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COP16 | Although 45 percent of Colombia's territory lies in the ocean, it is still an unknown region: there is an ongoing plan to explore it



In 2000, UNESCO declared the archipelago a Seaflower Biosphere Reserve.

FOTO: Claudia Rubio

At COP16, the Colombian Ocean Commission presented the National Plan of Marine Scientific Expeditions, which outlines efforts to increase knowledge of these areas.

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Periodista de Ciencia

23 de octubre 2024, 12:19 P.M.

Actualizado: 23.10.2024 12:19

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Colombia, a country with access to two oceans, has about 45 percent of its territory in marine areas. However, experts say that very little is known about these areas, especially considering that deep waters are regions that are particularly difficult for humans to explore, making it necessary to resort to the development of specialized technology to do so.

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"Deep waters are an area that has not yet been reached, taking into account that human capabilities do not allow it, and for this purpose it is necessary to have the most modern and advanced technological equipment, which at this moment the country is trying to acquire through research projects with entities such as the **General Maritime Directorate, as the Ministry of Culture, of Science**, which are entities that are articulated to improve these needs, these weaknesses in favor of going out to investigate more our territory", explains Lieutenant Sebastián Reyes, Head of the Area of Marine and Coastal Affairs of the Executive Secretariat of the **Colombian Commission of the Ocean (CCO)**.

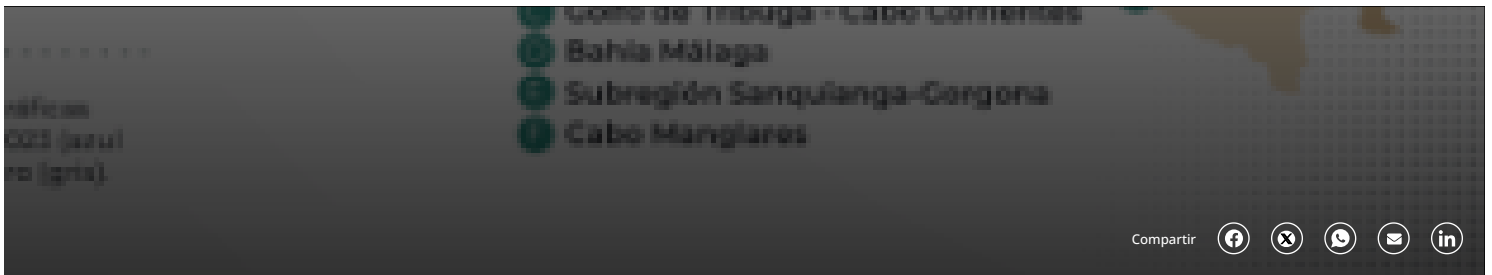
While these resources are being developed, Colombia continues to work to learn about the part of the marine territory that can be reached. **For this reason, this government commission presented at COP16 the National Plan for Marine Scientific Expeditions**, a document that seeks to articulate different institutions in favor of the development of studies in these ecosystems, with the aim of strengthening a baseline of information necessary for decision-making.

"At the moment, we have two active programs: the **Seaflower** and the **Pacific**, with the goal of activating a program for the continental Caribbean. This is something we want to do in the future. Each of these programs works in the same way, we do marine scientific research, we articulate with researchers, with universities, with governmental and non-governmental organizations and local communities, this allows us to really understand the territories, their needs in terms of marine and coastal scientific research," says Juliana Acero, coordinator of the Seaflower Program of the National Plan for Marine Scientific Expeditions.

(Le puede interesar: [Primicia: Los Parques Nacionales han perdido 125.745 hectáreas en poco más de una década; es casi tres veces el tamaño de la ciudad de Cali](#))

AL DE EXPEDICIONES CIENTÍFICAS MARINAS



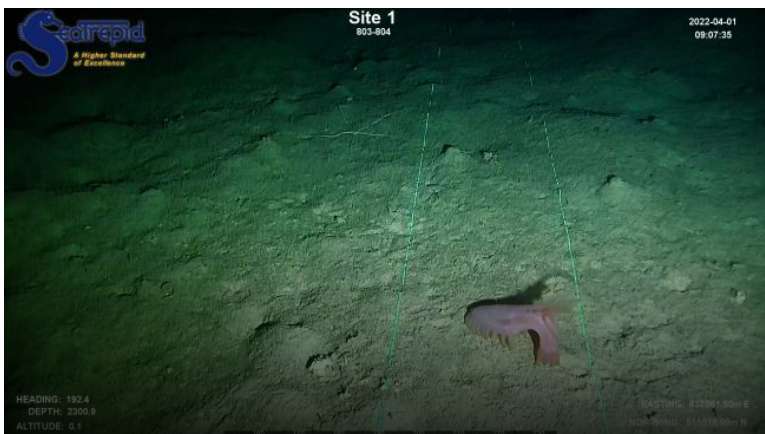


of these two areas of the country."

The plan brings together five platforms, one scientific, one technical, one administrative, one territorial and one operational, to ensure institutional coordination with different sectors and to carry out expeditions in the field through the scientific research platforms or the ships of the General Directorate of the Sea (Dimar).

Knowing biodiversity to protect it

In terms of results, from the Colombian Ocean Commission they assure that this plan, which has been implemented since 2014 in the Atlantic and since 2018 in the Pacific, **has allowed us to expand the knowledge we have on issues related to the biodiversity of marine and coastal ecosystems (only in the seafloor 425 new species records have been made), the availability of hydrobiological fishing resources, the state of coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrasses and deep sea ecosystems.**



In the Pacific, 55 new species records were made.

FOTO: Cortesía Invermar

"We also review the state of pollution in specific geographic areas. We communicate with local communities as decision-makers so that the information we gather is used in decision-making and really benefits both the local communities and the country," says Juliana Acero.

An example of this is the information gathered on the queen conch, a marine mollusk closely linked to the gastronomy of the archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia, whose existence could be threatened if its trade is not controlled. For this reason, closed seasons and safe limits have been established for its collection.

(También: [Restaurar cinco millones de hectáreas y crear más de 522 mil empleos relacionados a la biodiversidad, entre los compromisos que asumió Colombia a 2030](#))

"We are not decision-makers, but we provide this information to those who are, precisely so that they can apply or implement closures, no-fishing zones, and so on. In this way, this is one of the examples where we have contributed to those decision-makers," explains Acero.

But in this investigative task, funding continues to be the main challenge, according to the CCO. "It is a challenge to have a clear roadmap as a government. This is the responsibility of many ministries, many local authorities, environmental authorities. We have to propose a roadmap and a portfolio of marine scientific research together as a country, precisely so as not to duplicate efforts and to better manage financial resources, both national and international," says Acero.

In the context of the crisis of biodiversity loss that the planet is going through - the main theme of the COP16 to be held in Cali - the scientific exploration of the marine territory becomes relevant in a country like Colombia, since it is necessary to know what resources are available in order to manage and conserve them, according to the CCO.

"In a way, this intersectoral dialogue that we proposed was exactly with a view to COP16 and the agreements that will be reached in these two weeks. We are going to talk about financing issues, how countries have implemented their biodiversity plans, and one of the key aspects is how we are going to finance this in the long term. We as a country have the same question and the same vision for the future," said the CCO representative.

SCIENCE EDITORIAL

Editor's note: This text is an artificially intelligent English translation of the original Spanish version, which can be found here. Any comment, please write to berdav@eltiempo.com

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