



# Understanding what net gain means and providing a framework to achieve it

April 2023



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## Definitions behind a net positive impact approach



## Net positive impact and net gains

Terms are used interchangeably.

Embedded principle associated with infrastructure development for some time.

Generally relates to where projects lead to measurable gains that exceed the losses that may result from activities.

Operationalising = application of the mitigation hierarchy, but also includes additional conservation actions.

There is emerging emphasis for approaches that go beyond mitigation and are more transformative.





## Nature positive

Umbrella global goal for the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Meeting the goal is dependent on a range of actions that cumulatively contribute to reaching the desired outcomes.

An individual organisation or the specific activities they undertake cannot be determined as being nature positive in isolation.

Could be linked to contributions made through net gains, but they are not the same thing.

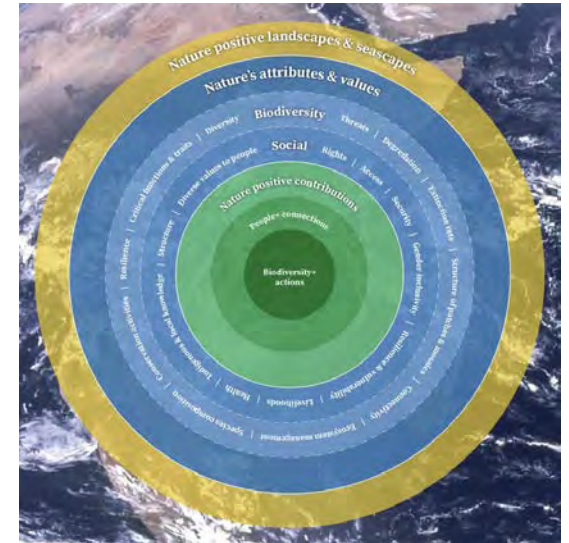
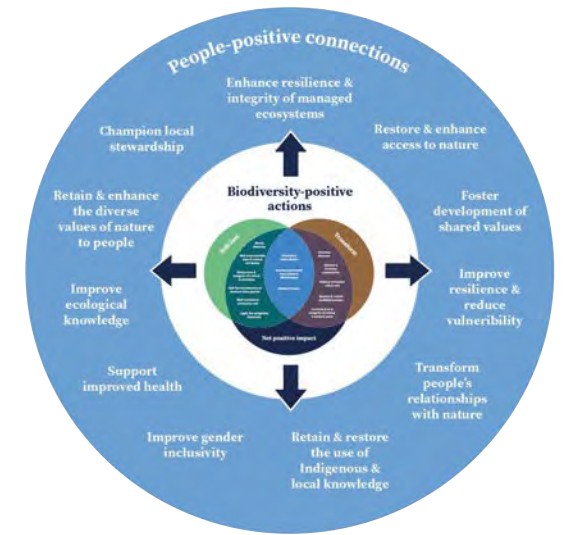
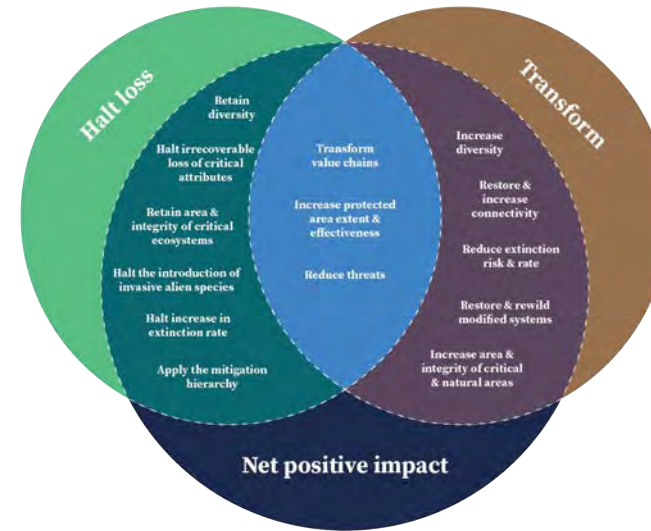
The spirit of the goal is mostly aligned with halting loss and transformative outcomes (and scale).

Net gains may contribute, but caution needed (e.g. re impacts on critical habitat).

It is biodiversity- and people-positive.

Mechanisms to measure contributions are still in development.

Could be used for holistic alignment, but it is not really an operational focus.



