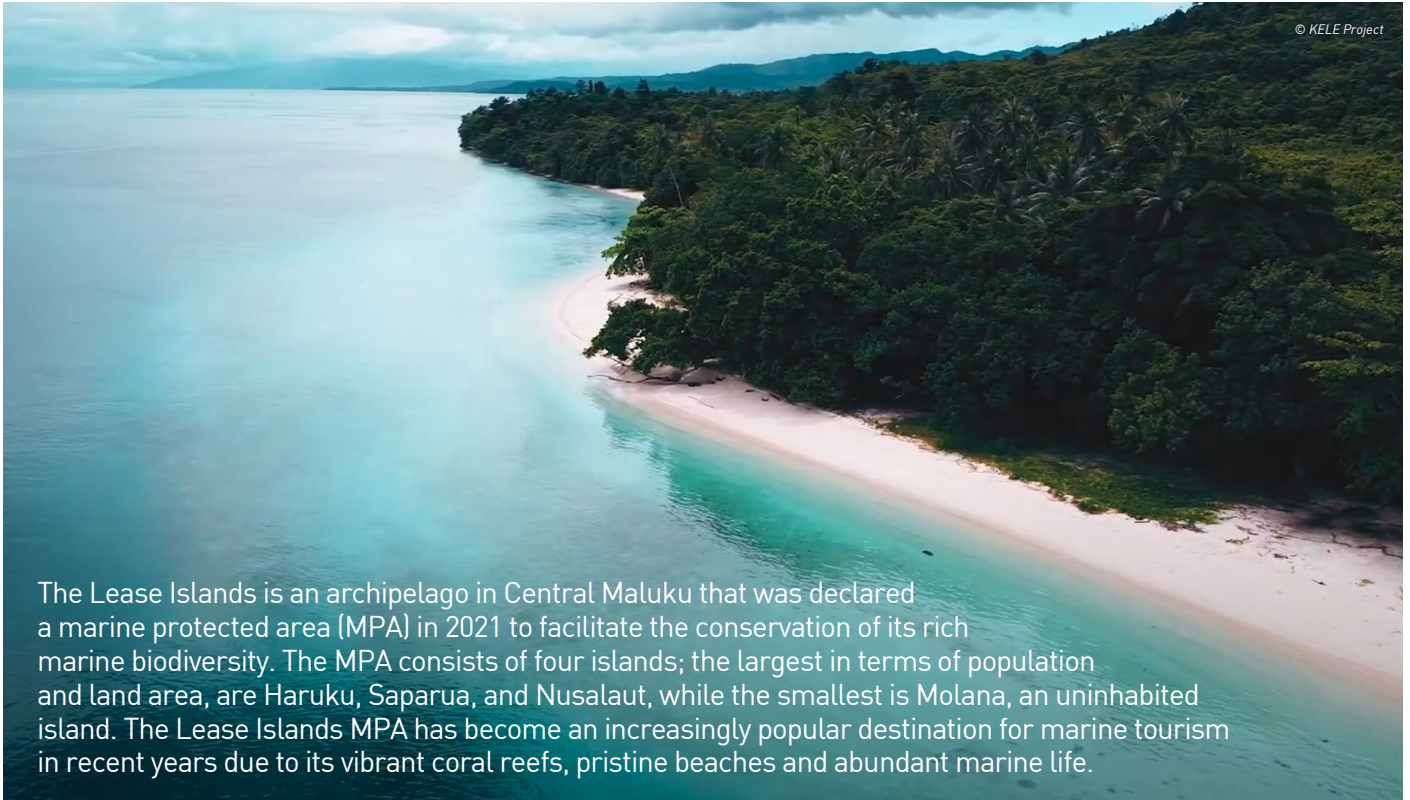


LEASE ISLANDS MPA LEARNING SITE



The Lease Islands is an archipelago in Central Maluku that was declared a marine protected area (MPA) in 2021 to facilitate the conservation of its rich marine biodiversity. The MPA consists of four islands; the largest in terms of population and land area, are Haruku, Saparua, and Nusalaut, while the smallest is Molana, an uninhabited island. The Lease Islands MPA has become an increasingly popular destination for marine tourism in recent years due to its vibrant coral reefs, pristine beaches and abundant marine life.



FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY

The Lease Islands MPA is densely-populated and is home to over 70,000 inhabitants as of 2020. It has four sub-districts, namely Haruku, Saparua, East Saparua, and Nusalaut, with 35 villages. Around 12% of its population are small-scale fishers, majority of whom continue to utilize traditional gears in fishing activities. The rest of the population is engaged in agricultural activities.

It is located in the Indonesian Fisheries Management Area (FMA) 714. On average, the four sub-districts in the Lease Islands MPA contribute to an annual fisheries production of 27,285 metric tons, valued at IDR 122 million (USD 7,945), and contributing to 16% of the total fisheries production value of the Central Maluku. In addition to fisheries and agriculture, tourism activities in the Lease Islands MPA also provide extra income to local communities.

ECOSYSTEM THREATS

The Lease Islands MPA is facing various stressors that impact its coastal and marine ecosystems. Identified threats include destructive fishing practices, plastic waste, and the effects of global climate change which are known to pose serious risks to the health and resilience of coral reefs.

