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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

The Ocean's Forgotten Carbon: On Blue Carbon and Climate

 **DOWN TO EARTH**8 June 2026 · **ENVIRONMENT** · **GS3**

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

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The Ocean's Forgotten Carbon: On Blue Carbon and Climate

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INTERVIEW ANGLE

"Blue carbon ecosystems store carbon and protect coasts, yet they are barely counted in climate plans. What would it take to make blue carbon a mainstream part of India's NDCs?"

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [Down to Earth](#)

 Every fact web-verified against primary sources **HOW**

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

On **World Oceans Day**, the climate conversation usually centres on forests and emission cuts. But the coast holds a quieter, highly efficient carbon store: **blue carbon**, the carbon captured by **mangroves, seagrass and salt marshes**. For an aspirant, this is a GS3 case on **climate mitigation, coastal adaptation and conservation finance**, a natural asset India under-counts even as it pursues net-zero and coastal **resilience**.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Blue carbon, stored by **mangroves, seagrass and salt marshes**, sequesters carbon more efficiently than many land forests and also **protects coasts** and **supports fisheries**. India has long coasts and major mangroves, yet blue carbon is barely in its **NDCs or carbon accounting**. The fix: integrate it into climate finance and plans, **restore mangroves**, and tie conservation to **community livelihoods**.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

CONCEPT	WHAT IT MEANS	WHY IT MATTERS
Blue carbon	Carbon stored by coastal/marine ecosystems	A highly efficient, long-term carbon sink
Mangroves / seagrass / salt marshes	The key blue-carbon ecosystems	Sequester carbon; protect coasts
NDCs	National climate pledges under Paris	Where blue carbon should be counted
MISHTI	India's mangrove-restoration scheme	The delivery vehicle

THE ANALYSIS: WHY BLUE CARBON DESERVES A BIGGER ROLE

- ① **It is highly efficient.** Per unit area, blue-carbon ecosystems can store carbon faster and longer than many terrestrial forests.
- ② **It protects coasts.** Mangroves and marshes buffer storm surge and erosion, delivering adaptation co-benefits.
- ③ **It supports livelihoods.** These ecosystems nurse fisheries and sustain coastal communities.
- ④ **It is under-counted.** Blue carbon is largely absent from India's climate accounting and finance.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

mangroves, seagrass meadows, salt marshes; the Sundarbans is India's largest mangrove block (a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Ramsar site). India's cover: roughly 4,900 to 5,000 sq km of mangroves (ISFR); a coastline of about 11,098 km. Schemes: MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes); coastal regulation under the CRZ Notification. Climate frame: NDCs under the Paris Agreement; ecosystem-based adaptation; net-zero by 2070. Global link: the High Seas Treaty and SDG 14; the role of oceans as a major carbon sink.

THE DEBATE

Argument to focus elsewhere: Blue carbon science and measurement are still maturing, so scarce resources should go to proven terrestrial forestry and emission cuts.

Argument to mainstream it: Blue carbon offers efficient mitigation plus coastal adaptation and livelihoods, a rare triple benefit India is neglecting.

The balanced verdict: Maturing measurement is a reason to **invest in measurement, not to neglect the asset**. India should integrate blue carbon into climate accounting and finance while improving its science, capturing the mitigation, adaptation and livelihood benefits together.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

Policy optimises what it measures; what goes uncounted goes unfunded. The strong answer identifies a valuable but un-measured asset (here, blue carbon) and argues for bringing it into the accounting framework. This “measure what matters” lens applies to natural capital, the care economy and informal-sector contributions alike.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Mangroves + seagrass + salt marshes -> efficient carbon storage + coastal protection + fisheries. The gap: absent from NDCs/carbon accounting + under-funded. The fix: integrate into NDCs + climate finance + MISHTI restoration + community livelihoods -> climate and coastal resilience.

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Integrate blue carbon into India’s NDCs** and carbon accounting and markets.
- ② **Protect and restore mangroves and seagrass** through MISHTI and CRZ enforcement.
- ③ **Channel climate and adaptation finance** to coastal ecosystems.
- ④ **Tie conservation to community livelihoods** for durable protection.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

“Blue carbon ecosystems are an underused climate and coastal-resilience asset for India.” Examine their potential and the barriers. (250 words)

“The ocean’s edge stores carbon more faithfully than many forests, yet India barely counts it; what we do not measure, we do not protect.”

Blue carbon (mangroves, seagrass, salt marshes) · Sundarbans (UNESCO + Ramsar) · mangrove cover ~4,900-5,000 sq km · MISHTI · CRZ Notification · NDCs · SDG 14.

Should blue carbon be a formal part of India’s NDCs even while its measurement science is still maturing?

Connects to GS3 PYQs on climate mitigation, coastal ecosystems and conservation; probable forward question is the blue-carbon framing above.

today’s World Oceans Day article and the deep-sea mining editorial; static GS3 on coastal ecosystems and climate.

Sources: Down To Earth, MoEFCC, Forest Survey of India

Source: The Ocean's Forgotten Carbon: On Blue Carbon and Climate — Ujivari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

On World Oceans Day, India should mainstream blue carbon, the carbon captured and stored by coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrass and salt marshes, into its climate strategy, conservation finance and coastal-resilience planning, because these ecosystems deliver outsized climate and protective benefits that are currently under-counted.

✓ SUPPORTING

- Blue carbon ecosystems sequester carbon far more efficiently per unit area than many terrestrial forests, making them valuable climate assets.
- They also protect coasts from storms and erosion and support fisheries and livelihoods, delivering adaptation and economic co-benefits.

- India has significant mangrove cover and a long coastline, yet blue carbon is barely integrated into its climate accounting and finance.

COUNTER

Some argue that blue carbon science and measurement are still maturing, and that scarce conservation resources should focus on proven terrestrial forestry and emission cuts.

WAY FORWARD

Integrate blue carbon into India's NDCs and carbon accounting, protect and restore mangroves and seagrass, channel climate finance to coastal ecosystems, and combine conservation with community livelihoods.

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MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

QUESTION

"Blue carbon ecosystems are an underused climate and coastal-resilience asset for India." Examine their potential and the barriers to mainstreaming them. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

Climate strategy is dominated by forests on land and machines that cut emissions. On World Oceans Day, it is worth remembering a quieter carbon store: the coastal ecosystems that capture carbon at the edge of the sea.

BODY

Blue carbon refers to the carbon captured and stored by coastal and marine ecosystems, principally mangroves, seagrass meadows and salt marshes. These ecosystems are remarkably efficient: per unit area, they can sequester carbon faster and store it longer than many terrestrial forests, locking it into waterlogged soils for centuries.

They also deliver powerful co-benefits, buffering coasts against storm surge and erosion, nursing fisheries that sustain coastal livelihoods, and harbouring biodiversity. For India, with a long coastline

and significant mangrove cover including the Sundarbans, blue carbon is a natural asset that aligns climate mitigation with coastal adaptation.

Yet it is barely counted. Blue carbon is largely absent from India's formal climate accounting and Nationally Determined Contributions, and conservation finance flows far more readily to terrestrial forestry.

The counter-argument, that blue carbon measurement is still maturing and that resources should focus on proven options, has some force, but it argues for investment in measurement, not neglect. The way forward is to integrate blue carbon into India's NDCs and carbon markets, protect and restore mangroves and seagrass through schemes like MISHTI, channel climate and adaptation finance to coastal ecosystems, and tie conservation to community livelihoods so that protection is durable.

CONCLUSION

Blue carbon is the ocean's forgotten climate asset. India should count it, fund it and protect it, turning a neglected resource into a pillar of climate and coastal resilience.

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