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# Marine Spatial Planning — Odisha Leads India's Ocean Governance

21 April 2026

ENVIRONMENT

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

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# Marine Spatial Planning — Odisha Leads India's Ocean Governance

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## WHY IN NEWS

**Odisha** has become **India's first state to implement Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)**, partnering with the **National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR)** as part of the **Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative** launched in 2019. MSP allocates Odisha's marine zones across energy, ports, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and conservation using an integrated governance framework — replacing the current fragmented, sector-by-sector approach to ocean use.

## WHAT IS MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING?

**Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)** is an evidence-based process for **allocating marine space** — ocean areas, seabed, and water column — to different human activities and conservation purposes. Analogous to land-use planning for the ocean, MSP:

- Maps existing and proposed **uses of the sea** (fishing zones, shipping lanes, energy installations, protected areas, aquaculture farms)
- **Resolves conflicts** between competing uses (e.g., fishing grounds vs. offshore wind farms)
- **Identifies and protects** ecologically sensitive marine habitats
- Provides a **long-term governance framework** for sustainable ocean use

## Why MSP Matters

Without MSP, ocean governance is fragmented:

- Fisheries managed by one ministry
- Ports by another
- Offshore energy by yet another
- Conservation by a separate authority

Conflicting permits and uncoordinated development lead to ecological degradation, economic losses, and governance failures. MSP integrates these into a single spatial framework.

## ODISHA'S COASTAL PROFILE

Odisha has one of India's most ecologically complex coastlines:

FEATURE	DETAILS
Coastline length	~550 km (longest on the East Coast after Andhra Pradesh)
Key features	Chilika Lake (Asia's largest brackish lagoon), mangroves, estuaries, sandy beaches
Marine biodiversity	Olive Ridley turtles (Gahirmatha, Rushikulya nesting beaches), Irrawaddy dolphins, dugongs
Fisheries	~1 million fisherfolk; marine fishing a major livelihood sector
Ports	Paradip (major), Gopalpur, Dhamra (Adani), Astral Port (upcoming)
Offshore energy	Offshore wind energy potential: estimated 5+ GW

### The Chilika Lake — A Special Case

**Chilika Lake** (1,100 sq km) is Asia's largest brackish water lagoon and India's first **Ramsar Wetland** (1981).

It supports:

- ~800 species of birds (including migratory species from Central Asia)
- Irrawaddy dolphins
- ~200,000 fisherfolk families

MSP for Odisha must explicitly protect Chilika from industrial and aquaculture encroachment while enabling sustainable fishing.

## THE INDO-NORWAY INTEGRATED OCEAN INITIATIVE

Norway is a world leader in MSP — it has managed its **North Sea and Barents Sea** areas through spatial planning for decades. The **Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative** (launched 2019) is a bilateral framework to:

- Transfer Norwegian MSP expertise to India
- Support coastal zone governance across Indian coastal states
- Develop integrated ocean management frameworks
- Build Indian institutional capacity in marine science

**Phase 1** of the initiative covered baseline mapping and capacity building.

**Phase 2** — which Odisha is now participating in — involves actual MSP implementation, including zoning and legal framework development.

## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR COASTAL RESEARCH (NCCR)

The **NCCR** is the implementing agency for Odisha's MSP:

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Established	1998
Under	Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
Previous name	ICMAM-PD (Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management Project Directorate)
Headquarters	Chennai
Functions	Shoreline management, coastal erosion monitoring, pollution assessment, marine ecosystem research, hazard mitigation, capacity building

NCCR will conduct:

- ❶ **Marine spatial mapping** — satellite + field surveys to map existing uses
- ❷ **Ecological sensitivity mapping** — identifying critical habitats, nursery grounds, migration corridors
- ❸ **Stakeholder consultation** — fisherfolk communities, port authorities, energy developers
- ❹ **Zone designation** — formal allocation of areas to permitted uses
- ❺ **Legal framework** — integration with existing Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules

## ODISHA MARINE BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CORRIDOR (OMBRIC)

Alongside MSP, Odisha launched the **OMBRIC** in August 2025 — a research corridor focused on:

- Marine biodiversity conservation
- Marine biotechnology (bioprospecting, blue bioeconomy)
- Sustainable fisheries innovation
- Climate adaptation for coastal communities

OMBRIC connects research institutions, universities, and industry in a collaborative marine science ecosystem – India’s first such dedicated marine biotech corridor.

## INDIA’S OCEAN ECONOMY — THE BIGGER PICTURE

India’s **Blue Economy** – economic activity from ocean resources – is estimated at approximately **\$28-35 billion annually** and has potential to reach **\$150 billion by 2030** (NITI Aayog):

SECTOR	CURRENT VALUE	POTENTIAL
Fisheries	~₹1.5 lakh crore	Growing
Offshore energy	Nascent	100+ GW potential
Seaport services	Major	Growing
Marine tourism	Growing	Large
Marine biotechnology	Small	Significant
Deep-sea mining	Nascent	Long-term

## Policy Framework

POLICY/PROGRAMME	OBJECTIVE
<b>Sagarmala Programme</b>	Port-led development, coastal shipping, port connectivity
<b>Deep Ocean Mission</b>	Exploration of deep-sea minerals, biodiversity, energy
<b>Blue Economy Policy (draft)</b>	Integrated framework for ocean economy; MSP is a component
<b>Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Rules, 2019</b>	Environmental protection of coastal land
<b>Indian Maritime Blueprint 2030</b>	Maritime sector development

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS3 — Environment	Marine ecology, blue economy, ocean governance, CRZ
GS1 — Geography	Coastal geography, Chilika Lake, Odisha coastline, Ramsar
GS2 — IR	Indo-Norway bilateral, ocean diplomacy
GS3 — Economy	Blue economy, Sagarmala, Deep Ocean Mission
Mains Keywords	MSP, NCCR, Blue Economy, Sagarmala, Chilika Lake, Ramsar, CRZ, Indo-Norway, OMBRIC, Deep Ocean Mission

## FACTS CORNER

- **Odisha coastline:** ~550 km (longest on East Coast after Andhra Pradesh)
- **Chilika Lake:** Asia's largest brackish lagoon; India's first Ramsar Wetland (1981); ~1,100 sq km
- **NCCR:** National Centre for Coastal Research; under MoES; established 1998
- **Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative:** Launched 2019; MSP knowledge transfer
- **OMBRIC:** Odisha Marine Biotechnology Research and Innovation Corridor; launched August 2025
- **Blue Economy potential:** NITI Aayog estimates \$150 billion by 2030 (from current \$28-35 billion)
- **Deep Ocean Mission:** GoI initiative for deep-sea mineral exploration; approved 2021
- **Olive Ridley turtles:** Mass nesting (Arribada) at Gahirmatha and Rushikulya beaches, Odisha
- **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary:** World's largest Olive Ridley nesting beach; off Odisha coast
- **Sagarmala Programme:** 2015; port modernisation + coastal shipping; ₹6+ lakh crore

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UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/04/21/marine-spatial-planning-odisha/>

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