



31 March 2009

Dear friends of The Ocean Foundation:

We have certainly had a busy month of March. It came in like a lion and stayed that way—it has been very exciting to be part of some landmark gatherings designed to move ocean conservation forward.

We began the month by continuing our work with the White House Council on Environmental Quality and two grantees to ensure that the Obama administration not only confirmed U.S. support for the commercial whaling moratorium, but also added a condemnation of lethal scientific whaling as unnecessary in modern whale conservation management. See the following link for the CEQ announcement: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/press\\_releases/march\\_6\\_2009](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/press_releases/march_6_2009).

From March 7-10, the Blue Vision Summit, co-sponsored by The Ocean Foundation, gathered 500 ocean scientists, conservationists, legislators, artists, and funders from all over the U.S. to share strategies on ocean conservation and make visits to members of Congress on Capitol Hill. For more information, please visit <http://www.bluefront.org/bluevision>. TOF Board of Advisors member, Dr. Roger Payne, gave the opening plenary speech, which drew on his decades of whale research and whale conservation.

The DC Environmental Film Festival opened the following week and included TOF partner Screenscope's "State of the Planet's Oceans," a documentary narrated by Matt Damon that aired nationwide on PBS stations beginning on March 18<sup>th</sup>. **On April 21**, PBS will air a special two-hour Frontline show on the challenges of protecting two U.S. marine treasures: Chesapeake Bay & Puget Sound (check local listings for details).

During the week of March 16<sup>th</sup>, The Ocean Foundation acted as a co-host for a coral trade meeting in Hong Kong with financial support from NOAA and The Tiffany & Co Foundation. Thirty-five attendees from Pacific Rim and Mediterranean nations met to close gaps in scientific, management and trade data on corallium (the red and pink coral used for jewelry) and prepare for an upcoming meeting of the parties to the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Kudos to TOF's Special Project Director, Jeremy Linneman, for organizing such a complex, but highly successful meeting.

Also during the same week, Dr. David Guggenheim and Fernando Bretos of our Cuba Marine Research & Conservation project organized a workshop for Cuba, US and Mexican researchers in Veracruz, Mexico. The "Workshop on Cuba-Mexico-US Collaboration in Marine Science & Conservation" was designed to advance joint activities among the three nations and is related to our overall support for the "Proyecto Costa Noroccidental," a collaborative effort with the University of Havana's Centro de Investigaciones to study the rich marine and coastal ecosystems and wildlife of the Cuban Gulf of Mexico. In a related development, we at TOF are pleased that we just received our professional research license from the U.S. Department of Treasury authorizing us to travel to and work in Cuba to support these important marine conservation efforts.

Following passage by the U.S. House on March 26, the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act, a bill supported by many TOF grantees, is now headed to President Obama for his consideration. Carbon dioxide reacts with seawater to create an over-abundance of hydrogen, which lowers the delicate pH balance favorable to marine life. Ninety-five academic institutions and universities supported the measure because of concern that if oceans become too acidic due to

absorption of excess greenhouse gases, the shells of scallops, clams, crabs, plankton, corals and other marine life begin to dissolve, and the life cycles of ecosystems such as kelp forests are interrupted.

On March 25, the Fundo Brasileiro a Biodiversidade and TOF opened a four-day workshop on designing a system of marine protected areas (MPAs) for Brazil, that took place in Paraty, a World Heritage Site about four hours' drive southwest of Rio de Janeiro. With two of TOF's MPA experts, Dr. Charlotte de Fontaubert and Dr. Cheri Recchia, I led a panel to help educate the eager government and non-profit officials who initiated this exciting new process to protect Brazil's diverse marine resources. Our role was to use examples from Australia, Belize, California, Canada, the Caribbean, Colombia, Fiji, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, and Tanzania to provide context for the system of MPAs contemplated for Brazil. Next steps include committing the details to paper and identifying potential multi-national funding partners to implement the new network of marine protected areas.

As I write, a record number of endangered right whales is enjoying a busy feeding frenzy off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The apparent upswing in successful calving and rearing of the young right whales is a testament to the effectiveness of dedicated, long-term efforts to achieve marine conservation goals.

The months ahead look to be equally busy for ocean conservation efforts. I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,  
Mark J. Spalding, President