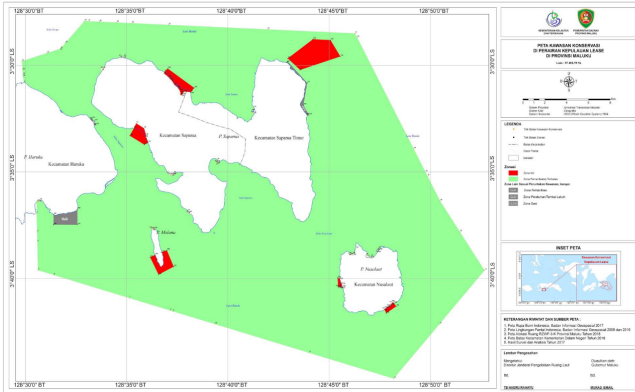
ABUNDANCE OF MARINE RESOURCES

The Lease Islands MPA, situated within the Coral Triangle, is renowned for its rich marine biodiversity and ecosystems. In 2017, the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) carried out a scoping study and identified its critical coastal and marine ecosystems, including mangrove forests (125.55 ha), seagrass beds (835.84 ha), and coral reefs (2,132.14 ha). An ecological survey conducted in 2018 by CTC revealed the presence of 216 fish species within the area, including highly valuable species such as snapper (Lutjanidae) and grouper (Epinephelidae). Moreover, in 2020, CTC found that live hard coral cover within the MPA to be as high as 74%.

The waters around the Lease Islands also serve as important migratory corridors for marine mammals, such as blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*) and sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*). Various endangered, threatened, and protected marine animals, including dugongs (*Dugong dugon*), manta rays (*Manta alfredi*), green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), and hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) can also be found in the Lease Islands MPA.

ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA)

In 2016, the Maluku Provincial Government initially designated the Lease Islands as a Provincial Small Islands Park (TPK), covering a total area of 81,573.48 ha. In 2018, the area was revised to align with Maluku Province's updated Coastal and Small Island Zoning Plan (RPZ). In June 2021, the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) officially declared the Lease Islands as an MPA with a total area of 67,484.19 ha through a Ministerial Decree.



The Lease Islands MPA consists of the following zones:

- Core Zone (1,390.85 ha)
- Limited Use Zone for Fisheries and Marine Tourism (65,778.15 ha)
- Port Zone (12.46 ha)
- Rehabilitation Zone (219.99 ha)
- *Sasi* Zone (82.74 ha)

Sasi is the traditional system of resource management in Maluku. CTC has been supporting the revival of the *Sasi* system to strengthen marine conservation in the area.

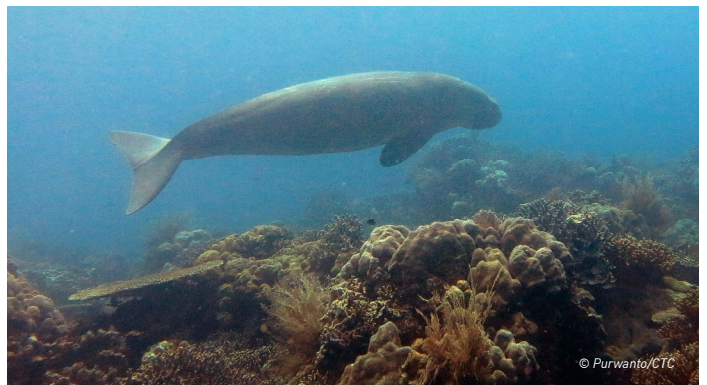
Since 2017, CTC has actively supported the establishment and effective management of the Lease Islands MPA. CTC conducted several scientific surveys, developed the MPA zoning and management plans, organized several public consultations, and provided MPA management training to local communities and stakeholders.

CTC also helped establish and trained the Lease Islands MPA Management Unit to ensure that the area is managed effectively. The MPA Management Unit is composed of representatives from the Maluku Province's Marine Affairs and Fisheries Department and community surveillance groups (*Pokmaswas*) from the three islands. CTC conducts regular reef health monitoring (RHM) and resource use monitoring (RUM) surveys to assess the effectiveness of the MPA's zoning and management plan. CTC's programs in the Lease Islands MPA are supported by USAID and the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

PROTECTING THE DUGONG

In August 2022, CTC officially launched the *Kalesang Dugong* Project, in collaboration with the Baileo Maluku Foundation and the Maluku Province Government. The two-year project is supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) for the Wallacea II Partnership Program. The project aims to protect the dugong and its habitat in four target villages in Saparua and East Saparua Sub-districts: Booi, Porto, Mahu, and Ihamahu.

Kalesang Dugong also aims to increase the capacity and awareness of local communities and key stakeholders, including Indigenous peoples, women, youth, and private sector, so that they can contribute to the protection of this endangered marine mammal. To fill the current data gap, the project aims to provide updated information about dugongs and their seagrass habitats in Saparua through biophysical and resource use monitoring surveys. The project will also develop a citizen science to build a more comprehensive database about dugongs and other ETP marine species in the Lease Islands MPA. This initiative supports the development of village regulations and the revitalization of *Sasi*, and community outreach to further strengthen dugong conservation in the MPA.



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