



 THE OCEAN
FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Celebrating Our
CommYOUunity

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO FOR THE OCEAN?

As the only community foundation for the ocean, we're dedicated to reversing the destruction of ocean environments around the world.



"The ocean holds a special place in my heart! It is the center of so many amazing memories with friends and family and of trips around the world. The ocean makes me feel connected - to my childhood, to past adventures, to nature, to strangers who have the shared experience of standing on a beach somewhere with the breeze in their hair. I love the smell of the ocean and the sense of nostalgia that immediately hits when I'm back on the sand. Some of my favorite memories include collecting shells with my Nanny on the beach in Florida, whale watching in Hawaii, swimming with sharks in Belize, and scuba diving at the Great Barrier Reef!"

— Lyndsea | Virginia



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



TOF President Mark J. Spalding offering opening remarks at Rockefeller Asset Management in New York City to celebrate TOF's 20th Anniversary.

Dear Friends of The Ocean Foundation,

We are pleased to share this year's Annual Report, where our thematic focus is on community, what it means to be a community foundation, and how you are an integral part of our work.

Why community?

"It's human nature to want to feel like we belong somewhere and are part of something bigger than ourselves."¹

How do we go about finding the right community?

Most of us align with others around our interests—such as a particular sport, a hiking club, or a gym. Places of worship and libraries often offer a sense of community. Many of us volunteer to help make our own communities a healthier, safer place to live, work and play, and in turn, find a deeper sense of connection to our place and its well-being.

What then is the role of a Community Foundation?

A community foundation is a public charity that typically focuses on supporting a defined local geographical area, primarily by facilitating and pooling donations to meet community needs and support local nonprofits that promote that community's economic, social, and environmental well-being. Community foundations are funded by donations from individuals, families, foundations, businesses and governments. Some community foundations focus on supporting a community of practice rather than the community within a defined geographic area.

1

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-community-building-most-important-asset-life-heygrowzilla>

The Ocean Foundation focuses on the health of the ocean and the community of those who care to invest their time and resources to restoring it. It also happens to be the **ONLY** community foundation for the [Ocean](#).

CommYOUity

This year, we ran a campaign asking our staff and all of you for your ocean memories. These shared memories and related inspirational stories have been amazing to receive. They are the stories of a real, if far flung, community linked by a common interest in ocean health, and by a love for the power and beauty of the ocean and the life within its waters.

So, who are we? And, what do we stand for?

The world has only one global ocean that we all share. Together, we are one community with one passion for that ocean. As I have written before, human activities take too much of what is good out of the ocean, and dump too much that is bad into it. Our community is about the change needed to leave more of the good and stop the bad.

The fuse is lit. Human disruption of our planet's climate is the biggest threat to all life on earth. We are already seeing the consequences of excess greenhouse gas emissions on land and in the changing ocean temperature, depth, and chemistry.

However, we will not give up hope. Our community is bigger and stronger than despair. We are capable of change, AND

we can figure out how to accomplish it. On our side we have energy, optimism, the resilience of nature, and, most of all, we have the spirit and brains of the people who make up our community. We can see hope in restoring blue carbon ecosystems, in negotiating a new treaty to stop plastic pollution, and in creating equitable participation in science for sustainable development.

The Ocean Foundation is a leader in change. We are a leader in choosing voluntary restraint. We strive to be global / viral / nimble in our thinking. Our community is smart. We know what to support, what to oppose, and what should be questioned. We know to ask about unintended consequences of well-meaning ideas for climate solutions.

Our community stands for building a just and sustainable blue economy AND a resilient, healthy, and abundant ocean. We can, and will, restore the health and abundance of the ocean—our global life support system and our inspiration.

Let's go out and be the greatness our ocean needs!


Mark J. Spalding

“The Environmental crises we face provide us with the most singular opportunity for greatness ever offered to any generation in any civilization.”

—Roger Payne (1935-2023; whale scientist and founding member of TOF's Board of Advisors)

OUR IMPACT

Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

\$5,642,881

TOWARDS CONSERVING MARINE HABITATS AND SPECIAL PLACES

We work to conserve the places and habitats that are special to the people who rely on them most.

\$2,290,037

TOWARDS PROTECTING SPECIES OF CONCERN

We strive to protect those species of concern and their habitats for future generations.

\$2,564,181

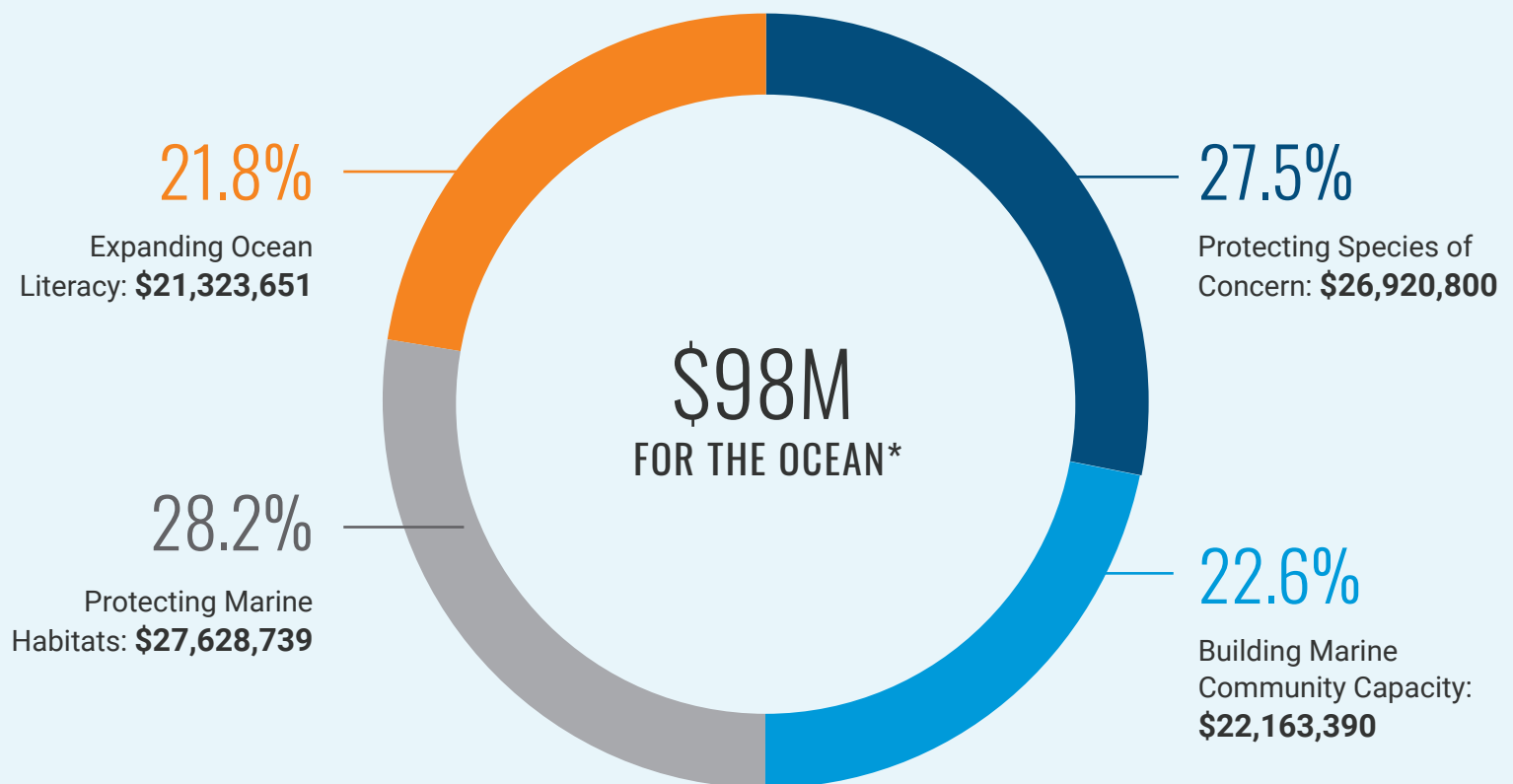
TOWARDS BUILDING CAPACITY OF THE MARINE COMMUNITY

We empower implementers so that marine conservation thrives well into the future.

\$3,403,347

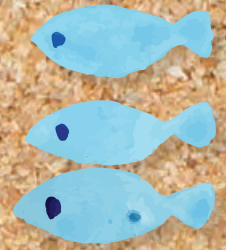
TOWARDS EXPANDING OCEAN LITERACY

We work to educate future ocean leaders, expand ocean knowledge, and increase public awareness — oftentimes the first steps towards preserving a healthy ocean.



*CUMULATIVE OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



"I fell in love with the sea the minute I put my goggles on underwater and observed this incredible, abundant, alien world that we rarely see. I have many great memories but the most thrilling have been encountering species in the wild, in their home: from sea horses in their favorite sand patch to baby spinner dolphins attempting rotations with their pod. It's impossible to express the wonder and the profound importance of protecting this dynamic resource."

– Whitney | Cyprus

Staff and Social Media Audience Memories with the Ocean

Here at The Ocean Foundation, we believe in the power of the ocean and its magical effects on both people and the planet. More importantly, as a community foundation, we believe that our community involves everyone who relies on the ocean. **That's YOU! Because, regardless of where you live, everyone benefits from a healthy ocean and coasts.**

We asked our staff, and social media audience, as part of our community, to tell us their favorite memories of the water, ocean, and coasts — and why they are working to make the ocean better for all life on earth. Here's what they said:

"I grew up in a small coastal town to parents who were both lifelong sailors, so the ocean and sailing are in my blood. For as long as I can remember, the ocean has been where I feel the most at peace and the most at home. I love being on it, in it, under it, or just near it. My other lifelong love is animals - and I eventually became a penguin expert, author, and speaker. I have SO many wonderful memories of the ocean and coasts, but this is a recent favorite; In 2019, I was a guest lecturer on the Nat Geo Explorer, and our ship traveled to Antarctica, the Falklands, and South Georgia. One morning, we arose at 4:30am, so we could be on the beach at South Georgia's Gold Harbour for the sunrise. Sitting there, with the glacier beside us, the ocean in front of us, and hundreds of thousands of magnificent King penguins surrounding us was definitely one of my favorite life moments!"

– Dyan deNapoli | AKA The Penguin Lady





"I grew up on the coast exploring tidepools and surfing cold waves. I always dreamed of warm water. My first time snorkeling, I saw a spotted eagle ray and the world stopped. I floated in silence as this beautiful beast glided towards me, then gracefully turned as if to show off the stunning pattern on its wing. Seeing how ocean flora and fauna move in the water is like nothing else. These experiences remind me of what I'm fighting for and refresh my mind and heart. Now I work at the Reef Life Foundation and couldn't be happier."

– Tara A. Pierce



"Ocean is life. It is a place of communion with God and nature for me. It is a source of awe and inspiration to me."

– Ngozi Margaret Oguguah



"While swimming in the ocean, my mind wanders aimlessly and ponders deeply the fascinating wonders of Planet Earth and our human existence without dryland influences, interruptions, or interferences. When I swim back to walk onshore, waves of worry and the heavy onslaught of daily responsibilities consume me."

– Steven Munatones





CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

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“Thanks to countless family vacations to Florida and visits to aquariums when I was growing up, I fell in love with the ocean at an early age. I have always enjoyed any activity that gets me in, on, over, or near saltwater to be mesmerized by the incredible variety of life in it. Then when I saw the movie “Jaws” in grade school, I knew I wanted to work with sharks. I’m grateful that my career has allowed me to follow my passion to promote the sustainable use and conservation of marine resources through research, outreach, and education and be on the water researching elasmobranchs, including the endangered smalltooth sawfish!”

– Tonya Wiley



BLUE RESILIENCE INITIATIVE



Jobos Bay Puerto Rico Mata Redonda
living shoreline project. PHOTO: Ben
Scheelk, The Ocean Foundation

Serving ocean communities since 2018, our Blue Resilience Initiative is dedicated to advancing Nature-based Solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, through the lens of the ocean-climate nexus. Our work includes coastal habitat restoration and conservation, as well as regenerative agriculture and agroforestry. We work closely with local organizations, equipping key stakeholders with the tools, technical expertise, and policy frameworks to achieve large-scale climate risk reduction.



Connecting Coral Scientists in the Field in Cuba

In year two of our three-year Caribbean Biodiversity Fund project to build coastal resilience in the Caribbean, we explored how scientists from the Dominican Republic and Cuba can [collaborate](#) on novel coral seeding (larval propagation) methods, in collaboration with FUNDEMAR, SECORE International, and the University of Havana's Marine Research Center.

In August, over 20 Cuban scientists ventured to Jardines de la Reina National Park, the largest marine protected area in the Caribbean. Their three-week cruise marked Cuba's debut of the new larval propagation technique, which promotes greater genetic diversity than typical clonal propagation. While only around 40 coral polyps were settled onto substrates, the teams were able to collect spawn, fuse, and settle coral in Cuba **for the first time ever**.

Also that month, a dozen scientists traveled to Guanahacabibes National Park (GNP), a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve located on Cuba's western tip. At GNP, over 400 substrates of not only elkhorn coral, but also staghorn coral, were settled.



(Top to bottom)
Workshop participants at the Center for Marine Research, University of Havana; Dr. Pedro Chevalier-Monteagudo at the Acuario Nacional with the coral substrates; Cuban scientist on an expedition at the Guanahacabibes National Park.



Earlier this summer, we co-hosted a larval propagation technique workshop with the Centro de Investigaciones Marinas (Center for Marine Research) of the University of Havana (UH) where we were joined by our technical partner, renowned global coral restoration expert Dr. Margaret Miller, Research Director at SECORE. **Over 15 young scientists participated and over 75% of them were women: a testament to Cuba's marine science community.** These young scientists represent the future of Cuba's corals as they now have the technical capacity to introduce genetically diverse corals to Cuba's reefs in perpetuity.

We supported a separate, small-scale expedition in September off the coast of Havana, to document the spawning of *Orbicella faveolata* coral. The goal of the trip was for Cuba to complete its spawning calendar – a table of when different species are spawning – for future coral larval propagation efforts. Despite spending several nights underwater, the team of scientists was unable to detect spawning. Although this work is very challenging, we're confident we'll be able to succeed on a future expedition.

Our coral work has created both a coral spawning calendar for Cuba, to inform long term coral restoration planning, and has trained over 50 scientists and community members in coral restoration efforts.



Over 15 young scientists participated in a larval propagation technique workshop – over 75% of participants were women: a testament to Cuba's marine science community.



Addressing the Sargassum Issue

Improving Efficiencies with Removal

We have been hard at work with our partners and communities in St. Kitts and Nevis and the Dominican Republic to repurpose the harmful sargassum blooms that wash up on their shores as cost-effective, organic compost for their farms. These blooms devastate marine habitats and harm the tourism industry that both countries rely on. Removing and repurposing this resource will help local farmers and the community and relieve pressure on coastal ecosystems while enhancing food security. This year, our local team in St. Kitts conducted pilot trials in this project where we collected sargassum from the shores of the Marriott Resort and Royal Beach Casino and repurposed it as compost. Through these trials, we were able to successfully determine the capacity and optimal arrangement of these projects: two teams of five operators can transport a minimum of 250yd³ of sargassum per day. Following the trials, our local partners fulfilled a commercial contract for sargassum removal and composting with the resort.

We also continue to pursue our harvest in a more efficient and sustainable way. In partnership with Club Med, a fleet of 12 custom-fabricated carts were introduced, which have been assembled and are now fully operational. By carefully using the appropriate rakes and other tools, we can reduce the volume of sand extracted during the harvesting operation, and ultimately minimize adverse impacts on coastal ecosystems. By minimizing the negative effects on the coastal ecosystem, we strive to create a harmonious coexistence between beach preservation and efficient harvesting practices.

