



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indonesia Creates World's Largest Manta Sanctuary

Jakarta, Indonesia - February 21, 2014. The Government of Indonesia today announced the creation of the world's largest manta ray sanctuary, spanning an area of almost 6 million square kilometers. This new legislation provides full protection to manta rays throughout Southeast Asia's biggest country, which for years has been the world's largest shark and ray fishery.

Killing and harming of both oceanic and reef manta rays, as well as trading of manta ray body parts, is now illegal throughout Indonesia. Violators face a maximum penalty of 1 year in jail or a fine of approximately US\$ 25,000.

This bold decision by the Government of Indonesia is a lesson in “mantanomics”. An economic analysis by scientists from the Indonesia Institute of Sciences recently demonstrated that Indonesia's mantas rays are worth more than 2,000 times more alive than dead.

“Indonesia now has the second-largest manta ray tourism industry in the world, with an estimated annual turnover of \$15 million,” said Agus Dermawan, a senior official from Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. “Given the huge area of reefs and islands in our country, if managed properly, Indonesia could become the top manta tourism destination on the planet.”

Divers, snorkelers and ocean lovers have helped to protect manta rays in Indonesia. By submitting their manta sightings and photos to MantaWatch's online manta tracking application, citizen scientists have provided critical data to the government.

“This is a great example of how governments and the diving industry can work together to achieve positive impacts for the environment and the economy”, said Andrew Harvey, MantaWatch's founder and director.

Today's announcement comes just six month after MantaWatch supported the creation of the West Manggarai and Komodo manta ray sanctuary, and one year after the Raja Ampat government declared the first manta ray sanctuary in the Coral Triangle.

Indonesia now faces the new challenge of effectively managing its manta rays, and enforcing the new regulations when necessary. Urgent research is needed to inform management planning by answer critical questions, such as “how many mantas inhabit Indonesia's waters”, “where are the important migratory corridors, and habitats for feeding and breeding”, and even “do mantas migrate across Indonesia's borders, where they may be at risk in the unprotected waters of neighboring countries”.

MantaWatch protects threatened manta rays through the application of technology and education that supports local conservation actions. MantaWatch operates MantaTrax—the world's first social web application dedicated to open, transparent and participative marine conservation—and runs the annual MantaWatch Internship Program—a professional manta ray research and conservation training program for students in developing countries. MantaWatch is a not-for-profit marine conservation company based in London, United Kingdom.

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Editors Notes:

Manta rays are listed as vulnerable to extinction under the International Union for Conservation (IUCN) Red List. With females only producing two to three pups every five years, slow reproductive cycles mean that manta rays are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation.

Following a vote by 179 nations, both species of manta ray (*Manta birostris* and *Manta alfredi*) were listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in March 2013.

Manta rays are now protected in Indonesia under Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministerial Decree No. 4/ 2014.

MantaWatch develops and operates MantaTrax—the world's first social web application for manta ray research and conservation. <http://trax.mantawatch.com>.