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Blue Halo update: Barbuda passes new ocean laws!

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Welcome to the Barbuda Blue Halo Initiative newsletter! You were added to this list because you expressed interest in our work or are already on the Barbuda Blue Halo email list. If you do not want to receive these monthly (or less) updates, you can unsubscribe in 1-click at the bottom of this email.

Hello Everyone,

It has been a quite few months since I wrote with an update on the [Barbuda Blue Halo Initiative](#). In that time, lots has happened. For example, in July we ran a [kids ocean summer camp](#), and sponsored a [lionfish tournament](#) in Barbuda.

But the news I am most thrilled to share is that on Tuesday, August 12th, the Barbuda Council signed into law a sweeping set of **new ocean management regulations that zone Barbuda's coastal waters, strengthen fisheries management, and establish a network of marine sanctuaries.**

This great news comes after 17 months of extensive community consultation and scientific research that so many of you participated in and supported.

The new regulations establish five **marine sanctuaries**, collectively protecting 33% (139 km²) of the coastal area, to enable fish populations and allow habitats to rebuild and recover. To restore the coral reefs, catching **parrotfish and sea urchins** has been completely prohibited, as those herbivores are critical to keeping algae levels on reefs low so coral can thrive. Barbuda is the first Caribbean island to put either of these bold and important measures in place.



Also included in the regulations is a two-year fishing hiatus for the Codrington Lagoon, the primary nursery ground for the lobster and finfish fisheries. The lagoon, a Ramsar wetland of international importance, is one the Caribbean's most extensive and intact mangrove ecosystems, and home to the world's largest breeding colony of Magnificent frigatebirds.

The coastal zones and fishing regulations reflect stakeholders' priorities and are the outcome of a community-driven, science-based, and consensus-seeking process aiming to balance current and future needs to use ocean resources. There were 6 rounds of community consultation, and 4 additional rounds with fishermen. **All the lines on the zoning map were drawn by Barbudans, and the draft regulations changed**

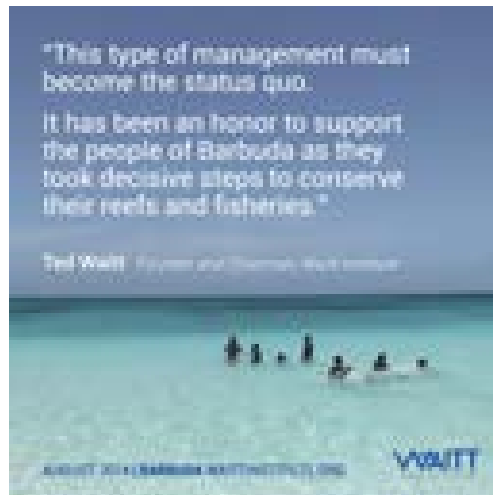
dramatically based on community input.

Key Fisheries Regulations

1. Permit required to fish in the coastal waters around Barbuda (within 5.55 km of shore).
2. All catch or possession of parrotfish and sea urchins is prohibited.
3. Catch of sharks is limited to traditional use. No export or finning.
4. All fishing on any fish spawning aggregations is prohibited.
5. All lobster and fish traps must include escape gaps to reduce bycatch.
6. Use of nets is prohibited within 20 meters of reefs.
7. Permits are required for placing artificial reefs, and prohibit fishing on these reefs.
8. Fishing in Codrington Lagoon is prohibited for 2 years, except for line fishing from shore.
9. Permits must be obtained prior to any mangrove or seagrass damage.
10. A Coastal Management Advisory Committee and Parks Authority are established.

With these new policies, the small island of **Barbuda has become a Caribbean ocean conservation leader and global role model:**

- New York Times: [A Small Island Takes a Big Step on Ocean Conservation](#)
- Cover story in the Antigua Observer newspaper: [Blue Halo is Law in Barbuda](#)
- National Geographic: [Small Caribbean Island Shows Bold Ocean Leadership: Barbuda Overhauls Reef and Fisheries Management for Sustainability.](#)
- Huffington Post: [Barbuda Sets a New Standard for Marine Protection in the Caribbean](#)
- Op-ed in the [Observer](#) co-authored with Minister of Fisheries/Barbuda Council Chairman Arthur Nibbs.
- Full press release, regulations, and other supporting documents are available in Dropbox [here](#).



Of course, there is so much more work to be done. **It's not a success until fishers' catches are improving and the reefs are healthier -- this project is not about laws on paper, it's about successful implementation that results in benefits to fishers and the broader community.** But this is a significant milestone and there are so many people who have worked hard to make this legal framework for sustainability possible. So thank you all!



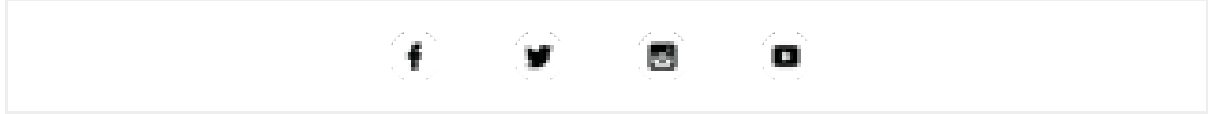
The [Waitt Institute](#) will continue to work closely with the government and people of Barbuda over the next three years to support implementation of these regulations. This will include setting up a long-term scientific monitoring program, training local staff in marine ecology and field research techniques, recommending enforcement approaches, providing needed equipment (including a patrol boat), and working with schools to develop an ocean education curriculum.

In the meantime, if you'd like to **help us share this good news**, that would be incredibly welcome. Please forward this email to people who might be interested, and follow the project and share our posts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). And check out our newly revamped website for lots of information: barbuda.waittinstitute.org.

My heart soars to think that if other islands take similarly bold steps soon, we will see reefs recover, fishers' livelihoods improve, ecosystems become more resilient to climate change, and the Caribbean coastal way of life thrive.

Warm Regards and sincere thanks,
Ayana & the Waitt Institute team

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, PhD
Executive Director, Waitt Institute



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