

Case Study: Greater Cape Three Points Area

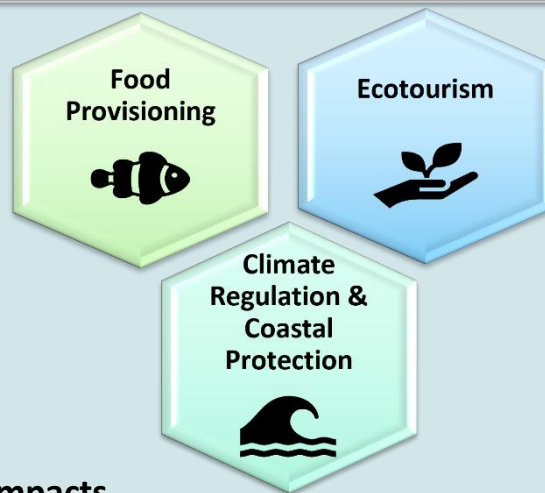
Background

In 1994, Ghana ratified the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and in 2022 committed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), including Target 3, conserving 30% of land, inland waters, and marine areas by 2030. While Ghana has protected 15% of terrestrial and inland waters and designated five Ramsar sites, there are currently no established Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). In April 2024, the government announced plans to establish the country's first MPA in the Greater Cape Three Points Area (GCTPA) by 2026. This case study highlights the area's significance, the journey to the formal commitment of establishment, next steps post-gazettement, and how the MPA Implementation Roadmap can guide effective execution.

Ecological Overview

The marine and coastal ecosystems in the Greater Cape Three Points Area are among the most biologically diverse in West Africa. The region includes mangrove forests, estuaries, lagoons, and nearshore waters that serve as vital nursery, feeding, and spawning grounds for a variety of marine species. Notably, the area supports populations of commercially important fish such as sardinellas, anchovies, carangids, and scombrids, which are essential to Ghana's small pelagic fisheries. These fish stocks are shared across national boundaries, making the area ecologically and economically important not only for Ghana but also for neighbouring countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Benin. The upwelling conditions off Cape Three Points create nutrient-rich waters that enhance primary productivity, supporting a robust food web from plankton to top predators. This productivity attracts species such as cetaceans, which use the area for feeding and breeding. The marine zone also includes coral reefs and seagrass beds that provide habitat complexity and coastal protection.

Ecosystem Services in GCTPA



Impacts

The GCTPA in Ghana requires protection due to mounting environmental pressures that threaten its rich marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of coastal communities. Key impacts include overfishing, pollution from oil and gas activities, habitat destruction from coastal development, and climate-related changes to ocean conditions. These pressures are degrading critical ecosystems such as mangroves, estuaries, and coral reefs, which serve as nurseries and feeding grounds for important fish species.

From Identification to Gazettement Commitment

The process to identify and formally commit to the gazettelement of the Greater Cape Three Points Area as Ghana’s first Marine Protected Area (MPA) has been a multi-year, collaborative effort involving scientific research, stakeholder engagement, and policy development. The graphic below demonstrates the timeline of the core steps taken from the identification of Greater the Greater Cape Three Points Area through to the official commitment of gazettelement.



Next Steps & Utilising the MPA Implementation Roadmap

Following Ghana’s commitment to establish the Greater Cape Three Points Area (GCTPA) as the country’s first Marine Protected Area by 2026, the priority now is to ensure effective and coordinated implementation. The MPA Implementation Roadmap serves as a strategic guide to support this process that:

- Defines priorities across management, monitoring, and assessment stages.
- Organises actions into short-, mid-, and long-term timeframes for phased delivery.
- Embeds cross-cutting themes such as gender inclusion, traditional knowledge, and sustainable financing.
- Promotes adaptive management through monitoring and evaluation.

Utilising and applying the MPA Implementation Roadmap ensures a smooth transition from designation to effective management, delivering ecological protection and socio-economic benefits.

