

# THREATS TO OUR OCEAN HERITAGE

## Deep Dive: Potentially Polluting Wrecks (PPW)

### What is Ocean Heritage?

The stories of our societies and our ancestors are wrapped in intangible connection with the ocean and preserved on the seafloor as artefacts, shipwrecks, and remains of those lost or buried at sea. Marine global heritage has largely been based on natural features, and the inextricable link between natural and cultural has been ignored. Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) supports ecological marine biodiversity and helps boost sea connectivity in a shared space of natural and cultural heritage: Ocean Heritage.

### Three Threats, Three Books

The Ocean Foundation has a new project that aims to bring awareness to the threats of bottom trawling, potentially polluting wrecks (PPW), and deep seabed mining (DSM) to underwater cultural heritage (UCH). In partnership with the Lloyd's Register Foundation Heritage and Education Centre and with cooperation from The International Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH) within the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), it is one of the only endorsed Activities under the UN Decade for Ocean Science focusing on cultural heritage. The project will publish one open access book on each topic by 2025.

The Lloyd's Register Foundation Ocean Safety Foresight Review stresses the need for vastly increased effort around purposeful marine data collection and supports the UN Global Compact sustainable ocean principles calling for interventions to stimulate sharing of relevant scientific data. This project is an opportunity to unite cultural and scientific data to effect real change.

### What are Potentially Polluting Wrecks?

A Potentially Polluting Wreck, or "PPW", is a shipwreck that was sunk with and still shelters a large cargo of hazardous substances, generally fuel

oils. Globally, nearly 8,600 PPW, mostly from WWII, have been identified as major threats to the marine environment, harboring up to 20 million tons of oil. As these wrecks are nearing 80 years of underwater exposure, their corroding iron hulls are reaching a point of critical failure, meaning that catastrophic releases are imminent.

To protect fragile marine organisms and vulnerable coastal communities from the threat of toxic substances, more action needs to be taken to create a legal framework around these vessels, identify the most dangerous ones, and find the funding to remediate them.

There is a time-limited conjunction of threat and opportunity. Never has UCH been under greater threat from industrial activity and the adverse effects of accelerating climate change. Equally, the launch of the UN Decade of Ocean Science and the agreement on the High Seas treaty means that there has never been a better opportunity to define and promote the standard and protocols required to deal with the urgent threats and safety challenges.



### Key Topics

Legal Duty to Protect Ocean Heritage

Modeling Petroleum Spills

Corrosion Threats

Satellite Detection

Case Studies

... and more!

Check out the latest on the PPW book here!



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