In July, our sargassum insetting work in the Caribbean was awarded Top Innovator in the Coastal Tourism Challenge by Friends of Ocean Action and UpLink. Our partner on this project, Grogenics, received the award for our low-cost, large-scale approach to sargassum mitigation. Through the project, local communities can create new forms of livelihoods, reduce social vulnerability, and enhance climate resilience throughout the Caribbean.



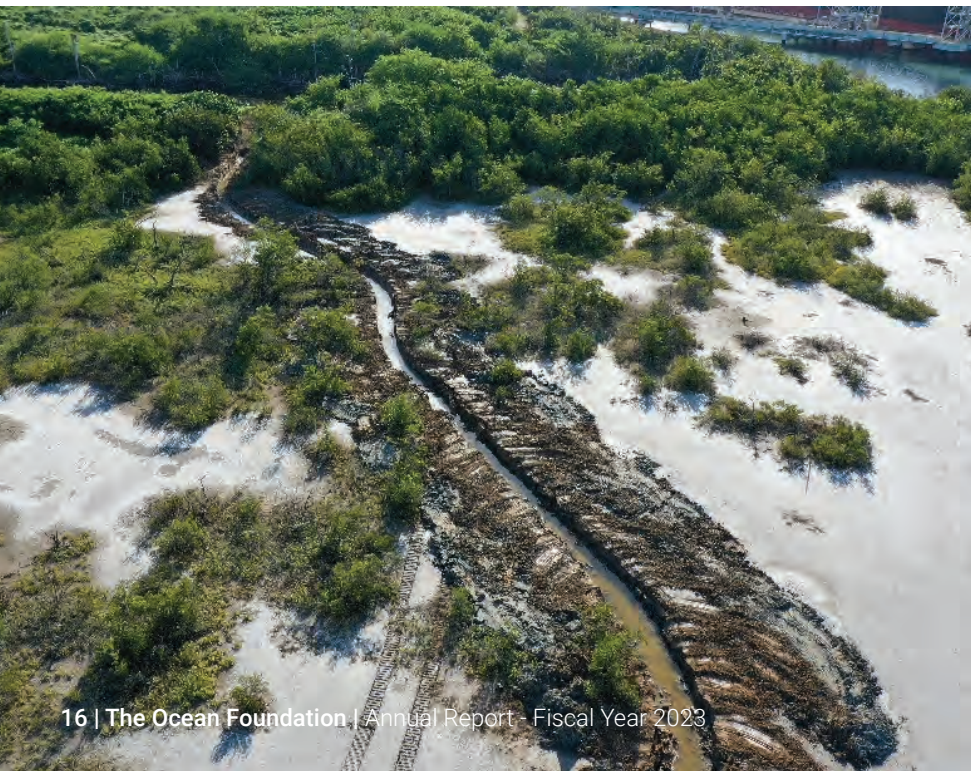
Continuing our Momentum with Mangroves

Breaking Ground on the Largest Mangrove Project in the United States: Aguirre State Forest and the Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (JBNERR), Puerto Rico

In the Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and adjacent Aguirre State Forest, we have worked with our partners to design and permit the **largest mangrove restoration project in the United States (695-acres)**. To kick-off the year, we worked with our partners at JBNERR, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural & Environmental Resources, Merello Marine Consulting, and members of the community to install our permit signs, receive delivery of an excavator, and break-ground on the project to begin restoring hydrology.

Building the Foundation toward Certified Carbon Credits

In January, our partners Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados (CINVESTAV), Programa Mexicano del Carbono (PMC), and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, in collaboration with the Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP), concluded a blue carbon assessment to measure mangrove carbon stocks at our restoration site in Xcalak, Mexico. **This assessment is a key part of the process of validating the large-scale mangrove restoration project to potentially generate certified carbon credits in the future.** By taking critical steps like this assessment, we are pursuing a thoughtful, well-planned and sequential approach toward ultimate carbon credit certification for our projects.



Large scale mangrove restoration in Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico:

(far left) Aerial view of improved hydrology at the site; (top left) Community information booth for the project; (top right) Opening access and restoring hydrological flow at the site; (left) Preparing the shoreline. PHOTOS: Ben Scheelk, The Ocean Foundation

Sharing Lessons Learned with Cuban Communities

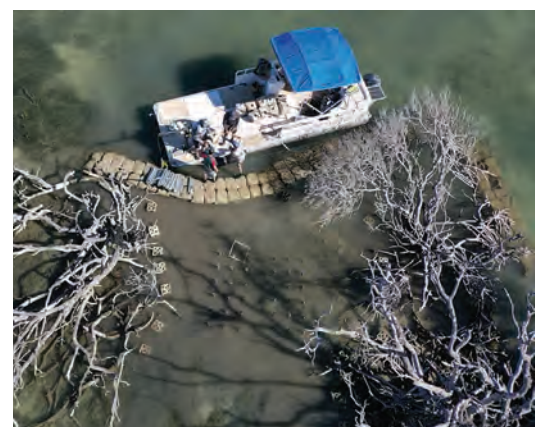
In June, we convened a training workshop on the importance and functions of mangrove ecosystems with community members in La Fe, Cuba, including teachers, children, park and communication specialists and local community members. 600 red mangrove seedlings (about one hectare) were planted in an area affected by hurricanes. In addition, through a clean up, about 2 cubic meters of solid waste was collected and removed to a location that offers waste management infrastructure, which this community lacks locally.

Community members at mangrove training workshop in La Fe, Cuba, removing debris and learning how to plant mangrove seedlings.



Constructing a Living Shoreline in Mata Redonda, Puerto Rico

A living shoreline is a protected, stabilized coastal edge made of natural materials such as plants, sand, or rock. Unlike a concrete seawall or other hard structure, which impedes the growth of plants and animals, living shorelines grow over time. In Mata Redonda, Puerto Rico, 1,000 EnviroLok bags and 500 cotton sediment tubes were installed to reduce erosion and provide a safe space for mangrove restoration to be successful on the small cay. After the living shoreline was completed, 1,080 red mangrove trees were planted on the 0.5 acre cay to restore this critical habitat used by migratory birds as well as a variety of marine species including commercially valuable fisheries and manatees. In addition, we installed 4 shallow water and 2 speed limit (5 knots) buoys to deter boaters from entering the restoration area and to minimize further erosion as well as 4 caution and 2 manatee signs as protective measures. The DNER, JBNERR, local laborers, and the University of Puerto Rico all contributed to the living shoreline construction and mangrove nursery. We were also proud to host a team of 21 volunteers from Marriott International's Caribbean and Latin America Development Team to plant mangroves and other native trees, pick up trash, and install Envirolok sediment bags as part of this effort.



Living Shoreline Project, Mata Redonda, Puerto Rico (Left) Aerial view of living shoreline project; (above, L to R) participants filling sediment tubes and using them to construct the shoreline; (Top to bottom) Deploying Shallow Water caution buoys and other materials. PHOTOS: Ben Scheelk, The Ocean Foundation

Peer-to-Peer Hands On Hydrological Restoration

TOF convened over 30 community members of Xcalak, Mexico with CINVESTAV to discuss the results of a mangrove habitat assessment and restoration plan and to train the community in on-site restoration techniques. Participants practiced hand dredging of canals and the creation of *tarquinas*, or elevated mangrove planters, that will eventually provide a natural seed source for areas that will undergo hydrological restoration. This peer-to-peer training was conducted by visiting community leaders from Chelem and Dzilam de Bravo, predominantly Mayan communities on Yucatan's north coast who have nearly a decade of experience with similar restoration projects. The workshop emphasized the significance of this **community-led and community-built project for Mexico**, which will likely remove the carbon equivalent of 4,000 people per year (much larger than the footprint of their own 400 resident community).



(Left) Community members improving hydrology in Xcalak, Mexico; (above, top to bottom) Community members constructing a *tarquina*, or elevated mangrove planter; Community members and park managers discuss mangrove habitat assessment and restoration plan; TOF Program Manager Katie Thompson, TOF Program Officer Fernando Bretos, and TOF Program Officer Ben Scheelk in the field.





Community members in Xcalak, Mexico learning about mangrove hydrological restoration techniques; Park signage.



The community-led and community-built project in Xcalak, Mexico, will likely remove the carbon equivalent of 4,000 people per year, much larger than the footprint of their own 400 resident community.



"In 1962
my family
moved to
American
Samoa
(2,500
mi. south
of Hawaii in
the Pacific Ocean). ...

Surrounded by the ocean and reef,
the adventures as a 10 year old were
memorable. ... The reef was such
a source of wonder. No tourists.
Primitive as could be. This was 60
years ago and the memories remain.
The Polynesian people taught me
so much! 2 ships docked at the
wharf monthly. One was a New
Zealand banana boat and one was a
passenger ship. No TV. No radio. We
didn't learn of President Kennedy's
assassination for 3 months."

– Deb T.



"The sea is literally and
spiritually home. A place
I can breath and feel
free. The energy and
sound soothes my soul
and cast away life's heavy
toll. I am grateful for everything
it provides and hope we can bless it
in ways too so it will thrive."

– Kelli



"I have been
obsessed with
the ocean ever
since I was a kid.
Everything about
it fascinated
me and had this
mysterious pull to
the ocean. I knew

I had to pursue a career in
marine science and have been truly
amazed with everything I have learned.
The best part about being in this field
is that we are constantly learning
something new about the ocean
everyday – always on our toes!"

– Lily Rios-Brady

A photograph of five children of diverse backgrounds running on a sandy beach, holding hands and splashing in the shallow ocean waves. The scene is captured from behind, with the children running away from the camera towards the horizon. The water is a vibrant blue, and the sky is a soft, hazy white, suggesting a bright, sunny day.

COMMUNITY OCEAN ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL INITIATIVE



Community members in
Xcalak, Mexico

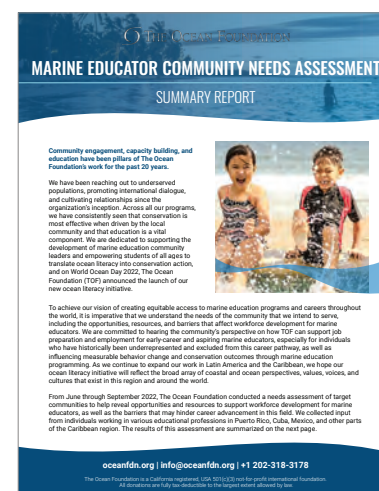
One Year Anniversary

On June 8, 2022, we celebrated World Ocean Day by introducing our [Community Ocean Engagement Global Initiative](#) (COEGI). Since then, we have been dedicated to supporting the development of marine education community leaders and empowering students of all ages to translate ocean literacy into conservation action.

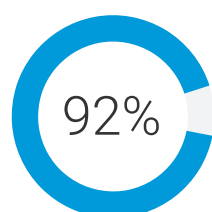
In its first year, COEGI made strides toward our vision of creating equitable access to marine education programs and careers around the world. We published a youth ocean action toolkit, gathered input from educators throughout the Caribbean, and began developing a mentoring program guide for the ocean community. We continued our listening, learning, and research-oriented approach to understand how TOF can support the needs of marine educators, expand the field of ocean literacy, and help influence behavior change outcomes across the globe.

Assessing Marine Educator Needs

To inform the development of our work in ocean literacy, from June through September, The Ocean Foundation conducted a Marine Educator Community Needs Assessment to help reveal opportunities and resources to support workforce development for marine educators, as well as the barriers that may hinder career advancement in this field. We collected input from individuals working in various educational professions in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, and other parts of the Caribbean region. Highlights include:

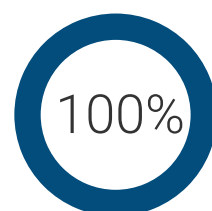


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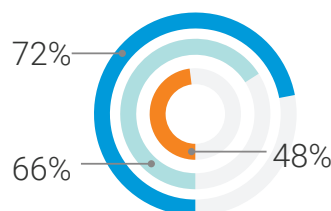
The majority of educators agree about the importance of mentorship.

On average, 92% of participants agreed that having a mentor is important for career advancement, professional growth, networking, skills development, building a sense of community, and fostering long-term collaboration between peers.



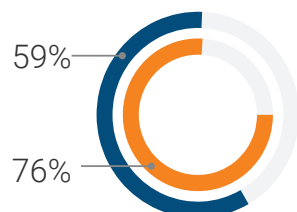
Educators unanimously agree that conference involvement contributes to skill development.

100% of participants agreed that presenting at a public exhibition, conference, or event helps to develop public speaking, networking, and/or leadership skills.



Educators cite minimal job opportunities as the primary barrier to entry for this career path.

In addition to minimal job opportunities (72%), educators also cited financial hardship (66%) and lack of access to networking opportunities (48%) as some of the most prevalent barriers. Participants identified free learning resources, access to mentors, and marine educator training or certification as important tools to facilitate career development.



There is a high level of interest among educators in further discussing these topics and continuing their own education.

59% of participants agreed to further engage through a follow-up interview with our staff. Additionally, 76% of participants agreed that professional certification programs are important for career advancement.

This initial assessment sheds light on how stakeholders can come together to leverage existing opportunities and break down barriers to support workforce development in this field. Data from this project is helping to inform our future work in ocean literacy.



"I was lucky enough to grow up by the ocean in Florida and can't remember a time when the beach wasn't home to me. I learned to swim before I could

walk and many of my best childhood memories are of my dad teaching me to body surf or spending the days out on the water with my family. As a child I'd spend all day in the water and today the beach is still one of my favorite places in the world."

– Alexandra Refosco



"My relatives have spent seven generations on the delta of the Sissiboo River in North Weymouth, Nova Scotia. Three generations ago, they built thirteen wooden merchant ships for use in World War I from a wharf at that location. It's not easy when the Bay of Fundy tides are rising 30+ feet every 11+ hour cycle, day and night with disregard to clock. My favorite memories are dispersed around that delta and many other shores on the Bay of Fundy (or crossing the bay by boat). Watching the ocean rise and fall perceptibly when at peak flow in either direction, using boats tied up at a pier as helpful visual cues."

– Bruce Campbell



"I grew up 30 minutes from the ocean in Massachusetts and because of this we spent majority of our time there. The ocean reminds me of my family, the calm waters and summertime breeze, mixed with laughter and joy. The beaches are my comfort zone and whenever I'm at one I feel peace."

– Nikki

Keeping Up To Date on the Latest Research

We launched and maintained a new [*Ocean Literacy & Behavior Change Research webpage*](#) to provide a synopsis of current data and recent trends regarding ocean literacy and behavior change, as well as to identify gaps that The Ocean Foundation can potentially fill with our work in ocean literacy. Informational topics include ocean literacy as a discipline, environmental behavior change, education, and the broad topic of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This page allows people across the globe to gain basic knowledge of our effects on the ocean and its effects on us and for marine educators to quickly find key resources that may be of use to them professionally.



“My first memories of the ocean always remind me of time spent with family and good friends. It holds a special place in my heart full of cherished memories of burying friends in the sand, boogie boarding with my siblings, my dad swimming after me when I fell asleep on a floatie, and wondering out loud about what might be swimming around us when we swam out far enough that we could no longer touch the ground. Time has passed, life has changed, and now the beach is where my husband, baby girl, dog, and I walk to spend quality time with each other. I dream about taking my little girl to the tidepools when she gets a little older to show her all of the creatures to discover there. We’re now passing on the creation of memories at the ocean and hope she will cherish it like we do.”

