



Thursday 12 May, 2022

Mission Blue is excited to announce the designation of the Palmahim Slide, Israel as a Mission Blue Hope Spot. We recognize and commend Hadas Gann-Perkal and Ateret Shabtay with The Society for The Protection of Nature In Israel (SPNI) as the Hope Spot Champions. The Hope Spots Council made this designation based on the merit of the nomination. We stand in solidarity with you and support your efforts to protect this incredible place.

Hope Spots are special places that are critical to the health of the ocean — Earth's blue heart. Hope Spots are about recognizing, empowering and supporting individuals and communities around the world in their efforts to protect the ocean. While about 12 percent of the land around the world is now under some form of protection (as national parks etc.), *less than seven percent* of the ocean is protected in any way. Hope Spots allow us to plan for the future and look beyond current marine protected areas (MPAs), which are like national parks on land where exploitative uses like fishing and deep sea mining are restricted. Hope Spots are often areas that need new protection, but they can also be existing MPAs where more action is needed.

The Palmahim Slide is a bathymetric irregularity creating a distinct geological formation starting at depths of 400m and reaching up to 1,200m. It is located in Israel's Mediterranean EEZ, 35km off Tel-Aviv's coastline. Only in 2010, thanks to a survey held by the submersible robot E/V Nautilus, were two very rare and important habitats found here; Methane seeps and deep-water coral gardens. The biodiversity discovered here was nothing like anything seen before in the south-eastern Mediterranean Sea. An additional expedition that took place in 2017, discovered the critically endangered bamboo coral and in 2021 brine pool habitats, a breeding site for the Blackmouth Catshark and a sighting of the Angular Roughshark were recorded as well. It was recently discovered to be a hotspot for deep shark reproduction, including endangered species.

We call on policy makers in Israel to follow in the footsteps of the Hope Spot designation and declare the Palmahim Slide a no take marine reserve, large enough to protect the fragile life in the area. We are hopeful that the ministers of Environment, Justice, Energy, Interior and Agriculture of Israel will lead the way for genuine protection of this wonderful Hope Spot.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sylvia Earle
President
Mission Blue