Source: <https://bluedotassociates.com/bluedot-positive/the-context-for-nature-positive/understanding-nature-positive-and-the-role-of-organisations-in-supporting-the-goal/>

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## Guiding a net positive impact approach





Lots of emerging high-level guidance and frameworks with some alignment across them.

Guidance at this time mostly about how to build a strategy and what to consider – not necessarily practical application.

There remains a challenge to translate approaches to the marine environment with all the inherent complexities.

Evidence suggests that net gain approaches have not often achieved intended aims.

Marine restoration is complex and success is not guaranteed.

Often organisations have to drive approaches autonomously, although strategic approaches are being developed in some places.

Although in some places strategic frameworks/ approaches are helping.

Organisations need more support to define the best approaches and we need to understand what support is required.

Strategic collaborative approaches that drive ecosystem-based outcomes are likely to be most beneficial over time.



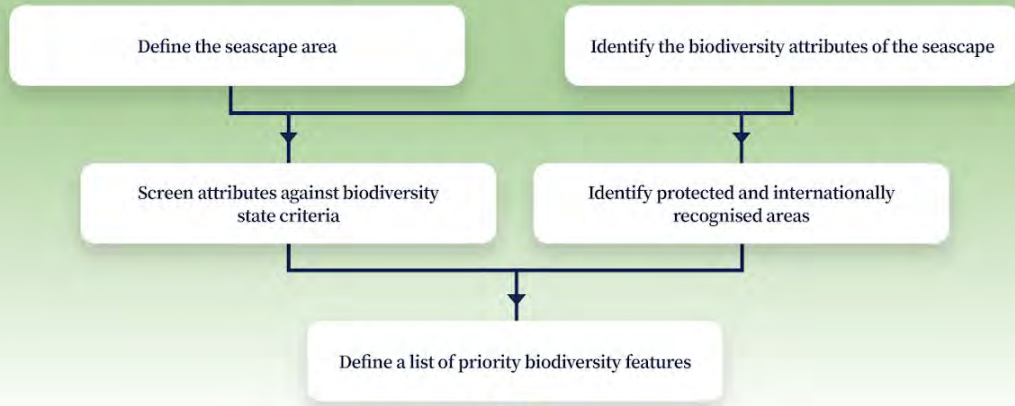
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**Framework for determining net positive actions – a practical approach**