– Alyssa Hildt

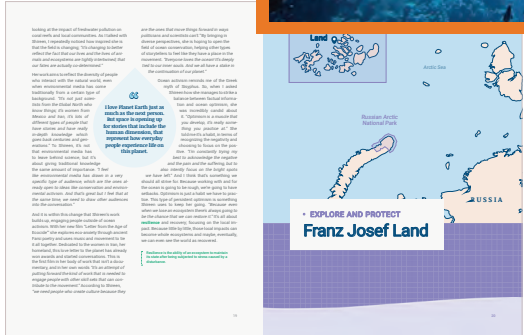
Collaboration on a Mentoring Program Guide

We are collaborating across initiatives at TOF by working with the Ocean Science Equity Initiative, as well as the NOAA Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Program and Pier2Peer, to create a “Guide to Developing Mentoring Programs for the International Ocean Community”. By speaking with experts and reviewing evidence from various established mentorship program models, experiences, and materials, we are compiling a list of **recommendations for developing mentorship programs that are (1) aligned with the needs of the global ocean community, (2) relevant and practicable for international audiences, and (3) supportive of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Access values**. The Guide will contain tools, conceptual information, and key recommendations for various types of ocean-related mentorship projects, and will be used to inform the development of TOF’s future mentorship program for early-career and aspiring marine educators. The Guide will also be published online for others to reference freely.

Convening Youth on a Bilingual Ocean Action Toolkit

The Ocean Foundation assembled a group of eight young creators between the ages of 18-26 to provide curriculum writing, design, and Spanish translation services for the production of a “youth ocean action toolkit” focused on the seven Ocean Literacy Principles and Marine Protected Areas, supported by \$75,000 in funding from National Geographic Society. The toolkit was written **by youth and for youth**, focusing on ocean health and conservation with other key elements including community action, ocean exploration, and social media integration. The toolkit shows the benefits of different types of Marine Protected Areas around the world and demonstrates how youth can take action to conserve their ocean. We also organized a group of experts from leading Marine Protected Area agencies and ocean conservation organizations to provide additional feedback on the toolkit.

This project took place over a nine-month period. A diverse group of youth were selected from China, India, England, Nigeria, Mexico, Egypt, Argentina, and the U.S.



[CLICK FOR FULL TOOLKIT](#)



Youth Action Toolkit creators

(Left to right) Ajay Sawant, Julia Lara Navarrete, Oluwaseyi Moejoh, Rebecca Allen, Serag Heiba, and Summer Snell

Amplifying Our Message

On November 15, 2022, our ocean literacy Program Officer presented during “The Future of Workforce Development for the Sustainable Blue Economy” panel at BlueTech Week in San Diego, California. The presentation focused on community engagement as an essential path to workforce development, K-12 case studies of BlueTech awareness through youth education, and reflections on the power of mentorship from the TOF Marine Educator Community Needs Assessment. We also hosted an exhibitor table to create more awareness for STEM innovation and promote stewardship of ocean and freshwater resources. In March, with Open Communications for the Ocean (OCTO), we featured Youth Ocean Action Toolkit authors and discussed techniques to engage and empower young people around the world (view the recording [here](#)). In October, TOF had the privilege of sponsoring the Lifetime Achievement Award during the North American Association for Environmental Education Conference, given to Julie Packard, Executive Director of Monterey Bay Aquarium. TOF was also able to attend and hold a virtual exhibit booth at the conference to introduce this new body of work.



(Left) TOF Program Officer Frances Lang presenting during "The Future of Workforce Development for the Sustainable Blue Economy" panel at BlueTech Week in San Diego, California; (right) TOF Program Officer Frances Lang and Youth Action Toolkit creators discussing techniques to engage and empower young people around the world on an Open Communications for the Ocean webinar.

OCEAN SCIENCE EQUITY INITIATIVE



"The ocean is a place of peace for me. That instance when your head is under water and all the noise and chaos from above just disappears. It's a new world of color, life and curiosity. That is why I love the ocean."

Azaria Cabrini Pickering |
The Pacific Community

As our blue planet changes faster than ever before, a community's ability to monitor and understand the ocean is inextricably linked to their well being. But currently, the physical, human, and financial infrastructure to conduct this science is inequitably distributed across the world. **Our Ocean Science Equity Initiative works to ensure [all countries and communities](#) can monitor and respond to these changing ocean conditions – not just those with the most resources.** By funding local experts, establishing regional centers of excellence, co-designing and deploying low-cost equipment, supporting training, and advancing discussions on

equity at international scales, Ocean Science Equity aims to address the systemic and root causes of inequitable access to ocean science capacity.

This Initiative builds off the several years of work that The Ocean Foundation has done through our International Ocean Acidification Initiative. Leveraging that success, this year, we have expanded our portfolio to go beyond ocean acidification to now explore other changing conditions through the monitoring of pCO_2 , total alkalinity, temperature, salinity, oxygen, as well as continuing our critical work on pH.

In this year's Annual Report, we are pleased to share with you the philosophy behind this new Initiative, information on how we do our work, and to provide a few highlights of our recent accomplishments.

Our Philosophy

Ocean Science Equity is required for climate resilience and prosperity.

The Inequitable Status Quo is Unacceptable.

Right now, the majority of coastal communities lack the ability to monitor and understand their own waters. And, where local and Indigenous knowledge exists, it's often devalued and disregarded. **Without local data from many of the places we expect to be most vulnerable to a changing ocean, the stories being told don't reflect reality. And policy decisions don't prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable.** International reports that guide policy decisions through things like the Paris Agreement or the High Seas Treaty often don't include data from low income regions, which obscures the fact that these regions are often most at risk.

Science Sovereignty – Where Local Leaders Have the Tools and are Valued As Experts – Is Key.

Researchers in well-resourced countries may take for granted stable electricity to power their instruments, large research vessels to set out on field studies, and well-stocked equipment stores available to pursue new ideas, but scientists in other regions often have to find workarounds to conduct their projects without access to such resources. **Scientists working in these regions are incredible: They have the expertise to advance our world's understanding of the ocean.** We believe helping them get the tools they need is critical to ensuring a livable planet and a healthy ocean for everyone.

Without local data from many of the places we expect to be most vulnerable to a changing ocean, the stories being told don't reflect reality. And policy decisions don't prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable.

Our Approach

We focus on lessening technical, administrative, and financial burdens for local partners. The goal is to ensure locally led and sustained ocean science activities that contribute to pressing ocean issues. We adhere to the following principles to provide a variety of models of support:

Step back: Let local voices lead.

Money is power: Transfer money to transfer capacity.

Meet needs: Fill technical and administrative gaps.

Be the bridge: Elevate unheard voices and connect partners.



"The Ocean's simply, been my longest companion and best friend. Since a kid I've painted about Her! From Yallingup downunder to Hanalei, Hawaii: Keep The Ocean Alive."

– Derek Glaskin

Our Work

Why We Help People Monitor

Ocean science helps sustain resilient economies and communities, particularly in the face of ocean and climate change. We're seeking to support more successful ocean conservation efforts worldwide – by combating the unequal distribution of ocean science capacity.

What We Help People Monitor

PH | PCO₂ | TOTAL ALKALINITY | TEMPERATURE | SALINITY | OXYGEN

How We Help People Monitor

We strive for every country to have a robust monitoring and mitigation strategy.

Ocean Science Equity focuses on bridging what we call the technical chasm – the gap between what wealthy labs use for ocean science and what is practical and usable on the ground in regions without significant resources.

We bridge this chasm by providing direct technical training, both in person and online, procuring and shipping essential monitoring equipment that can be impossible to obtain locally, and creating new tools and technologies to meet local needs. For example, we connect local communities and experts to design affordable, open-source technology and facilitate the delivery of equipment, gear, and spare parts needed to keep equipment functioning.

Technical Training

LABORATORY AND FIELD TRAININGS:

We coordinate and lead multi-week hands-on trainings for scientists. These trainings, which include lectures, lab-based and field-based work, are **designed to launch participants into leading their own research** and are one component of the overall support we provide on this pathway.



GOA-ON in a Box trainings at the Pacific Island Ocean Acidification Centre (PIOAC) in Suva, Fiji

(Above) Trainer Gabby Kitch of NOAA Ocean Acidification Program instructs researchers Tima Allanson and Merianne Tabius of the University of the South Pacific Emalus in total alkalinity titrations. PHOTO: Kalina Grabb, NOAA Ocean Acidification Program; (right) Training participant Dr. Lindon Havimana measuring out a seawater sample prior to performing a total alkalinity titration. PHOTO: Maisy Lus, Fish Reef Project Papua New Guinea; (far right) Training participant Maleli Turagabeci of The Pacific Community producing a pH-sensitive dye reagent. PHOTO: Adrien Lauranceau-Moineau, The Pacific Community.



GOA-ON in a Box Kit Training at the Pacific Island Ocean Acidification Centre (PIOAC) in Suva, Fiji



This past January/February, The Ocean Foundation led the preparation and execution of a five-day, hands-on training for GOA-ON in a Box kit users in Suva, Fiji. The aim of this training was to build capacity for scientists and resource managers from the Pacific Islands to monitor ocean acidification by providing **practical training** to strengthen the expertise of new and existing users of GOA-ON in a Box kits that we distributed across the Pacific Islands.

We hosted twenty-one attendees from 10 countries at the training event. This group, while all focused on conducting ocean acidification (OA) research, held a diverse range of positions within their respective organizations, including technicians, master's students, professors, and governmental officers. Attendees became familiar with lab activities including spectrophotometric pH measurements, dye production, and total alkalinity measurements. We then turned to data quality analysis/control/QC and calculating the whole carbonate chemistry system from sample values. Prior to venturing into the field, we covered CTD sensor use (a package of instruments that measure conductivity, temperature and depth), iSAMI pH sensor use, and research planning, then practiced sensor deployment and bottle sampling in a shallow reef environment. Anonymous surveys showed that confidence in the Ocean Acidification research skills covered during the training rose from an average of 2.6 to 4.5 out of 5, a 75% increase, and every single respondent rated the trainers' teaching as a 5 of 5. Overall, attendees agreed that the course exceeded their expectations (4.9; 3 was "met expectations").



(Top to bottom) Water sample bottles collected from Suva Notch field site and measured with the GOA-ON in a Box kit. PHOTO: Kaitlyn Lowder, The Ocean Foundation; Trainer Kalina Grabb instructs Poate Degei of The Pacific Community how to adjust the pH of a reagent to mimic sample pH. PHOTO: Kalina Grabb, NOAA Ocean Acidification Program; PIOAC manager Dr. Katy Soapi discusses research plans with Maisy Lus, director of Fish Reef Project Papua New Guinea. PHOTO: Kalina Grabb, NOAA Ocean Acidification Program; Training participants, TOF Program Manager Dr. Kaitlyn Lowder and TOF Program Associate Lily Rios-Brady and GOA-ON in a Box equipment and materials in the lab. PHOTO: Lily Rios-Brady, The Ocean Foundation,





(Above L to R) Training participant McQuinnley Mesengei prepares to deploy a pH sensor at Suva Notch, Fiji, where it will collect data autonomously until it is recovered the following month. PHOTO: Poate Degei, The Pacific Community; Iakopo Saumalu from the Samoa Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment taking water samples in the field. PHOTO: Kaitlyn Lowder, The Ocean Foundation; Training participant Maisy Lus preparing to titrate her seawater sample to measure total alkalinity. PHOTO: Lily Rios-Brady, The Ocean Foundation. (Right) Training participants, trainers from NOAA OAP and PIOAC, TOF Program Manager Dr. Kaitlyn Lowder and TOF Program Associate Lily Rios-Brady gather after completing sessions; (far right) Training participants, Maria Elder-Ratutokarua from the U.S. Embassy in Fiji, and TOF Program Associate Lily Rios-Brady gather after completing the week-long training. GOA-ON in a Box training. PHOTOS: Lily Rios-Brady, The Ocean Foundation.



Talanoa Listening Session and On-going Mentorship Platform

One of our best strengths is to Step Back and let local voices lead. In February, we held a Talanoa listening session to hear how we could improve program offerings for partners. One comment raised in the Talanoa was a desire for more ongoing mentorship after in-person trainings. In response to this need, TOF organized and facilitated the launch of a new Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Centre community through monthly Zoom meetings, a WhatsApp group, and a listserv, reaching over 80 members collectively. These platforms encourage information exchange on research planning, project progress, announcements, supplemental equipment training, and implementation of research protocols in the field. As the community continues to grow, these platforms will provide the foundation for long-term resilience for OA in the Pacific as participants continue to share data, research techniques, and provide support to one another.

MULTILINGUAL ONLINE TRAINING GUIDES:

We create written guides and videos in multiple languages to ensure that our training materials reach those who can't attend an in-person meeting. These guides include our video series on how to use the GOA-ON in a Box kit.

ONLINE COURSES:

Partnering with the OceanTeacher Global Academy, we have been able to lead a multi-week online course to expand access to ocean science learning opportunities. This online course includes recorded lectures, reading materials, live seminars, study sessions, and quizzes.

ON CALL TROUBLESHOOTING:

We are on call for our partners to help them with specific needs. If a piece of equipment breaks or data processing hits a bump, we schedule remote conference calls to go step by step through challenges and identify solutions.



PIOAC manager Dr. Katy Soapi and deployed pH and CTD sensors underwater at the Suva Notch monitoring site in Suva, Fiji. PHOTO: Adrien Lauranceau-Moineau, The Pacific Community



"I was born into a sailing family and have been on, in or under the ocean my entire life. Sailing taught me about winds and currents, but SCUBA gave me a closer appreciation of the creatures under the sea. As an adult I learned of the plight of over fishing and shark finning which helped me decide to get involved in ocean conservation. Keeping our oceans healthy with less pollution and plastics, regulating fisheries and protecting valuable reefs is important to me."

– Kate



"Here's a photo of me and my dad in 1990 on Pender Island. I always say that the ocean feels like home to me. Whenever I'm sitting beside it I feel an intense sense of calm and 'rightness,' no matter where in the world I am. Maybe it's because I grew up with it as a big part of my life, or maybe it's just the power the ocean has for everyone."

– Alexis Valauri-Orton



"My first memories of the ocean were hunting for little coquina clam shells and dragging washed-up kelp along the California coast on family vacations. Even today, I find it magical that the ocean spits up little bits of itself along the shore—it gives such insight into what's living in the nearshore waters and what the bottom looks like, depending on the abundance of algae, clam halves, bits of coral, crustacean molts, or snail shells that are deposited along the shoreline."

– Kaitlyn Lowder

Equipment Design and Delivery

CO-DESIGN OF NEW LOW-COST SENSORS AND SYSTEMS:

Listening to locally defined needs, we work with technology developers and academic researchers to create new and lower cost systems for ocean science. For example, we developed the GOA-ON in a Box kit, which reduced the cost of monitoring ocean acidification by 90% and has served as a model for effective low cost ocean science. We have also led the development of new sensors, such as the pCO₂ to Go, to meet specific community needs.

The Ocean Foundation and Dr. Burke Hales of Dakunalytics have now evaluated the sensor's precision and accuracy by putting it to the test in another hatchery environment, this time in warmer conditions than the ongoing testing at the Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute in Seward, Alaska. This year, we supported the processing of bottle samples from aquaculture facilities on the Big Island that

were collected concurrently with pCO₂ to Go readings. Those tests further demonstrated the utility of the pCO₂ to Go in hatchery environments, where it can be used to rapidly analyze incoming seawater and then make adjustments to reduce mortality of young shellfish.

COACHING ON CHOOSING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT TO MEET A RESEARCH GOAL:

Every research question requires different scientific equipment. We work with partners to help them determine what equipment is most effective given their specific research questions as well as their existing infrastructure, capacity, and budget.

