

BLUE CARBON AND NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS

SECOND EDITION · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guidelines on Enhanced Action

Coastal blue carbon ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass, and salt marshes, are the most efficient natural carbon sinks on earth per unit area. The *Blue Carbon and NDC Guidelines: Second Edition*, updated in 2023, provides options for how countries may include coastal blue carbon ecosystems in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to help achieve their climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

Who should use these guidelines?

These guidelines are designed for national policymakers and technical experts directly involved in NDC design and implementation including GHG inventory and accounting experts, and are designed to support all 151 countries that contain coastal wetlands, irrespective of their level of economic development and regardless of the type and nature of the country's NDC commitments.

Given the multiple and varied mechanisms to include coastal wetlands in NDCs, as well as the different approaches, capabilities, and available data across different countries—these guidelines present a “tiered approach” for the inclusion of coastal wetlands in NDCs similar to that employed by IPCC guidance. The guidance is split into five ‘Pillars’ which align to sections within an NDC where blue carbon can be included, and can be followed as a step-by-step process.

Download the full Guidelines: thebluecarboninitiative.org/policy-guidance

The Five Pillars: Overview

Pillar 1 | Readiness Assessment and Options for Including Coastal Wetlands in NDCs

Coastal ecosystems can be included in NDC targets in many ways, depending on country circumstances and readiness level. Readiness is determined by factors such as whether blue carbon ecosystems are included in national forest definitions and what data is included in GHG inventories and forest reference levels. A decision tree, sample readiness assessment, and example scenarios are included in Pillar 1 to help guide countries in this process.

Pillar 2 | Adaptation: Blue Carbon in the Adaptation Component of an NDC

Blue carbon ecosystems provide ecosystem services that are vital for climate change adaptation, such as flood risk reduction and increased coastal resilience. Adaptation commitments within NDCs are less structured than mitigation components, making setting adaptation targets often the easiest entry point for including blue carbon ecosystems in an NDC. Pillar 2 provides an overview of the ways in which adaptation commitments can fit within an NDC, how countries can structure these commitments, and the value of including coastal blue carbon ecosystems within the adaptation section of an NDC.

Pillar 3 | Mitigation: Blue Carbon and Mitigation Targets

The Paris Agreement allows countries the flexibility to develop NDC mitigation targets according to national circumstances. Accounting for coastal wetlands within the mitigation section is a step towards developing comprehensive economy-wide targets. Pillar 3 contains technical guidance on how to include blue carbon ecosystems in mitigation NDC targets including the required information for all NDCs, how to design sectoral and economy-wide targets, and special considerations for REDD+ countries.

Pillar 4 | Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reporting and Inventories for Blue Carbon

The IPCC has existing methodologies for including blue carbon ecosystems in GHG inventories. The necessary data includes mapped extent of blue carbon ecosystems and their change over time, carbon stocks, and emissions factors. IPCC guidance takes a step-wise or tiered approach, allowing Parties to determine engagement level based on data availability and capacity. There is sufficient data globally at the Tier 1 level for any Party to begin reporting on blue carbon ecosystems in their GHG inventory. Pillar 4 explores what carbon data is required for coastal wetlands in mitigation targets, avenues for developing data, how to report on inventories under the UNFCCC, and how to determine the appropriate entry-point for your country.

Pillar 5 | Implementation: Delivering on Blue Carbon NDCs

Pillar 5 outlines the necessary considerations for implementing NDC targets and how to access support. Key elements for implementing NDC commitments include: regulatory alignment and updates, cross-sectoral engagement, inter-governmental coordination, stakeholder buy-in, and financing. Parties can access support for implementing blue carbon NDC commitments through the [NDC Partnership](http://www.ndcpartnership.org/) (www.ndcpartnership.org/).

The full guidelines are available for download [here](http://www.thebluecarboninitiative.org/policy-guidance).

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These guidelines were developed by Conservation International, the International Blue Carbon Institute, the International Partnership for Blue Carbon (IPBC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), NDC Partnership, Ocean & Climate Platform, Pew Charitable Trusts, Rare, Silvestrum, The Nature Conservancy, and IOC-UNESCO.

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