



Focus

- We explored how to integrate China's "ecological red lines" nature protection system with the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) definitions of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).
- We analyzed the impact of creating a connected and effective network of marine protected areas spanning China's national waters and marine areas beyond its jurisdiction.

Findings

- ✓ Most ecological red line areas are equivalent to either protected areas or OECMs as recognized by the IUCN.
- ✓ The newly adopted Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement can be a powerful tool to coordinate the conservation of marine biodiversity in collaboration with other multilateral environmental agreements.
- ✓ Carefully located protected areas and OECMs could help conserve local biodiversity, address overfishing and increase carbon capture in the South China Sea, supporting China's carbon reduction goals.

Recommendations

- 1 **OPTIMIZE** China's ecological red line system by aligning it with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's (KMGBF) compliance indicators.
- 2 **ACCELERATE** a national policy framework for OECMs.
- 3 **PROMOTE** greater cooperation between multilateral environmental agreements, particularly the KMGBF and the BBNJ.
- 4 **DEVELOP** a comprehensive framework for marine protected areas and OECMs that span China's territorial waters and marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction through domestic policy reform and full implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