PROCUREMENT, SHIPPING, AND CUSTOMS CLEARANCE:

Many specialized pieces of ocean science equipment are not available for purchase locally by our partners. We step in to coordinate complex procurement, often sourcing more than 100 individual items from more than 25 vendors. We handle the packaging, shipping, and customs clearance of that equipment to ensure it gets to its end user. Our success has led us to be frequently hired by other entities to help them get their equipment where it needs to be. Throughout this year, The Ocean Foundation has compiled \$178k worth of equipment for GOA-ON in a Box kits for research institutions in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, bringing the total number of kits distributed worldwide to 22.



GOA-ON in a Box kits preparing for international shipment from TOF Headquarters in Washington, DC. PHOTO: Lily Rios-Brady, The Ocean Foundation

Direct Financial Support

TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS:

We directly fund scientists and partners to attend key international and regional conferences where, without support, their voices would be missing. This year, we sponsored two students to attend the Association of Marine Labs in the Caribbean meeting in May, 2023, where they presented on an ocean acidification vulnerability assessment for Puerto Rico. In addition, TOF enabled seven Ocean Acidification practitioners from the Pacific Islands to attend the Fifth International Symposium on the Ocean in a High CO2 World, in Lima, Peru (Sept 2022). Without our support, these students and practitioners would not have had the opportunity to present their data, learn about the latest on global research and network with other scientists and practitioners.

MENTOR SCHOLARSHIPS:

We support direct mentorship programs and provide financing to enable specific training activities. Along with NOAA, we have served as the funder and administrator of the Pier2Peer Scholarship through GOA-ON and are launching a new Women in Ocean Science Fellowship program focused in the Pacific Islands with our Ocean Literacy work. This past year, we awarded 5 scholarships via Pier2Peer to increase capacity development and ocean acidification research in various countries.

RESEARCH GRANTS:

In addition to providing scientific equipment, we provide research grants to support staff time spent on conducting ocean monitoring and research. This year, we provided a grant to the University of Ghana to support a Master's student in advancing a regional ocean acidification coordination project and simultaneously developing skills and demonstrated experience in project management while fostering connections with ocean acidification researchers around the Gulf of Guinea and further abroad.

"I grew up visiting family on the gulf coast or vacationing in Topsail Island, NC. I loved everything that came with visiting the ocean - from finding the best shells, riding the waves into shore, watching our dogs live their best lives, and playing catch with my dad."

– Clare H



Puerto Rico Vulnerability Assessment

Through support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), The Ocean Foundation and partners Melissa Melendez at the University of Hawai'i and paid interns continued work to:

1. **Develop a preliminary scientific synthesis that identifies current chemical, ecosystem, and species trends in Puerto Rico and related these trends to social and economic priorities.** This included a table of important marine species and identification at which point chemical and physical events coincide with various life stages.
2. **Draft a report that summarizes community interviews and identifies key areas of social and economic vulnerability as well as potential adaptation strategies.** Interns and PR Sea Grant partner Jannette Ramos García conducted over 45 stakeholder interviews, which were analyzed to generate an overall understanding of the trend in responses. This effort explored categorical data, such as regional, education, and stakeholder group, in relation to scored responses to questions about knowledge of the ocean and Puerto Rico's preparedness to address these impacts.
3. **Create a user-friendly report card is produced that summarizes key findings of the full report; and**
4. **Convene a community consensus workshop in Puerto Rico with fishers, resource managers, and scientists to prioritize actions to reduce vulnerability to ocean acidification.** In March 2023, at the Marina De Salinas in Jobos Bay NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve, we held a workshop to present preliminary findings regarding ocean acidification's trends and social effects. Nineteen participants (half who are directly dependent on marine resources (e.g. fishermen), with the other half representing government agencies, NGOs, and the media) met across the two days to use interactive activities like marking key events (e.g. spawning, harvest, high tourism activity) on a calendar for different species of importance, and to identify key areas for continued research and locations for future monitoring stations.

Data from this project has also been submitted to the Puerto Rico Climate Change Council (PRCCC) report. Working Group 1: Geophysical and Chemical Scientific Knowledge 2020-2022.



(L to R) Participants identifying areas of importance at the community consensus workshop in Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico, to discuss ocean acidification's impacts on marine resources and social effects; Participants discussing ocean acidification's trends and social effects; Participants marking key calendar events including spawning, harvest and high tourism activity. PHOTOS: Alexis Valauri-Orton, The Ocean Foundation

REGIONAL COORDINATION GRANTS

We have helped establish regional training centers by funding local staff at national and regional institutions. We focus funding on early career researchers who can play a large role in coordinating regional activities while also advancing their own careers. Examples include our work establishing the Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Centre in Suva, Fiji and supporting ocean acidification coordination in West Africa.

Advancing the Global Dialogue on Ocean Science Capacity

This year, we established a hybrid celebration of our 5th annual Annual Ocean Acidification Day of Action, returning to an in-person event while maintaining the online aspects that enables it to be recognized internationally as our partners all over the world. TOF prepared a social media toolkit to help the international ocean acidification community spread the word about the importance of addressing OA and its effects on our blue planet. We also hired a videographer and composer to produce a [short video](#) that highlighted our partners and community. The flagship event was held at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, CA, in conjunction with NOAA's triennial Ocean Acidification Program Community Meeting. Attendees spent the evening learning about TOF's work, networking with each other, and spreading the word about the OA Day of Action with their followers.

(top) TOF Governments and Multilateral Liaison Officer Alejandra Navarrete Hernández and researcher Dr. José Martín Hernández-Ayón discussing the importance of Ocean Acidification policy making with Peruvian officials in Lima, Peru. PHOTO: Lily Rios-Brady, The Ocean Foundation; (bottom) TOF Governments and Multilateral Liaison Officer Alejandra Navarrete Hernández discussing the importance of Ocean Acidification policy making with the Perú Climate Change Commission Congress in Lima, Peru. PHOTO: The Ocean Foundation.



This year, we also co-authored a [publication](#) detailing how the Ocean Acidification Research for Sustainability (OARS) Program in which we are engaged with international partners is co-designing action at local to global scales. This paper was published in the *ICES Journal of Marine Science* and highlights the work TOF and its partners are doing in the Pacific as an example of effective, **co-designed action** that builds meaningful capacity.

In addition to co-sponsoring the Fifth International Symposium on the Ocean in a High CO2 World, in Lima, Peru and supporting researchers in traveling, we co-hosted a side event with the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification. This event, “From Knowledge to Action: Communicating OA Science for Policy Makers,” brought together attendees to hear eight lightning talks from speakers and then actively discuss three major themes:

- What is OA Action?
- How Might Government Led Policy or Priority Setting Help Accomplish This?
- Leveraging Collaborations and Commitments

The Bigger Picture

Achieving equitable distribution of ocean science capacity will require meaningful change and meaningful investment. We are committed to both advocating for these changes and investments and implementing key programs. We’ve gained the trust of our local scientific partners to help them meet their goals and we are honored to play this part. We intend to expand our technical and financial offerings as we continue to build and grow our Initiative.

Supporting the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

In June, The Ocean Foundation joined funders from the USA, Europe, North Africa, Japan and Latin America in Monaco for the third Foundations Dialogue in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. TOF had an extensive set of roles in the Dialogue. President Mark J. Spalding was a high-level plenary speaker and an agenda-setting panel speaker; he presented on the Funder’s Collaborative and he led two sessions of Catalyzing the Blue Economy working group. Program Officer Alexis Valauri-Orton led two sessions of the Capacity Building working group. Both helped to draft the official Monaco Statement from the meeting.

The meetings and related social events strengthened the connections among the philanthropic funders, and they were able to advance alignment as will be expressed in the ‘Monaco Statement’ from the meeting. There were also specific efforts launched around easing international research, particularly on scientific research in international waters and transfer of technology across borders; TOF took the lead on research and drafting this document.



"I remember going to the beach every year with my grandparents. The beach will always remind me of my childhood and of my family; the smell of saltwater and grit of sand in my shoes are my memory keepers. Walking the shore at night to see ghost crabs, holding onto my Papa's hand while we jumped the wave breaks, and looking for seashells perfect for necklaces are all memories of several summers. I will always love the ocean and The Outer Banks for keeping the magic of these summers alive in my memory!"

– Anna



"As my mom's scrapbook of me says, I've always loved the water and now love working to protect it. Here is me as a young child playing in the waters of Lake Erie"

– Courtnie Park



"To me, the ocean is a sacred and spiritual place. It's where I go to relax, to make my most difficult decisions, to mourn loss and change and to celebrate life's biggest thrills. When a wave hits me, I feel like the ocean is giving me a 'high five' to keep going."

– Kate Killerlain Morrison



PLASTICS INITIATIVE



TOF Programme Officer Erica Nuñez as panelist at the 2023 Plastics Recycling Conference. PHOTO: Nina Bulter

In its second year as a core initiative under the strategic direction of the Program Officer, the initiative has evolved to focus beyond “redesign,” so you’ll notice it’s no longer in our initiative name. This Initiative is now also working in areas where the impact to prevent plastic pollution can be the most effective with policy priorities on plastic production reduction and redesign with an emphasis on human and environmental health, as well as environmental justice.

We continue to take opportunities to broaden our scope to engage in policy discussions, global governance and play an active bridging role in the science-policy interface.

Policy Engagement

Global Plastics Treaty- A Once in a Generation opportunity

As an [accredited Civil Society Observer](#), we aspire to be a voice for those who share our fight against plastic pollution. At the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), we continue to be actively engaged in the two-year Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) process for Member States to agree and negotiate a new global treaty on plastics.

In order to ensure the scope of the treaty is sufficient to address the scale of plastic pollution, we continue to coordinate with a diverse set of stakeholder groups, from governments, civil society including representatives from Indigenous and frontline communities, scientists and industry in continued preparation to curb the plastics crisis with a Global Plastics Agreement.

But our policy engagement doesn't just happen at the semi-annual gatherings- our work is ongoing day-to-day. We continue to play a critical role in steering the priorities and discussions **leading up to and during** meetings of the INC by building on existing networks and fostering strategic communications to engrain the importance of mandatory ambitious life cycle measures. These activities will include engagement with international government officials to discuss priorities that center around production reduction, design measures that reduce, remove and manage toxins and harmful additives to plastics, environmental justice and a just transition for informal waste pickers, the preparation of positions and talking points, intelligence sharing, joint strategy development, and in-meeting support.

WHAT IS AN OBSERVER?

As an [accredited Observer Civil Society Organization](#) to bodies such as the [United Nations Environment Assembly](#) (primarily for Global Plastics Treaty negotiations), [Basel Convention](#) on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, and the [Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management](#), we are able to attend and actively participate in international fora and discussions.



TOF Program Officer Erica Nuñez in discussions with other delegates at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC1) in Uruguay. PHOTO: IISD/ENB | Angeles Estrada



"For as long as I can remember, my family holidays were at the beach, where I felt the ocean breeze for the first time as young as two months old. Each summer, we would drive for long hours south of

Buenos Aires following the Río de la Plata, the river that meets the Atlantic Ocean. We would stay at the beach all day getting washed over by the waves. My sister and I would particularly enjoy playing near the shore, which very often involved my dad buried deep in the sand with only his head out. Most of my growing-up memories are by (or related to) the ocean: rowing in the Pacific, diving in Patagonia, following hundreds of dolphins, listening to orcas, and voyaging in the gelid Antarctic waters. It seems it is my very special place."

– Andrea Capurro



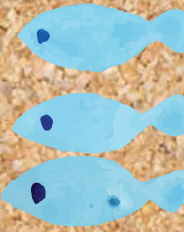
"I grew up in a small farm town in the central valley of California, and some of my best memories include our family escaping to California's Central Coast from Cambria to Morro Bay. Walking on the beach, exploring tide pools, collecting jade, talking to fishers on the piers. Eating fish and chips. And, my favorite, visiting the seals."

– Mark J. Spalding



"I grew up in Long Beach, CA. My family spent every weekend at the beach and watched Jacques Cousteau every Sunday night. I fell in love with the ocean and all of its creatures (especially whales). I teach middle school science and marine biology. I work at a Title 1 school. I take my kids on field trips to the Ocean Institute, Crystal Cove Conservancy, and the Bolsa Chica wetlands. My most joyful memories come from having my students experience being on a boat for the first time and participating in community science. I am a Naturalist for the American Cetacean Society and work summers on a cruise line as the ship's Naturalist doing Inside Passage trips to Alaska. My heart and soul are tied to the ocean. I instill my passion and love to protect the planet and all life on it daily. My intention is to have all people I encounter in my life feel the same."

– Daryth Morrissey



Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC1): Negotiations Begin

The Ocean Foundation participated in the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC1), in Uruguay in November 2022 with more than 2,300 delegates from 160 countries participating.

During one of two plenary panels for the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Sessions, we served as the **only civil society representative on the main stage** and discussed the contributions that NGOs bring to prevent plastic pollution through advocacy and movement building, supporting and contributing to scientific knowledge, public outreach, thought leadership on policy and innovation, on the ground work with frontline and marginalized communities and direct engagements with government and industry.

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC2): Negotiations Continue

In the spring, we headed to Paris, France from May 26 - June 2 for INC-2. After a bit of a bumpy start to the week-long negotiations, and delegates working into the night for several days, about 170 countries agreed to develop a first draft of a plastics treaty to be negotiated at the next meeting in November. The INC requested the Chair, with the support of the Secretariat, to prepare a zero-draft text of the international legally binding instrument for consideration at INC-3 in Nairobi, and we plan to participate.

The next year will dictate whether the upcoming Global Plastics Treaty will be capable of addressing the root cause of the plastics crisis, including over-production and consumption of virgin plastics and the negative impacts it has on human and environmental health. A Global Plastics Treaty is critical to securing a clean, healthy, and equitable future for communities across the globe, but only if it is designed appropriately with the strong mandatory measures we are pursuing **that will address the full life cycle of plastics.**

WHAT'S A ZERO DRAFT?

A zero-draft text is the tangible starting point for the ultimate Global Plastics Treaty. This benchmark meeting signaled that the international community is ready to put pen to paper.



Erica Nuñez, The Ocean Foundation; and Oliver Boachie, Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana. PHOTO: IISD/ENB | Angeles Estrada

Basel Convention: Plastics as Hazardous Waste

In addition to plastics treaty-focused engagement, TOF continues to work alongside partners in other fora to strengthen existing instruments while the treaty is being negotiated. We attend and participate in meetings of the Basel Convention, working to promote decisions and guidelines to strengthen implementation, compliance, and enforcement of controls on the plastic hazardous waste trade.

In November 2022, TOF attended the third meeting of the [*Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership*](#) (PWP) working group in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The PWP is a multi-stakeholder working group that includes representatives from business, government, academia, and civil society – to improve and promote the environmentally sound management of plastic waste to prevent and minimize its generation.

The PWP consists of four project groups, and we are a member of Project Groups 1 (prevention and minimization) and 3 (transboundary movement of plastic waste). During the meeting, project group chairs reported on key developments, group work plan progress, and potential outputs. The PWP also developed a draft work plan for 2024-25, focusing on activities that will promote working group cooperation and coordination.

In May, we attended the sixteenth meeting of the [*Conference of Parties to the Basel Convention*](#) (COP16) where our work focused on the discussions on the Technical Guidelines for the Environmentally Sound Management of Plastic Wastes. This agenda item was assigned to a contact group that met every day of the COP to work through unresolved issues within the 70+ page document, with the hope to finalize it for the COP to adopt. Although some items remained unresolved, enough progress was made that the COP agreed to adopt the guidelines.



TOF Program Officer Erica Nuñez at the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention (COP 16). PHOTO: The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, Flickr

Bridging the Science-Policy Interface

Chemical waste and pollution is a global issue, and plastic is only one part of the problem. Neutral science allows political discussions to follow from objective information and guidance. And, working to engage the scientific community regularly in the negotiation process helps maintain a steady input of technical information.

