



for a living planet

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New world map - Kimberley coast one of the most pristine places on the planet

The first global analysis of the data on human impacts to ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, continental shelves and the deep ocean, rated the marine environment of northern Australia, including the Kimberley, as one of the few relatively pristine coastal areas left on Earth.

The article published today in the journal, *Science*, looked at the impacts of 17 global data sets of anthropogenic (human-induced) drivers of ecological change on 20 marine ecosystems and showed that 41 per cent of the world's oceans are heavily impacted by human activities.

Dr Gilly Llewellyn, WWF-Australia Program Leader, Oceans, said, "This article shows that virtually nowhere in the world's oceans is untouched by the effects of human impact. It also shows that the Kimberley region, and indeed the whole of the northern coast of Australia, is of global importance for conservation, as one of the few places on the planet that is virtually untouched."

WWF-Australia recently brought leading scientists together in Broome to begin mapping the marine and coastal ecosystem and processes of the Kimberley.

"We are only just beginning to understand the true natural values of this region and the extent and diversity of its marine plant and animal communities. Industrial development, including from gas processing plants, would pose a significant threat to this marine wilderness," Dr Llewellyn said.

"The recently-announced joint assessment of the region by Federal and State governments, which was an important step forward, must consider the Kimberley's significance in global terms. We have a responsibility not just to fellow Australians but to people all around the world to protect this globally important region."

Notes to editors:

Link to Science Article: <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/319/5865/948>

Link to research web-site: <http://www.nceas.ucsb.edu/GlobalMarine>

http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=111113&org=NSF&from=news

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