



The ocean genome and future prospects for conservation and equity



How could you not be interested in marine genetic resources? In recent decades, our capacity to understand the ocean at a genetic level has been advancing at light-speed: new sequencing technologies, exponentially growing databases of genetic sequence data, and a suite of new applications for exploration and conservation. At the same time, marine biotechnology is a diverse and poorly quantified pillar of the blue economy, ranging from high-profile uses in the development of pharmaceuticals to lesser known uses as industrial enzymes for biofuel production, food additives and antifouling compounds. Yet tapping the full potential of the ocean genome for science, conservation and commercial uses depends on addressing core issues surrounding capacity, equity and biosafety. As a result, marine genetic resources are a key element of multiple ongoing negotiations and processes, most notably with regard to biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). This seminar will describe the concept of the ocean genome, the benefits it provides, the threats it faces, and prospects for increasing equity in the context of ongoing international processes.



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