OEWG1.2: Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

At UNEA 5.2 back in February 2022, the United Nations Environment Assembly decided a Science-Policy Panel should be established to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. With this in mind, the UN Environment Programme convened an [Open-ended Working Group \(OEWG\)](#) to prepare proposals for the panel, intending to complete it by the end of 2024. The first session of the OEWG was held in two parts, with one part taking place on October 6 in Nairobi in a hybrid format, and the second part held in Bangkok from January 30 to February 3. We attended both sessions to engage with the global community and help develop this scientific body which plans to provide capacity-building services.

BOTTLE Consortium

This year, we participated in meetings of the Technical Advisory Panel for the BOTTLE Consortium (Bio-Optimized Technologies to keep Thermoplastics out of Landfills and the Environment) to continue to coordinate on their mutual objectives **to advance the science and engineering of polymers to make them recyclable by design** and thus reduce plastic pollution. TOF

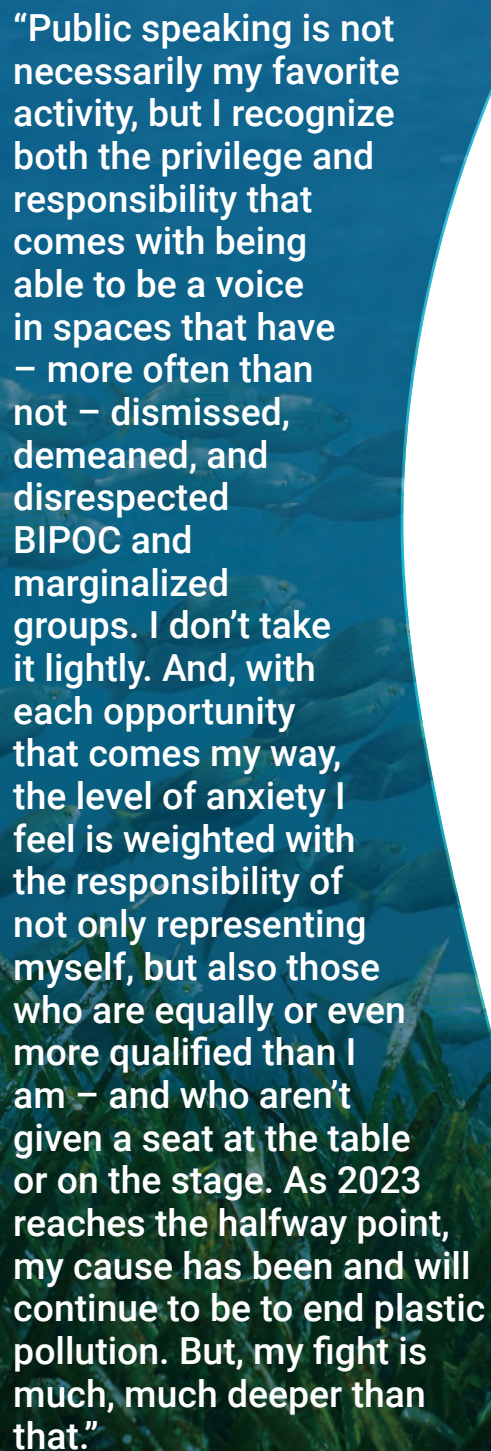
provides a nonprofit perspective as BOTTLE develops original applied science on polymer design to improve recyclability and make plastics safer, simpler, and more standardized.

Improving Access and Representation

A core tenant of our Initiative is to **be mindful of the empty chairs** at international meetings, conferences and technical workshops. In the chairs that *are* typically full, we recognize the lack of diversity in the seats, both in terms of government delegates representing their countries and in terms of BIPOC and marginalized groups continually being underrepresented.

We aim to support a more diverse group of delegates and participants at the negotiations around the table- and **in all fora** - to be more representative of all backgrounds, and especially ones who are on the receiving end of the plastic pollution crisis. We want all international processes to be more representative of our global community as individuals and the unique life experiences and perspectives that each of us bring to a conversation.

This year, we provided two modest travel stipends to support the travel of civil society members from the Global South. Due to costs, oftentimes **diverse representatives are unable to attend the in-person negotiations**. Over time, we hope to develop a more robust small grants program with the objective to provide financial support to help advocates and policy experts from developing countries attend critical international governance and conservation meetings.



“Public speaking is not necessarily my favorite activity, but I recognize both the privilege and responsibility that comes with being able to be a voice in spaces that have – more often than not – dismissed, demeaned, and disrespected BIPOC and marginalized groups. I don’t take it lightly. And, with each opportunity that comes my way, the level of anxiety I feel is weighted with the responsibility of not only representing myself, but also those who are equally or even more qualified than I am – and who aren’t given a seat at the table or on the stage. As 2023 reaches the halfway point, my cause has been and will continue to be to end plastic pollution. But, my fight is much, much deeper than that.”

– Erica Nuñez, Program Officer, Plastics

Raising Awareness and Participating in Coalitions and Networks

Staying up to speed on the ever-evolving science and technical aspects of plastic pollution, recycling and redesign requires a sustained commitment to share our knowledge in speaking engagements around the world to continue to advance principles of reduction and redesign. We also continue to participate in coalitions and networks to share information, lessons learned and technical information between organizations so that we can continually provide the most updated information in our role as technical advisor to government delegates.

Select Highlights:

- In June, we attended the [2022 United Nations Ocean Conference](#) in Lisbon and served as moderator for a panel on microplastics and as speaker on a high-level panel discussing a post-Plastics Treaty world.
- In September, as a chair of a technical session on redesign as a critical solution to plastic pollution, at the [7th International Marine Debris Conference \(7IMDC\)](#), we spoke about the lack of transparency in chemical composition, impacts to health, barriers to a circular economy for plastics, opportunities to reduce single use plastics in the medical field, and more.
- In March, we [spoke as a panelist](#) to more than 2,500 plastic industry leaders – including plastic processors, recycled resin buyers and sellers, and other stakeholders. Our panel discussed the actions and policies needed to curb the continued leaking of plastics into our oceans.
- Later that month, at the WWF Plastics Policy Summit, we discussed best practices for closing the loop on a currently linear plastics economy as part of a panel about Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).
- We highlighted the gap between the efficiency of recycling on a national versus local level, the importance of redesigning plastics for higher recyclability, and the environmental justice aspects of communities not having access to specific services that promote circularity.

WHAT IS EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR)?

ERP is a policy approach that shifts the financial responsibility of managing the end-of-life disposal of a product from taxpayers and municipalities back to the producers.



"One of my favorite memories is being offered my first job out of the Earth Science Department at UNH to be a diver for the California State Fish and Game Department. Each day, we

boarded the boat at dawn, and headed to the kelp beds. We dove on the footholds of the kelp to protect them from the overpopulation of sea urchins that fed upon the roots, which was killing off the kelp beds-- so important to the coastal ecosystem. The joy of working in the same space every day with seals, fish, sharks, and the occasional dolphin, changed my life. I was soon offered a job at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Shore Processes lab where we launched our SIO 1 Boston Whaler off the Scripps Pier and installed current meters and wave sensors on the seafloor. Later, I was "promoted" to an office job but I always look back to my first "office" on the ocean floor. If you dive enough, you see so many wonderful creatures and imagine them as your coworkers. Each creature in the sea has a job to do to maintain a healthy, balanced ecosystem."

– Martha Shaw



"At the age of eight, upon receiving my first snorkel mask, ventured into the ocean in Puerto Rico. The first thing I encountered was a black-spine sea urchin and ran out of the water screaming, "There's monsters in there!" My mother responded, "Get back in the water. And don't touch it." That advice has led to a life-long love affair with the ocean. "Mother, mother ocean, I have heard you call..." - Jimmy Buffett"

– Park



FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

As a [fiscal sponsor](#), The Ocean Foundation helps reduce the complexity of operating a successful project or organization by providing the critical infrastructure, proficiency, and expertise of an NGO- so projects can focus on program development, fundraising, implementation and outreach.

We create a space for innovation and unique approaches to marine conservation where people with big ideas- social entrepreneurs, grassroots activists, and cutting-edge researchers- can take risks, experiment with new methods, and think outside the box. This year, we're spotlighting one of our hosted projects: High Seas Alliance.



"While my 'ocean' was Lake Michigan (which I spent a lot of time in), I remember seeing the ocean for the first time on a family trip to Florida. We didn't have the opportunity to travel much when I was growing up, but the ocean in particular was an exciting place to visit. Not only was it a lot easier to float in the ocean versus freshwater lakes, but the waves were much bigger and easier to boogie board. I would spend hours catching the shore break until my stomach was covered in rug burns and it was painful to move."



– Ben Scheelk



HIGH SEAS ALLIANCE



Sargassum seaweed in the Sargasso Sea. PHOTO: Shane Gross, Greenpeace

Protecting the Ocean We Need - Securing the Future We Want

On June 19, 2023, United Nations (UN) member states took a significant step towards tackling our planetary emergency by [formally adopting the landmark High Seas Treaty](#) to safeguard life in the ocean beyond national jurisdiction.

At least 60 countries must sign and ratify [the Treaty](#) for it to become international law. As soon as that happens, the global community can start ramping up international action to protect our shared ocean, mitigate climate breakdown and safeguard the lives and livelihoods of billions of people worldwide.

In honor of this benchmark accomplishment, we sat down with a couple of the founding members of the High Seas Alliance (Alliance) and their current Executive Director to learn more about how the Alliance has grown over time, the personal inspiration that fuels their decadal plus advocacy work and what they'd like to see happen next to conserve our global ocean.

The Importance of the High Seas Ecosystem

Covering nearly half of the Earth's surface, the vast open-ocean and deep-sea environments of the high seas are ecologically vital, critically threatened and among the least understood on the planet. The high seas hold some of the largest reservoirs of biodiversity on Earth, supporting an abundant diversity of marine life, providing migratory routes for whales and sharks, and harboring remarkable ecosystems such as deep-water corals and other majestic marine life. They are also essential to regulating the climate, producing around half of the oxygen we breathe, and supporting food and livelihoods of billions of people. The next few years are critical for our global ocean. There are such amazing places like the Lost City in the mid Atlantic, the Emperor Seamounts in the Pacific, the confluence of currents and oceanic processes that help create the Sargasso Sea and the Central American Dome that need protection and management. "But only about 1% of the high seas are highly and fully protected, compared to 17% of land areas. The High Seas Treaty can finally change this." (Rebecca (Bec) Hubbard, Executive Director, High Seas Alliance)

If more people knew that the high seas is really the only ecosystem that requires such intense multilateral governance, people might start to feel more of a collective responsibility. That awareness raising was a central tenant to the Alliance's founding back in 2011.



"From the first moment I touched salt water, the ocean engulfed not only my body, but my soul. I knew I wanted to learn about it and protect it, and my love of mermaids helped!"

– Katrina Khan-Roberts

"The ocean continues to be a place of wonder, staring at the ocean for a while is really much more satisfying than on our phones. We are so distracted these days by so many things, but I think that most people have a connection to the ocean and a happy memory that it has provided. Remembering to spend time in the places that make us feel good helps us love them more."

– Susanna Fuller,
Oceans North, Canada,
served as the first
coordinator for the
High Seas Alliance



Humpback Whale Underwater
in Indian Ocean, Western
Australia PHOTO: Alex Westover



“The ocean is actually our first home, where all life originated. A healthy ocean remains vital to life on the planet, as it produces oxygen and sequesters billions of tons of carbon annually through its own natural undisturbed processes. As such we all bear a responsibility to do our best to protect the ocean, whether it’s from reducing our use of plastics, participating in beach cleanups, or joining one of the many organizations promoting ambitious action to stem greenhouse gas emissions, advance the new high sea biodiversity agreement, or safeguard ocean life from increasing threats such as deep seabed mining.”

– Kristina Gjerde, IUCN, USA, Co-Founder of the High Seas Alliance

“I was the first coordinator of the Alliance, in 2011 and had the pleasure of seeing the membership and work of the campaign expand to then require much more than 1.5 days a week. As a staff of a Canadian conservation organization, I then moved into the role of advocating for Canada to be a champion of the agreement.”

– Susanna Fuller,
Oceans North, Canada,
served as the first coordinator for
the High Seas Alliance

Origin of the Alliance

Born over a lunch shared by Kristina Gjerde of IUCN USA and Mirella von Lindenfels of [Communications Inc](#) at St. James Park in London, the initial concept for the Alliance emerged from previous work on deep sea bottom trawling issues with the [Deep Sea Conservation Coalition](#). Recognizing that the high seas were plagued by a wide array of threats in addition to bottom trawling, Gjerde and von Lindenfels dreamed of an alliance of scientists, conservation organizations, and individuals whose work intersected with the high seas, whether it be migratory species, deep sea ecosystems, pelagic fisheries, shipping, marine protected areas, or conservation as a whole. Since the initial meeting, hosted at the Pew offices in Washington, D.C., with generous support from the JM Kaplan Fund and the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Alliance has grown to be a well-organized coalition of over 50 members plus IUCN.

For the past 12 years, through high-level political advocacy, strategic engagement, expert technical and legal advice and public campaigning, the Alliance has worked together to highlight the urgency for action. The Alliance clearly demonstrates the power of working as a strong and coordinated group—sharing expertise, resources, information, supporting member organizations, and strong communications.

“I am hoping that we come to realize that a functioning ocean is vital to human health and wellbeing. And then manage our activities as if our lives depended upon it, because they do.”

– Susanna Fuller, Oceans North, Canada, served as the first coordinator for the High Seas Alliance

“The race for ratification is on!”

– Rebecca (Bec) Hubbard, Executive Director, High Seas Alliance

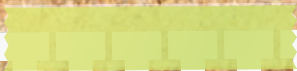
Inspiration to Fuel Change

On the heels of the benchmark treaty passage in June 2023, the Alliance quickly identified the great deal of collective work that needs to be done next.

By the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025, the Alliance would like to see at least 60 countries ratify the Treaty so it can enter into force. They would also like to see strong, transparent Treaty institutions established to ensure that once it enters into force, action to protect biodiversity in the high seas can start straight away.


The Alliance will continue to provide technical and legal assistance to help States to ratify and develop the capacities needed to effectively implement the treaty. Discussions around candidate sites for high seas Marine Protected Areas may also be advanced in an effort to achieve the 30% target by 2030 across the global ocean (for ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably managed marine protected areas and other effective conservation measures as set forth in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework).

In anticipation of this heightened campaign toward ratification and equitable implementation, Alliance members and leadership draw from their personal inspiration every day. With childhoods spent in coastal environments across the globe from Australia to Nova Scotia to California, Alliance members draw on their unique connections to the ocean to motivate them to keep going.



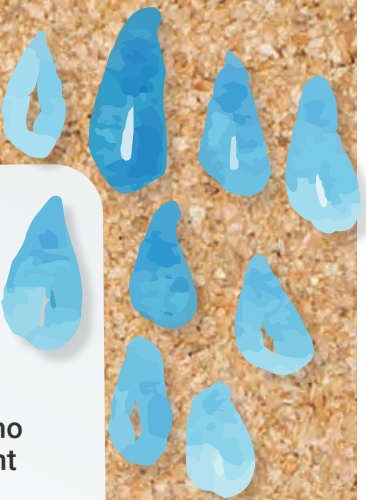
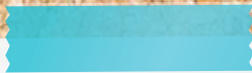
"My dad surfed so I spent a lot of my holidays going to the beach swimming, body surfing and inspecting the creatures that lived in the coastal strip of south-east Australia. I have worked on environmental campaigns with NGOs big and small since 1999, and I have been going further and further into understanding the essential importance of the ocean to life on the planet, and had committed myself to only working on ocean conservation."