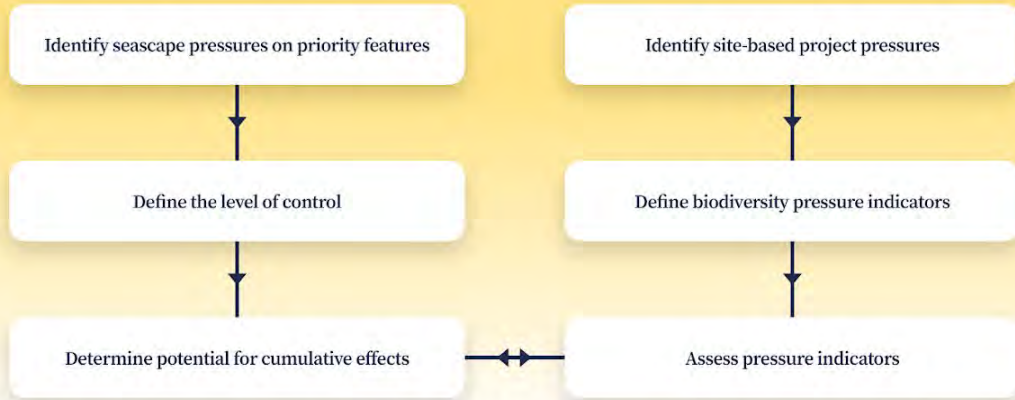




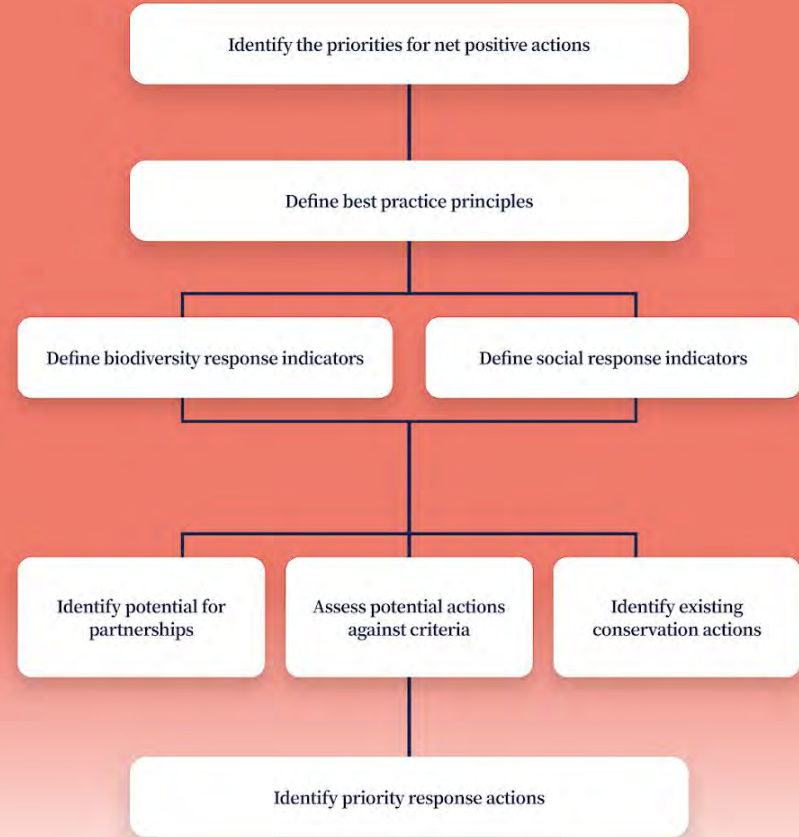
**State: Determine the context relating to broad biodiversity values in the seascape**



**Pressures: Determine existing and future pressures on priority features**



**Response: Develop responses to achieve net positive outcomes for priority features**



<https://bluedotassociates.com/a-guiding-framework-to-support-organisations-to-deliver-net-gains-for-marine-biodiversity/>



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## **Framework Highlights**



Understanding **state** at the appropriate ecological scale is fundamental to any NPI strategy - *there is a need to look beyond the site-level.*

Attributes can be screened against habitat and species **state** criteria to establish the priorities for NPI actions.

There is a need to understand the significance of **pressures** on values in the seascape and also from activities. To inform NPI actions, organisations need to understand how they can exert influence over these.

Biodiversity **pressure** indicators can be used to understand the magnitude of effect of activities on ecosystem integrity, which can be aligned with broad conservation goals.

Biodiversity state criteria	
Habitat criteria	Species criteria
i) Present in the seascape and potentially in the area of influence of site-based activities	i) Present in the seascape and potentially in the area of influence of site-based activities
+	+
i) Assessed as a threatened and/or declining habitat by IUCN, regional or national assessments	i) Threatened species (VU, EN, CR under IUCN or regional assessments)
ii) Legally protected or internationally recognised area	<b>and/or</b>
ii) Habitat that provides critical attributes, including for threatened species	i) Listed as a threatened and/or declining species in regional or national assessments
ii) Status	ii) An endemic or restricted range species
	ii) A migratory and/or congregatory species
	ii) Protected status
	ii) Declining population trends



