection of the seabed and subsoil). Other areas identified as relevant for nature conservation include Seine, Unicorn, Lion, and Dragon seamounts (in the Madeira-Tore Rise area) and the Hayes Fracture Zone (in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge area) and may be designated at a later date.

How will this benefit the North-East Atlantic?

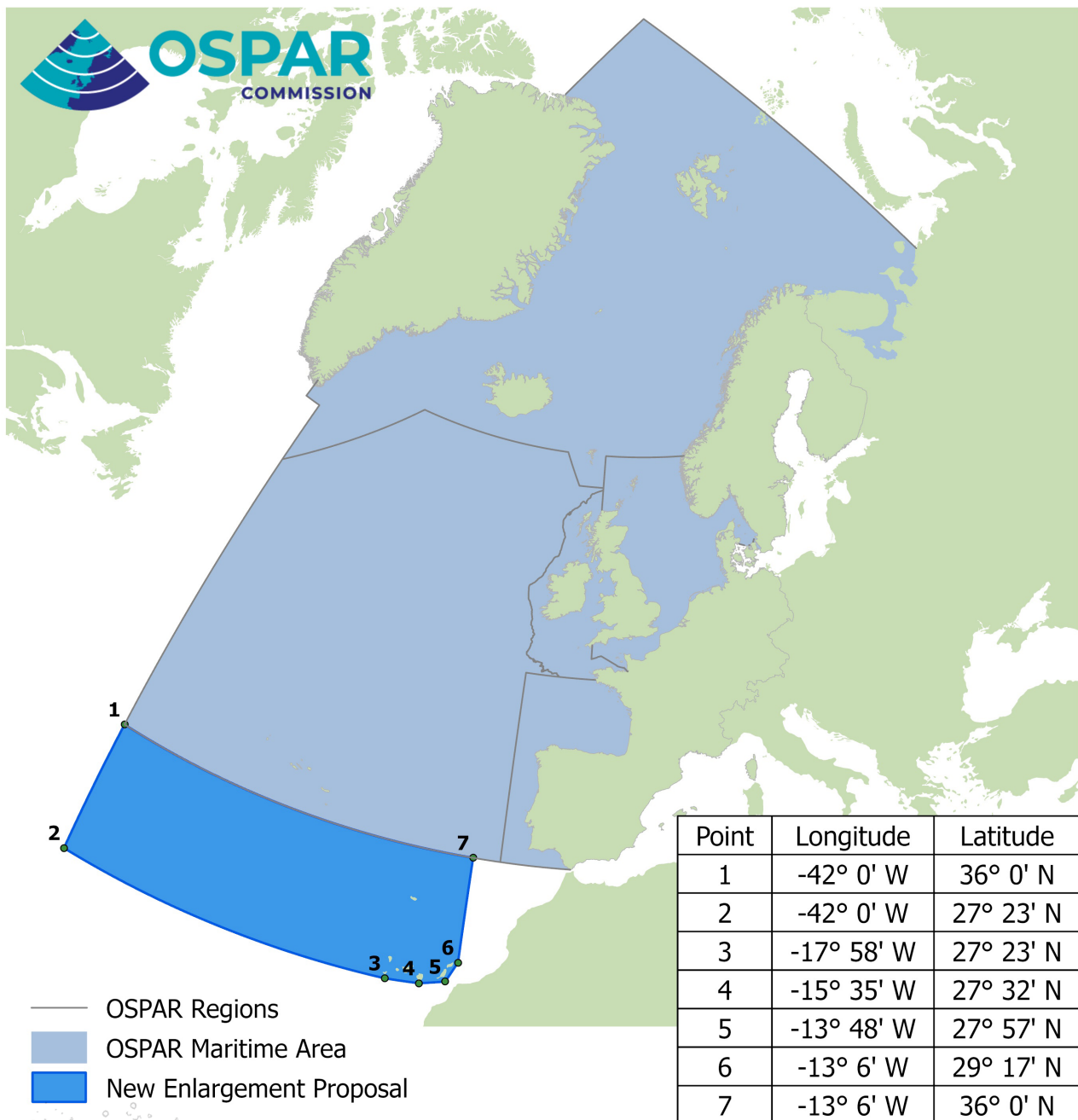
This proposal will:

- A. ensure the coordinated protection of an area known to be important for numerous species and highly important habitats, including seamounts, coral gardens, sponge aggregations, and maerl beds.
- B. align OSPAR and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) as foreseen in the MSFD and the NEAES 2030.
- C. promote the integration between OSPAR and other EU processes including on maritime spatial planning and nature conservation in an area adjacent to the current OSPAR Maritime Area already considered part of the North-East Atlantic region.

The enlargement of the OSPAR Maritime Area will be of interest to organisations with whom OSPAR shares common interests and with whom OSPAR has complementary mandates, namely the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF). OSPAR looks forward to strengthening cooperation with these organisations to ensure, for example, effective protection of the marine environment in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and in particular to ensure MPAs in these areas are effectively managed.

For more information,
please visit ospar.org

EXTENDING THE OSPAR MARITIME AREA TO INCLUDE MACARONESIA



For more information,
please visit ospar.org