– Rebecca (Bec) Hubbard, Executive Director, High Seas Alliance



"Growing up in California, the ocean was my second home. The beach was my favorite place to go. As a child I loved racing into the waves to get tossed and tumbled back to shore. As a teen I loved to body surf and explore tidepools in rocky coves. That close connection to the ocean has only grown, especially after I learned to scuba dive. On my first dive I fell in love with coral reefs and decided I needed to do my utmost to protect these colorful and vital habitats."

– Kristina Gjerde, IUCN, USA, Co-Founder of the High Seas Alliance



"I grew up in Cape Breton (in Mi'kmaki, Nova Scotia, Canada) and was always near or on the water. I spent my last year of high school on a tall ship, sailing from Europe to South America to the Caribbean and there is no better way to appreciate an environment than to never leave it for months at a time. I've never gotten seasick – which always made me feel that I had connection with the ocean. I so clearly remember the collapse of Northern cod in 1991, and the impact that had on communities and the marine ecosystem. I decided that I needed to study biology in university so that perhaps I could do something with that knowledge to improve the ocean. And when I started my studies in Montreal, I remember looking out down the St. Lawrence River, and missing the wider expanse of the sea."

– Susanna Fuller, Oceans North, Canada, served as the first coordinator for the High Seas Alliance

To learn more about the High Seas Alliance and to track treaty progress, please visit: <https://highseasalliance.org/> and <https://highseasalliance.org/treatytracker/> and follow them on #oneoceanoneplanet





SPECIAL PROJECTS

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OCEAN SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

A First with the Government of Cuba

In February, The Government of Cuba and The Ocean Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); one that marks the first time the Government of Cuba has signed a MoU with a non-governmental organization in the United States. The MoU draws on over thirty years of collaborative ocean science and policy work between the organization and Cuban marine research institutions and conservation agencies. This collaboration, facilitated through The Ocean Foundation's nonpartisan platform, focuses primarily on the Gulf of Mexico and Western Caribbean and among the three countries that border the Gulf: Cuba, México and the United States. [*The Trinational Initiative*](#), an effort to advance collaboration and conservation, began in 2007 with the goal of establishing a framework for ongoing joint scientific research to preserve and protect our surrounding and shared waters and

marine habitats. In 2015, during the rapprochement between Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, scientists from the US and Cuba recommended the creation of an Marine Protected Area (MPA) network that would transcend 55 years of exceptionally limited bilateral engagement. The leaders of the two countries saw environmental cooperation as the first priority for reciprocal cooperation. As a result, two environmental agreements were announced in November 2015. One of those, the [*Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Conservation and Management of Marine Protected Areas*](#), created a unique bilateral network that facilitated joint efforts concerning the science, stewardship, and management across four protected areas in Cuba and the United States. Two years later, [*RedGolfo*](#) was founded in Cozumel in December 2017 when Mexico added seven MPAs to the network – making it a truly Gulf wide effort. The other agreement set the stage for continued cooperation in marine conservation between the US State Department and the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations. Both agreements regarding the exchange of information and research on weather and climate issues, remain in force despite a temporary downturn in bilateral relations that started in 2016.



(L-R): TOF President Mark J. Spalding signing with her Excellency Ambassador Mrs. Lianys Torres Rivera, (Cuban Charge d'Affaires to the United States).

The MoU with Cuba is being executed by the Cuban Ministry for Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA). The MoU states the need to protect the marine and coastal biological diversity shared by both countries, which, as a result of the Gulf Stream and a geographical distance of only 90 nautical miles is considerable when it is well established that most of Florida's fish and benthic habitat such as corals are replenished from stocks to the immediate south. It also upholds the Trinational Initiative and RedGolfo as effective networks to advance cooperation in the study and protection of marine resources, and takes into account the important role of Mexico. The MoU covers the study of migratory species; connectivity between coral reef ecosystems; restoring and sequestering carbon dioxide in mangrove, seagrass, and wetland habitats; sustainable resources use; adaptation and mitigation of climate disruption; and finding new financing mechanisms for multilateral cooperation given a history of mutual adversity. It also reinforces the study of shared US-Cuban organisms and coastal habitats such as manatees, whales, corals, mangroves, seagrasses, wetlands, and sargassum.

Prior to the signing, Ambassador Lianys Torres Rivera, the first woman to ever head Cuba's mission in Washington, provided an overview of the history of work between Cuba and The Ocean Foundation and the importance of the precedent setting partnership. She notes that:

"This has been one of the few areas of academic and research exchange that has been sustained for decades, despite adverse political contexts. In a prominent way, The Ocean Foundation has played a decisive role in the establishment of authentic links of bilateral scientific cooperation, and created the basis to reach the agreements that exist today at the government level."

– Ambassador Lianys Torres Rivera

Mark J. Spalding, President of The Ocean Foundation, explained how the only community foundation for the ocean is uniquely positioned to collaborate with the Government of Cuba as part of their work in [Ocean Science Diplomacy](#):

"TOF stands by its commitment of over three decades to use science as a bridge; to emphasize the protection of shared marine resources. We are confident that agreements like this can set the stage for enhanced cooperation between our governments on coastal and ocean science, including severe weather preparedness."

– Mark J. Spalding | President, The Ocean Foundation

"In a prominent way, The Ocean Foundation has played a decisive role in the establishment of authentic links of bilateral scientific cooperation, and created the basis to reach the agreements that exist today at the government level."

– Ambassador
Lianys Torres Rivera

DEEP SEABED MINING

Deep Seabed Mining (DSM) is a prospective global industry that targets mineral deposits from the seafloor- including manganese, nickel, copper, cobalt, zinc and rare earth metals. Commercial-scale mining of the ocean floor would impact deep-sea ecosystems and cultural heritage. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) has been under immense industry pressure to finalize regulations which are far from complete.

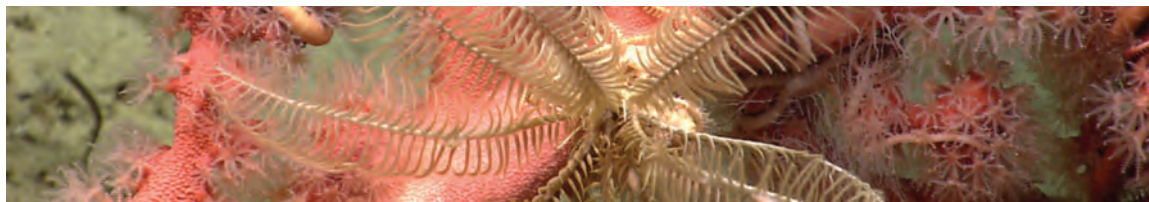
As a newly accredited Observer to the ISA, we have been there, every step of the way, to amplify our message debunking the false narrative that deep-sea minerals are needed (or even able) to decarbonize our global energy supply. We have worked collaboratively and successfully to elevate the **financial and liability concerns around DSM - it is a bad bet for the ocean, and for investors. We continued to advocate for a moratorium (a temporary prohibition) on DSM, through our**

membership in the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, by shifting the narrative to the threat DSM poses to our environment and economies.

We also contributed to our technical blog series on how deep seabed minerals cannot support a green transition ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#)). Working amidst the largely closed door and nontransparent ISA structure, we offered targeted interventions (formal remarks), submitted comments to the ISA and advised countries on factors to consider when weighing the pros and cons of DSM in their waters. We continued to broaden the group of stakeholders concerned about DSM, by presenting to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission's Scientific Advisory Committee.



(Left) Operation Deep Slope 2007. A large benthic crab crawling across the seafloor. PHOTO: Expedition to the Deep Slope 2007, NOAA-OE; (Below L-R) TOF Program Manager Maddie Warner making a formal intervention using TOF's Accredited Observer Status at the International Seabed Authority in Kingston, Jamaica. PHOTOS: IISD/ENB | Diego Noguera; The Ocean Foundation; (far bottom) Paragorgia sp. deep sea coral. PHOTO: NOAA OKEANOS Explorer Program, 2013 Northeast U. S. Canyons Expedition.





"Growing up, family vacations to the beach were a yearly ritual. I have so many amazing memories playing in the sand and at the boardwalk arcade, floating in the water, and helping push the stroller closer to the beach."

– Michelle Logan

"I completely love the ocean. I was born in Trinidad, moved to Puerto Rico, lived on the coast of Maine, then lived 40+ years in San Diego. I now live on the Space Coast of Florida. I would never live where I can't smell the salt air. My beach in Florida. My jobs made me travel a lot. I never knew I was home until I landed in San Diego and could smell the salt air. I ask the Ocean Foundation to protect our ocean species. Stop the Wind Turbines in the ocean off New Jersey and New York that have already killed dozens of whales and dolphins. Also fight to protect the Maine fishing industries which are very conservationist, their current practices have grown the lobster population and a Right Whale has NEVER died in history in Maine fishing waters due to Lobstering. The conservation practices have created the most abundant lobster population in many decades."

– Bob Shute



UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE

Our work in Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) increased in profile as The Ocean Foundation became a [newly accredited Observer to the UNESCO 2001 Convention on Underwater Cultural Heritage](#). Our Deep Seabed Mining outreach paved the way for a state led series of international dialogues drawing on TOF's work in raising awareness around the connections and overlaps between the threats to UCH and deep seabed habitats from prospective deep seabed mining (DSM) activities. In doing so, **we learned from and amplified the voices of Pacific Indigenous partners**. This allowed government delegates to become further educated about these critical issues in between official gatherings of the International Seabed Authority to inform their formal negotiations.

TOF also received a \$500,000+ (USD) grant from Lloyd's Register Foundation for a ["Threats to Our Ocean Heritage"](#) three book project (one on DSM, one on bottom trawling, and one on Potentially Polluting Wrecks), endorsed by the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Over the next two years, more than 20 academic and professional archeologists will contribute to the writing of the books. We also contributed to our technical blog series to raise awareness about how [mining is a threat to UCH](#).



◀ (right) TOF Senior Fellow Ole Varmer and others at a meeting on Underwater Cultural Heritage at UNESCO in Paris, France. PHOTO: The Ocean Foundation; (left) TOF Consultant Charlotte Jarvis presenting about the effects from fishing activity on archaeological sites. PHOTO: The Ocean Foundation

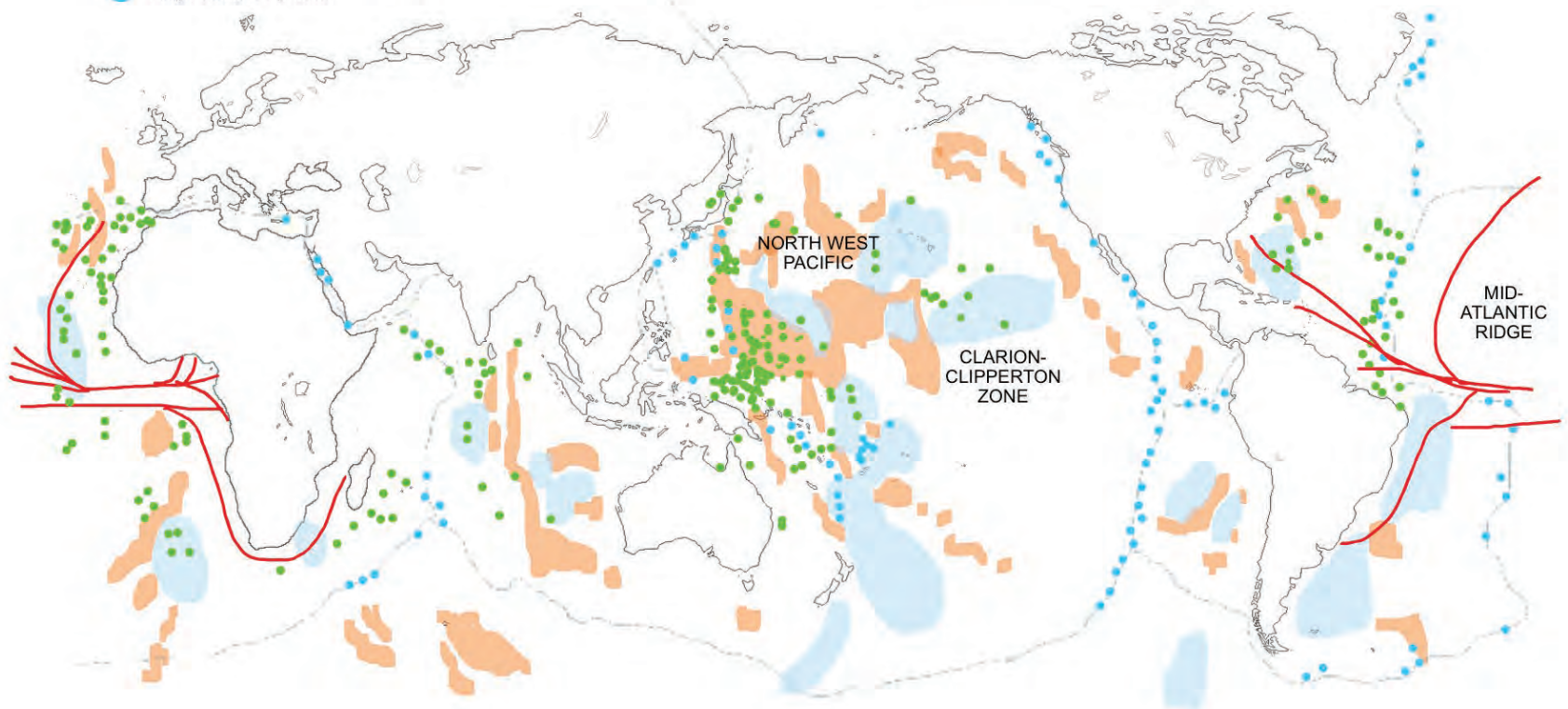
Seabed Mining Areas

Material Based on International Seabed Authority Information

- Polymetallic Nodules
- Cobalt-Rich Ferromanganese Crusts
- Polymetallic Sulphides

Underwater Cultural Heritage at Risk

- Middle Passage Routes
- A Sample of WW II Wrecks

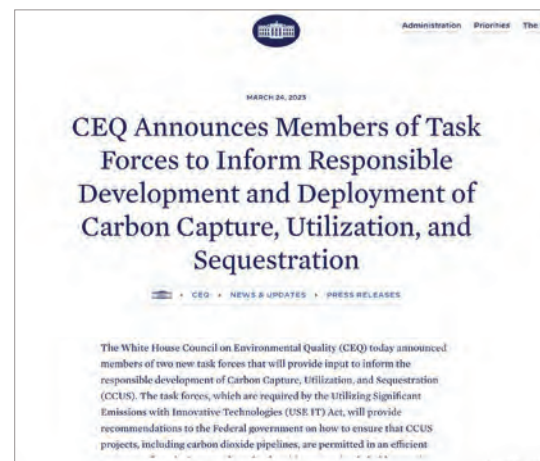


Map depicting Seabed Mining Areas and Underwater Cultural Heritage at Risk. CREDIT: Charlotte Jarvis, The Ocean Foundation

CLIMATE GEOENGINEERING

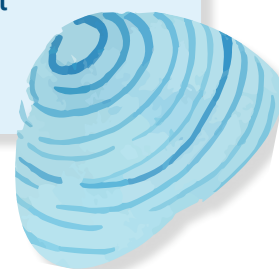
We pride ourselves on remaining nimble to respond to and address emerging ocean issues as a member of the global ocean community, and recent conversations on [climate geoengineering](#) have raised our concern, particularly regarding [ethics, equity and justice](#). Our work on [Carbon Dioxide Removal](#) (CDR) utilizes both a grassroots and grasstops approach. In March, **TOF President Mark J. Spalding was appointed by the President as a member of the new, first of its kind, White House Task Force: [Carbon Dioxide Capture, Utilization, and Sequestration Federal Lands and Outer Continental Shelf Permitting](#).**

With our fellow ocean eNGO community, we played a heavy role in crafting the collaborative ocean NGO statement on [precautionary principles for ocean CDR research](#). We have interacted directly with the White House and NOAA on [Solar Radiation Modification](#) and engaged in regular discussions with our fellow members on the Ocean Studies Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. We also contributed to our technical blog series on Climate Geoengineering, covering Solar Radiation Management, Carbon Dioxide Removal and how it will affect the ocean and its systems.