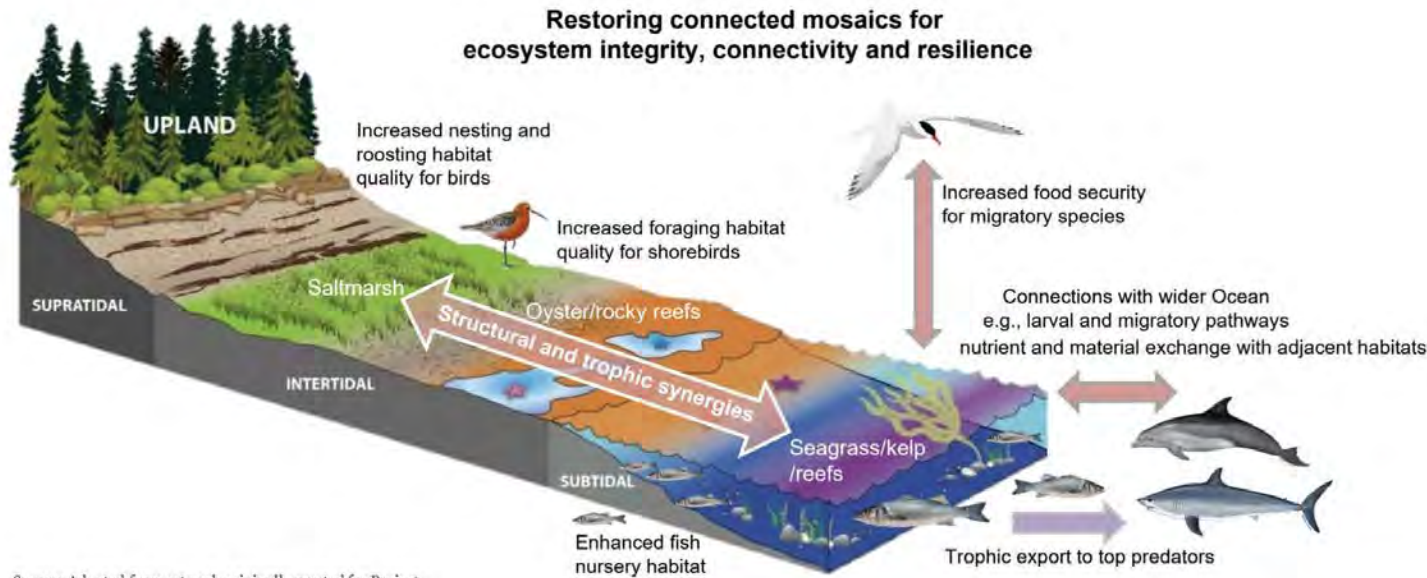
Biodiversity pressure indicators		Residual Magnitude Categories
Habits	Species	
Reduction in habitat extent Increase in fragmentation Change in primary productivity Change in ecosystem carrying capacity Reduced ecological connectivity Alteration to diversity	Change in individual species populations Change in distribution and range Alteration to important functions Increased extinction risk	No or negligible impact
		Minor impacts that are unlikely to lead to long term measurable effects on ecosystem integrity
		Moderate impacts that cannot be avoided and could lead to irreversible change, but do not lead to an irrecoverable loss in ecosystem integrity
		Major impacts that would lead to an irrecoverable loss of ecosystem integrity



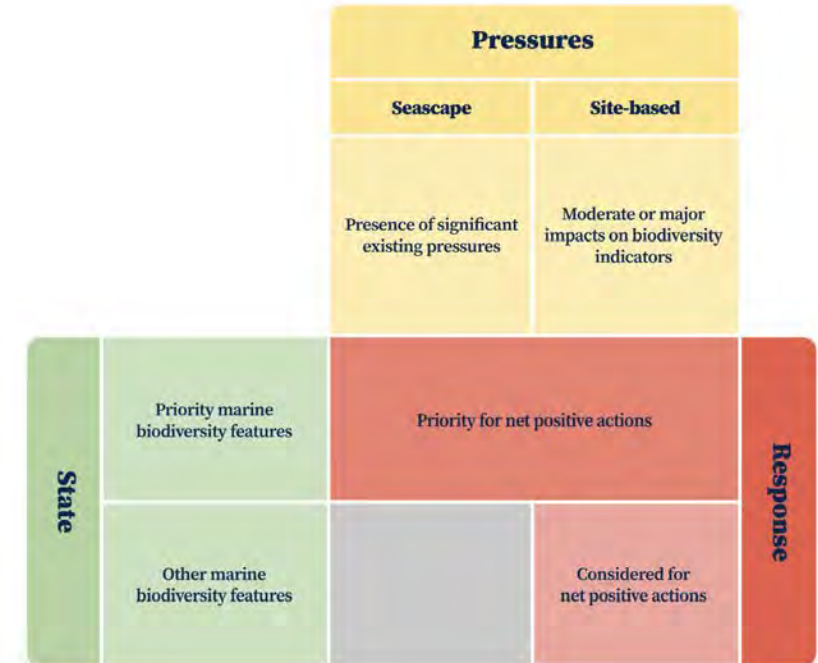
Once **state** and **pressures** have been assessed, the **response** for net positive actions can be defined.

Biodiversity and social **response** criteria can be used to help determine the best actions to take. These criteria relate to feasibility but also the extent of positive outcomes for biodiversity and people.

To support global goals, organisations should not only think about actions for individual features or for a narrow set of outcomes. Rather, organisations may seek to take a multiple habitat or seascape ecology approach; and support transformative outcomes.



Source: Adapted from artwork originally created for Project Watershed <https://projectwatershed.ca/>



# Thank You!

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