

# MAPPING OCEAN WEALTH

*Understanding the Value of Our Ocean*

The ocean produces an estimated U.S. \$1.5 trillion in global economic value each year. Countries and economies around the world depend on a healthy ocean—from large-scale fisheries to subsistence fishermen; from international luxury hotel chains to the three billion people dependent on seafood as their primary source of protein. With this incredible value in mind, we must work to better understand how and where we depend on nature, and harness scientific knowledge, innovative thinking and new technology to ensure the continuity of these benefits. Only then can we truly improve and increase investment in marine conservation, restoration and management.

We all depend on the ocean and are collectively responsible for its well-being. Understanding its value, and the cost of inaction, is crucial to ensuring we treat the ocean with care.

As the saying goes, ‘you cannot manage what you cannot measure’. With our Mapping Ocean Wealth initiative, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is using innovative technology and approaches to calculate and map what the ocean does for us today, so we can make smart investments and decisions affecting what the ocean can do for us tomorrow.



Photo Credit: © Carlton Ward Jr.

## TOURISM FOR TOMORROW

In 2017, Mapping Ocean Wealth was awarded the Tourism for Tomorrow Innovation Prize for developing an innovative methodology to map the tourism value of coral reefs around the world. Our data showed that, globally, coral reefs generate U.S. \$36 billion per year to the tourism economy with a combination of ‘on-reef’ activities like snorkeling and scuba diving, and ‘reef-adjacent’ values like beautiful beaches and seafood. The research combined traditional data gathering methods with novel approaches, including scraping data from social media platforms like Flickr and Trip Advisor to determine the location and density of coral tourism activities.

Coral reefs drive up to  
**U.S. \$36 Billion**  
per year in tourism revenue globally



‘ON-REEF’ ACTIVITIES



‘REEF-ADJACENT’ VALUES

**>70 Countries**

have reefs that generate more than  
U.S. \$1 million per sq km.

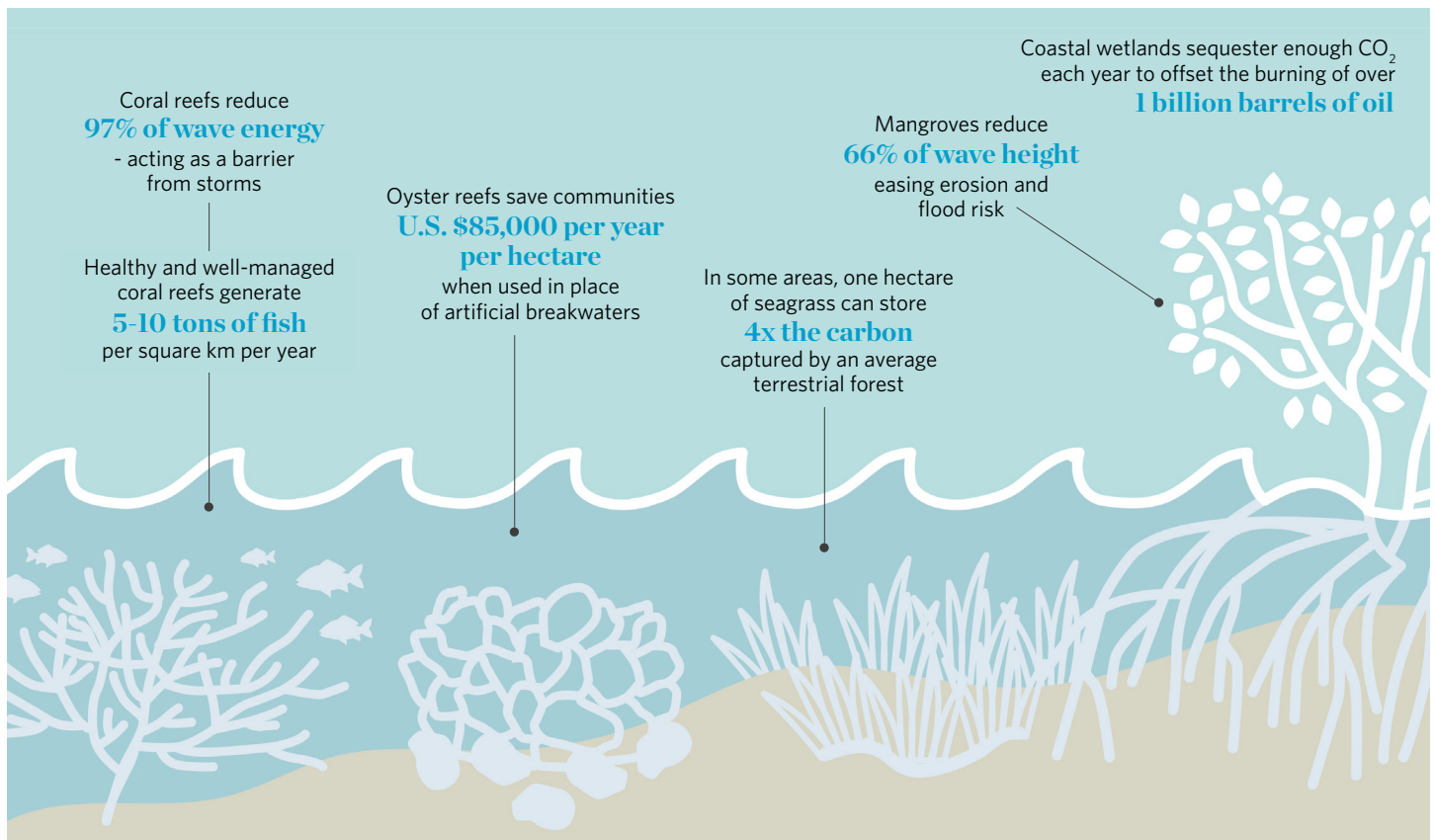
## GLOBAL OCEAN: MAPPING OCEAN WEALTH



Photo Credit: © Yen Yi-Lee

By mapping our ocean wealth, we move from global models of habitat value to specific local maps. Both enable us to evaluate nature as an asset, creating critical, actionable information that can be translated directly into the engineering, financial and policy language that can improve coastal and ocean planning, conservation, development and investment decisions.

TNC's work builds on rapidly advancing ocean science and our expertise working across scales and with multiple partners on coral reefs, oyster reefs, seagrasses, saltmarshes and mangrove forests. We have a detailed understanding of what drives the value of particular ecosystems, and we will continue to explore opportunities for applying this knowledge to improve coastal and ocean management at both local and regional scales.



### CONTACT

Mark Spalding | [mbspalding@tnc.org](mailto:mbspalding@tnc.org)

### ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground

solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 72 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. To learn more, visit [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org) or follow @nature\_press on Twitter.