"Me at age 8 in Sydney. Spending days taking ferries and sailboats around Sydney Harbour, and spending lots of time at Bondi Beach, cemented my love for the ocean. In fact, I was quite scared of the water in Sydney Harbour because it was cold and deep — but I always respected it nonetheless."

— Fernando Bretos



SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

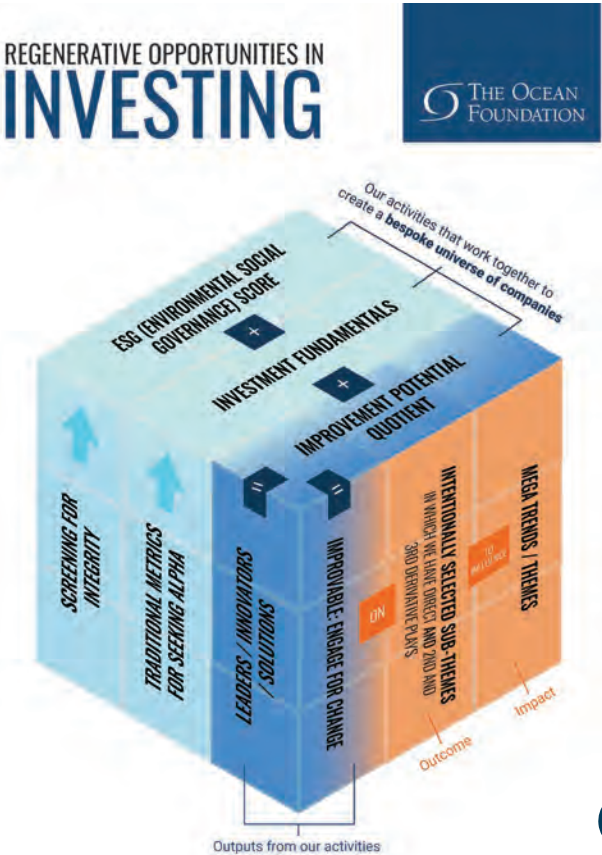
The Ocean Foundation continued our work with [Rockefeller Asset Management](#) to provide specialized insight to the Rockefeller Climate Solutions Strategy, by providing information about marine trends, risks, opportunities and an analysis of coastal and ocean conservation initiatives. This



spring, we tackled the global seafood supply value chain, which is equivalent to 2% of the global GDP: That’s \$1.8 trillion. And with this revenue, consumers and regulators have increasingly demanded an improved process for documenting all steps of a seafood product’s journey along the supply chain. TOF and our partners at Rockefeller Asset Management co-wrote a [report](#) in March exploring critical considerations when engaging corporations on seafood traceability.

When compared to the European Union, China and Canada, U.S. BlueTech companies are being “out-clustered” when it comes to the ocean economy, as they struggle to get access to workspace, funding, specialized indoor tanks and outdoor testing facilities.

This year, The Ocean Foundation and SustainaMetrix developed a story map that shows the current depth and importance of the blue economy to America, and presents policy proposals for returning America to leadership as a BlueTech power.



CLICK TO ENLARGE. Regenerative opportunities in sustainable investing, The Ocean Foundation

FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,797,367
Investments	\$1,579,519
Receivables	\$2,578,904
Prepaid expenses	\$69,605
	\$6,025,395

PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment & software	\$155,403
Vehicles	\$17,895
	\$173,298
Less: accumulated depreciation	(\$147,648)

OTHER ASSETS

Investment (interest in undeveloped land)	\$9,300,000
Receivables (net of current)	\$1,286,095
Intangible assets (net)	\$10,833
ROU Asset	\$1,592,167
Security deposits	\$11,161
	\$12,200,257

TOTAL ASSETS: \$18,251,302

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$896,008
Tenant security deposit	\$3,100
Operating lease liability (current portion)	\$158,914
Deferred revenue	\$366,523
Refundable advance	\$252,468
Charitable gift annuity (current portion)	\$620
	\$1,677,634

OTHER LIABILITIES

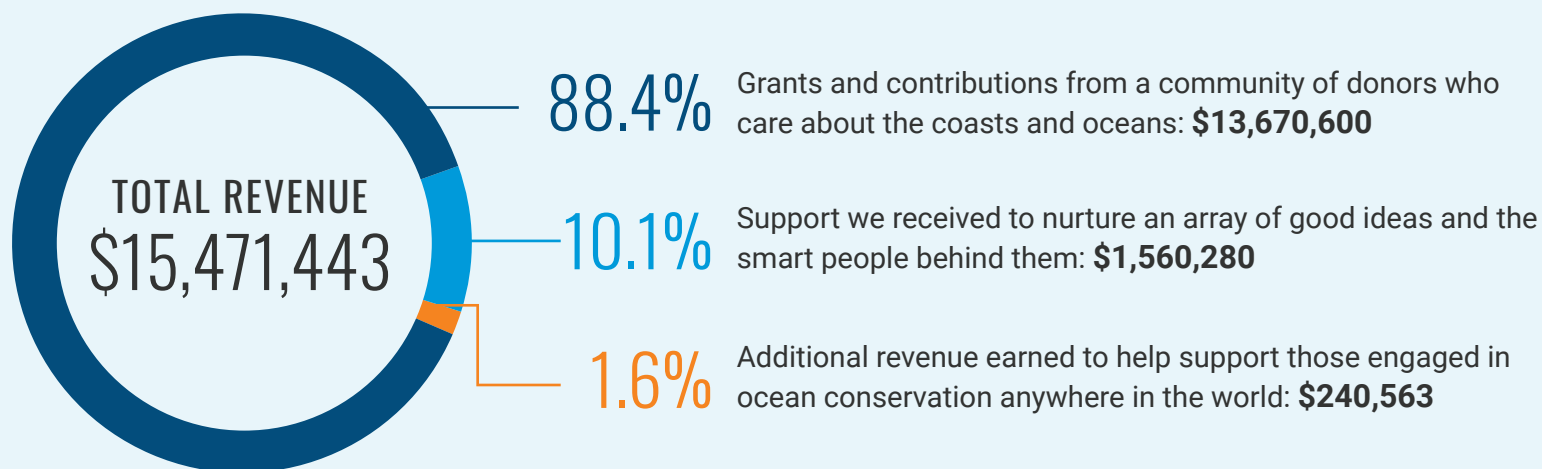
Operating lease liability (net of current)	\$1,511,258
Charitable gift annuity (net of current)	\$1,295
	\$1,512,553

NET ASSETS

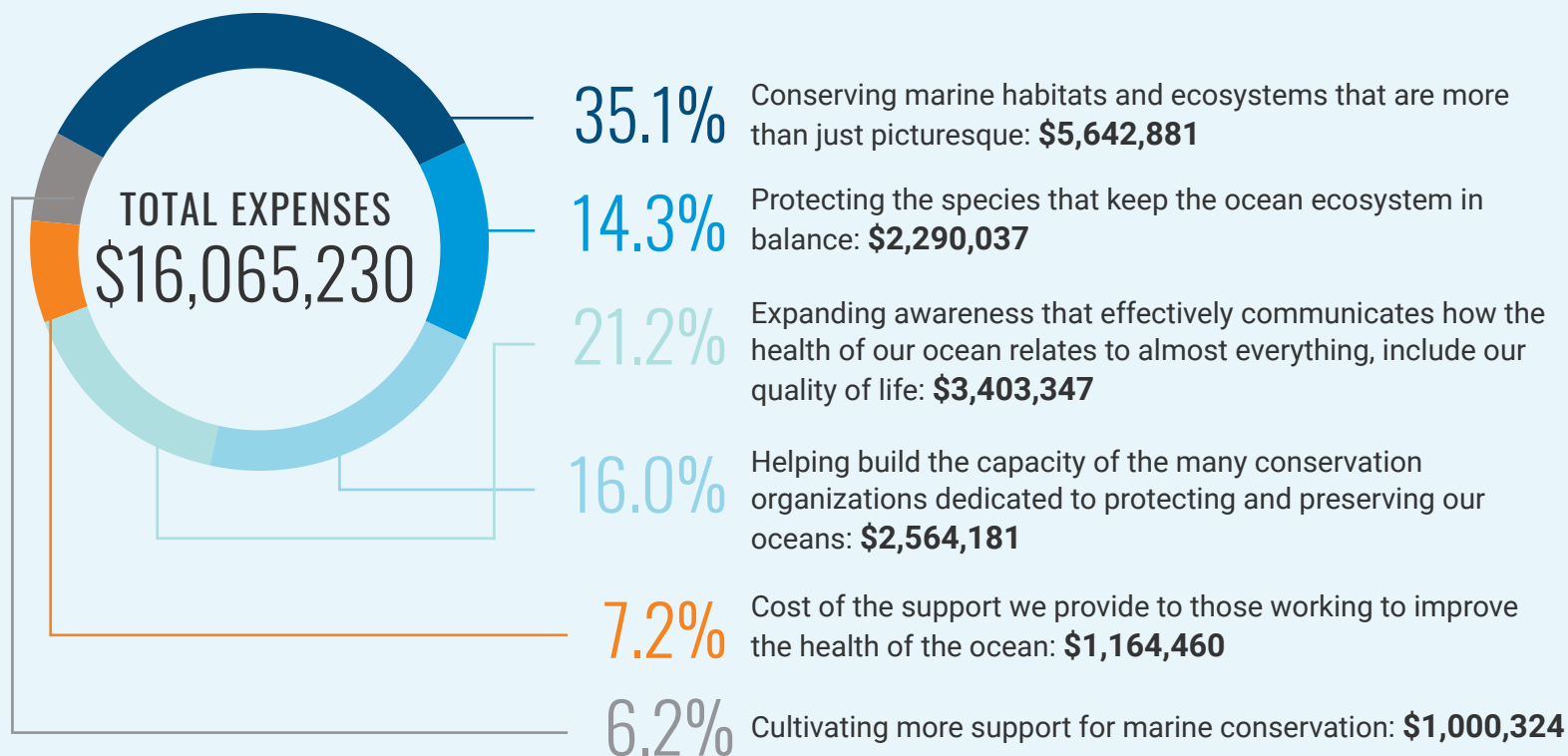
Without Donor Restriction	\$12,299,131
Undesignated	(\$14,423)
Designated by Board	\$12,313,554
With Donor Restriction	\$2,761,983
	\$15,061,115

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS: \$18,251,302

Revenue to Support Marine Conservation



Spending by Function

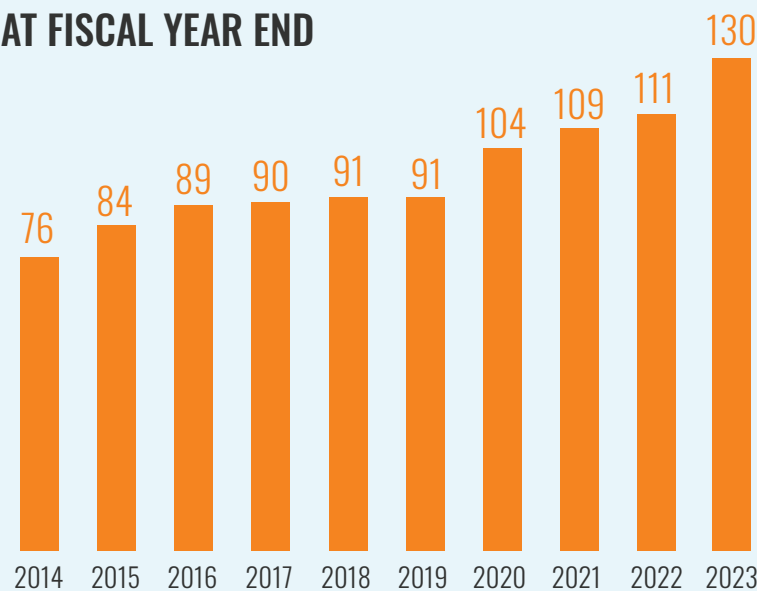


Statement of Activities

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTION	WITH DONOR RESTRICTION	TOTAL
REVENUE AND SUPPORT			
Grants & contributions	\$165,453	\$13,505,147	\$13,670,600
Program service revenue	\$1,560,280		\$1,560,280
Rental income	\$29,520		\$29,520
Investment income - net realized and unrealized gain/(loss)	\$172,098		\$172,098
Investment income - other	\$38,944		\$38,944
	\$1,966,296	\$13,505,147	\$15,471,443
Net assets released from restriction:			
Satisfaction of program restrictions	\$14,568,127	(\$14,568,127)	-
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT:	\$16,534,423	(\$1,062,980)	\$15,471,443
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Protecting Marine Habitats	\$5,642,881	-	\$5,642,881
Protecting Species of Concern	\$2,290,037	-	\$2,290,037
Building Marine Community Capacity	\$2,564,181	-	\$2,564,181
Ocean Literacy	\$3,403,347	-	\$3,403,347
	\$13,900,445		\$13,900,445
Support Services:			
Management & general	\$1,164,461	-	\$1,164,461
Fundraising	\$1,000,324	-	\$1,000,324
	\$2,164,785		\$2,164,785
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$16,065,230	-	\$16,065,230
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS (DEFICIT)	\$469,193	(\$1,062,980)	(\$593,787)
Beginning net assets	\$2,529,936	\$3,824,964	\$6,354,900
ENDING NET ASSETS	\$2,999,129	\$2,761,983	\$5,761,113

