

Potsdam Summer School 2025: Day 2 – Oceans & Coastal Zones

September 16, 2025, 09:15 – 12:00

Venue: AWI House A 45, Telegrafenberg, Potsdam

Hosts: Barbara Neumann, Linda Del Savio, Cristian Passarello, Lina Röschel and Ben Boteler (Ocean Governance Research Group, Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS) at GFZ)

Protecting the Marine Environment through Ocean Governance: A Deep Dive into the Topic of Plastic Pollution

The health and productivity of the world's ocean(s) are of critical importance to humanity. Oceans provide essential ecosystem services such as food security, global climate regulation, opportunities for leisure, and serve as a habitat for a wealth of biodiversity. However, the ocean and especially coastal areas continue to be exposed to a multitude of challenges, as human activities and pressures, including climate change, overexploitation of resources, and pollution put mounting pressures on marine and coastal environments. This poses significant challenges to the governance of the ocean, i.e., the regulations, frameworks, institutions and processes in place to regulate human activities or manage conservation efforts.

A particular governance challenge is that of plastic pollution, due to its transboundary nature and severe impacts on the marine environment, which range from biodiversity loss to the entanglement and ingestion of plastic by marine species. In response, developments at the international level are underway and include negotiations towards an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution (Global Plastics Treaty). The Global Plastics Treaty negotiations not only present an effort to shape and contribute to sustainable ocean governance in a more coordinated manner, but also aim to address the plastic problem by considering the full life cycle of plastics.

Against this background, the session aims to provide an overview and understanding of ocean governance challenges and processes on the example of the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations. We look forward to exchange with professionals and researchers from various disciplines who wish to learn more about the governance of our oceans and discuss in an interactive session formation how the Global Plastics Treaty should be shaped to achieve global goals such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.