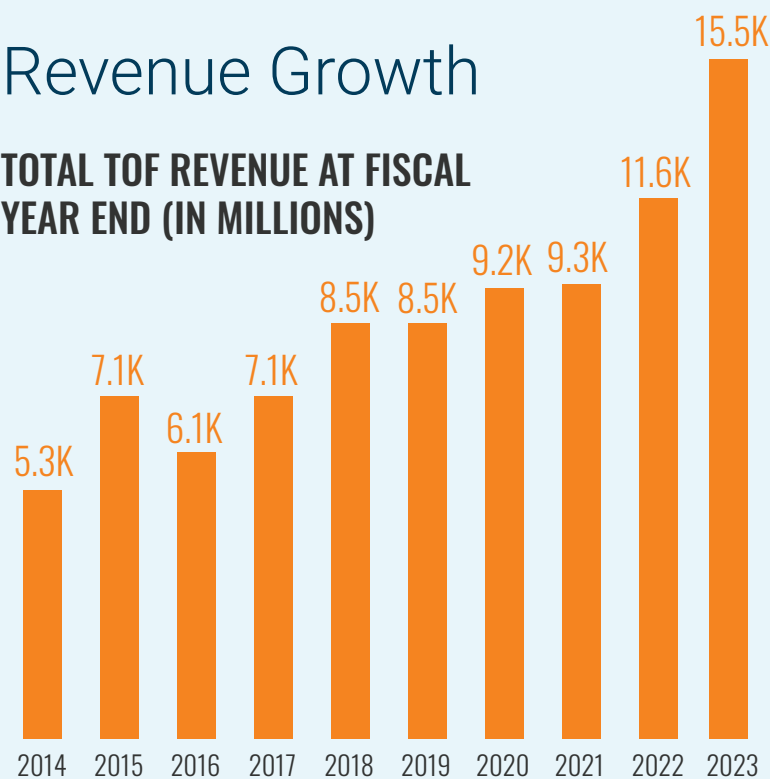
Project Growth

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS AT FISCAL YEAR END

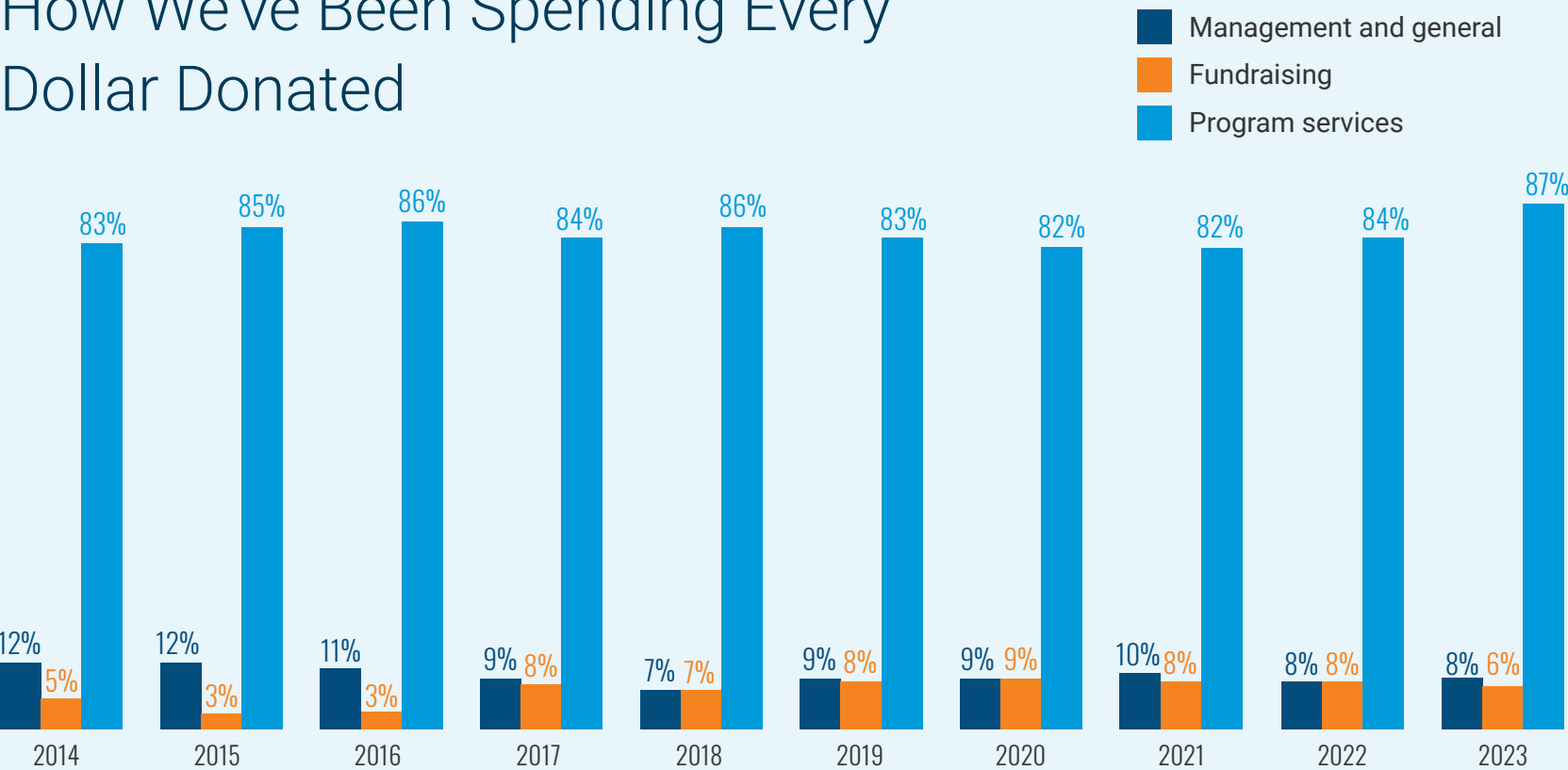


Revenue Growth

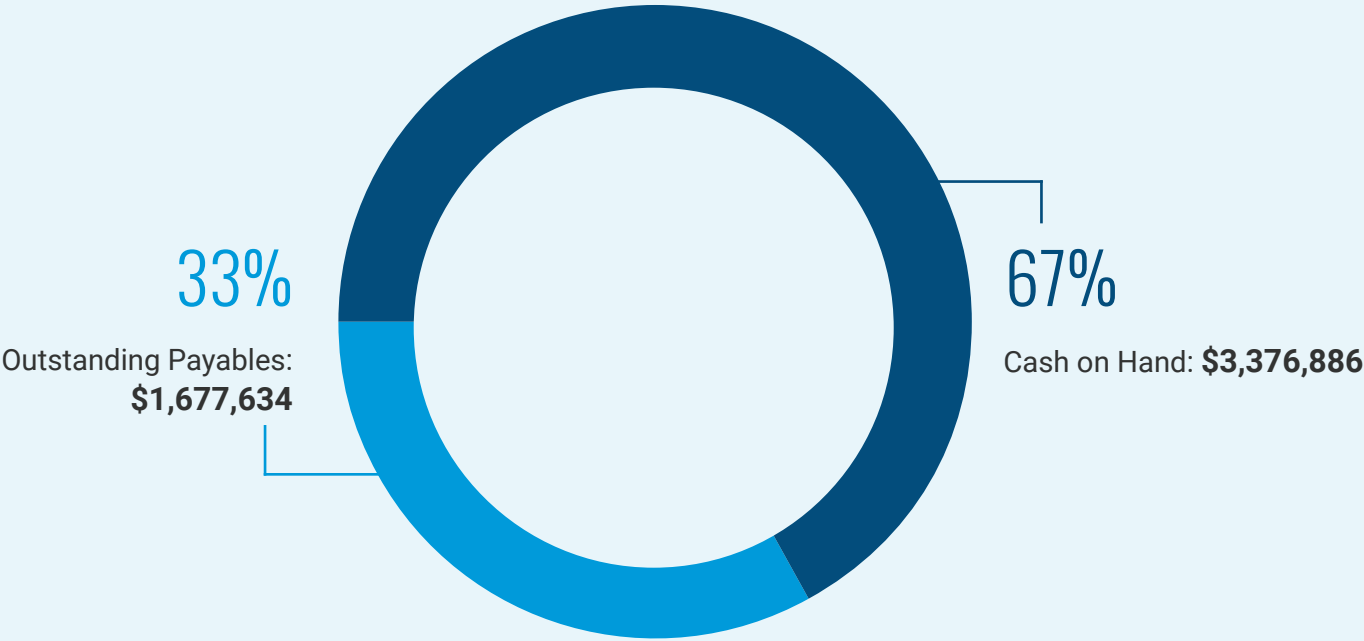
TOTAL TOF REVENUE AT FISCAL YEAR END (IN MILLIONS)



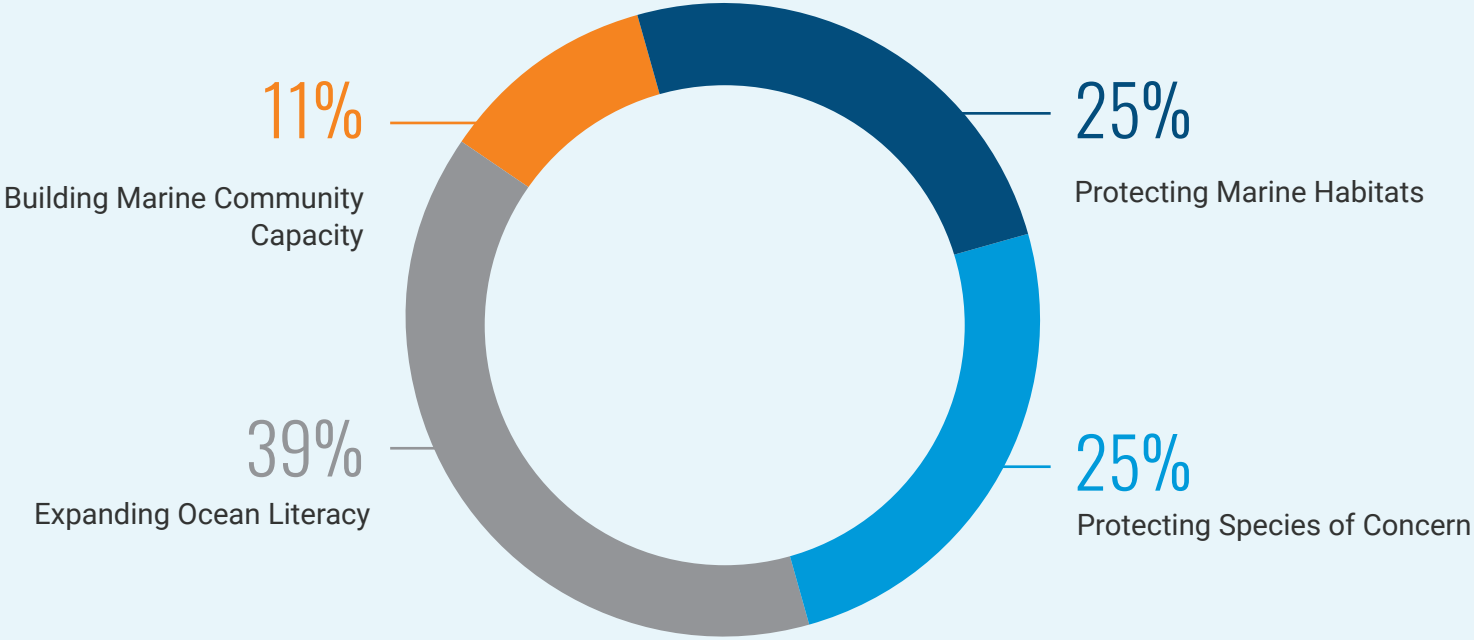
How We've Been Spending Every Dollar Donated



Cash vs. Payables



Major Program Revenue





OUR COMMUNITY

"We moved to St Maarten a couple of years ago. Our first community activity was a beach cleanup with The Nature Foundation. Since then, my husband and I have partnered in the SXM Coastal Cleanup Project where we teach local kids to scuba dive, help them earn their Dive Against Debris certification, and supervise underwater cleanups each quarter with the rotating volunteers. So far, we've pulled more than 3,000 lbs of debris from the costal waters of St Maarten!"

— Jen Downey

Fiscally Hosted Projects

- Alabama River Diversity Network
- Big Ocean
- Blue Climate Solutions
- California Channel Islands Marine Mammal Initiative
- Climate Strong Islands Network
- Deep Sea Mining Campaign
- earthDECKS.org Ocean Network
- Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative (ICAPO)
- Friends of Bello Mundo Consulting, LLC
- High Seas Alliance
- Inland Ocean Coalition
- International Fisheries Conservation Project
- Inuit Initiatives
- Laguna San Ignacio Ecosystem Science Program (LSIESP)
- Navigating Our Way to Solutions in Marine Conservation
- Ocean Connectors
- Ocean Revolution
- Oregon Kelp Alliance
- Redfish Rocks Community Team
- Saving Ocean Wildlife
- SEVENSEAS Media
- Shark Advocates International
- St. Croix Sea Turtle Project
- Superfish Tracking Research Partnership
- SURMAR-ASIMAR
- Tag-A-Giant
- The Live Blue Foundation
- The Ocean Project
- The Science Exchange
- The Wise Laboratory Field Research Program
- Tourism Action Coalition for a Sustainable Ocean
- Tracking Turtles Thru Time
- Who Saved the Whale Lagoon
- Women in Polar Sciences

Friends of Funds

- Friends of Chumbe Island Coral Park
- Friends of Coastal Coordination
- Friends of Conservación ConCiencia
- Friends of Darwin 200 Project
- Friends of Deep Green Wilderness
- Friends of Don Hanson Foundation
- Friends of Georgia Strait Alliance
- Friends of Grupo Tortuguero
- Friends of Havenworth Coastal Conservation
- Friends of La Tortuga Viva
- Friends of Major Projects Foundation
- Friends of NAUCO
- Friends of Oceanswell
- Friends of Organización SyCOMA
- Friends of Por El Mar
- Friends of Pro Esteros
- Friends of Rescate de Lobos Marinos
- Friends of Save the North Pacific Right Whale
- Friends of Sawfish Conservation Society
- Friends of Sustainable Travel International
- Friends of The Nonsuch Expeditions

Corporate Partners

- AlgaeNova
- Barrell Craft Spirits
- Club Med
- Dolfin Home Loans
- EcoBee/BeeSure
- Full Circle
- Golden Acre Foods Ltd.
- Grogenics
- Lloyd's Register Foundation
- MamaP
- Marriott International
- Maya Luxe
- Mijenta Tequila
- Montraville Farms
- NuKrew
- Onora
- PADI
- Perkins Coie
- Philadelphia Eagles
- Pinwheel
- REVERB Music Climate Revolution
- Roffé Accessories
- SA Partners
- Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton
- SKYY Vodka
- SOS Carbon
- Yacht Carbon Offset
- Yachting Pages Magazine

Staff

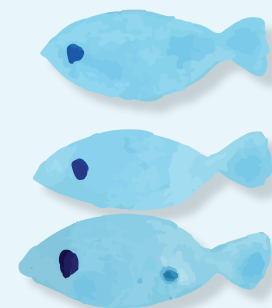
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- **Shree Karmacharya** | Senior Accountant & Operations Manager
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- **Stéphane Latxague** | Program Officer, EU
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- **Eddie Love** | Senior Program Manager & D.E.I.J. Committee Chair
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- **Eva Lukonits** | Social Media Associate
- **Faith Lyles** | Program Assistant
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- **Erica Nuñez** | Program Officer, Plastics
- **Courtnie Park** | Program Associate & D.E.I.J Committee Co-Chair
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- **Lily Rios-Brady** | Program Associate
- **Idamis Rodriguez Nazario** | Intern
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- **Jessica SeEVERS** | Program Manager
- **Mia Shade, SHRM-SCP** | Human Resources Officer
- **Eric Small** | Senior Accountant
- **Katie Thompson** | Program Manager
- **Alexis Valauri-Orton** | Program Officer
- **Linh Vo** | Accountant

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- Boyce Thorne Miller
- Conn Nugent
- Randall Snodgrass
- Ole Varmer

In Memoriam

- Roger Payne, Ph.D.
- John Ogden



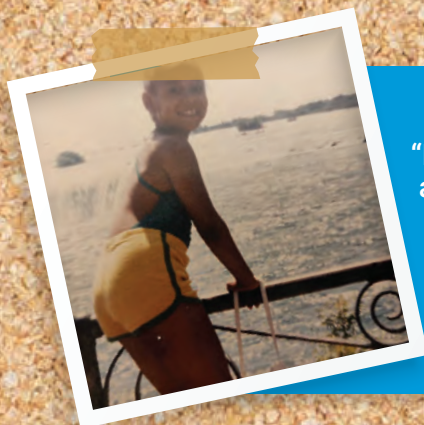
"My love for the ocean came from my love for water, spending my childhood on Missouri rivers and Michigan lakes. I am now lucky enough to live next to the ocean, but will never forget my roots!"

– Katie Thompson



"Discovering Ningaloo Reef off the coast of Western Australia during my years living in the West was an education on the need to make the area a UNESCO site. It is so important that we protect our coral reefs and honour our oceans. As a painter I often document the oceans from above."

– Laurie J Cochrane



"Me as a kid at Niagara Falls. I was generally amazed at the stories of people going over the waterfall in a barrel."

– Tamika Washington



oceanfdn.org



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