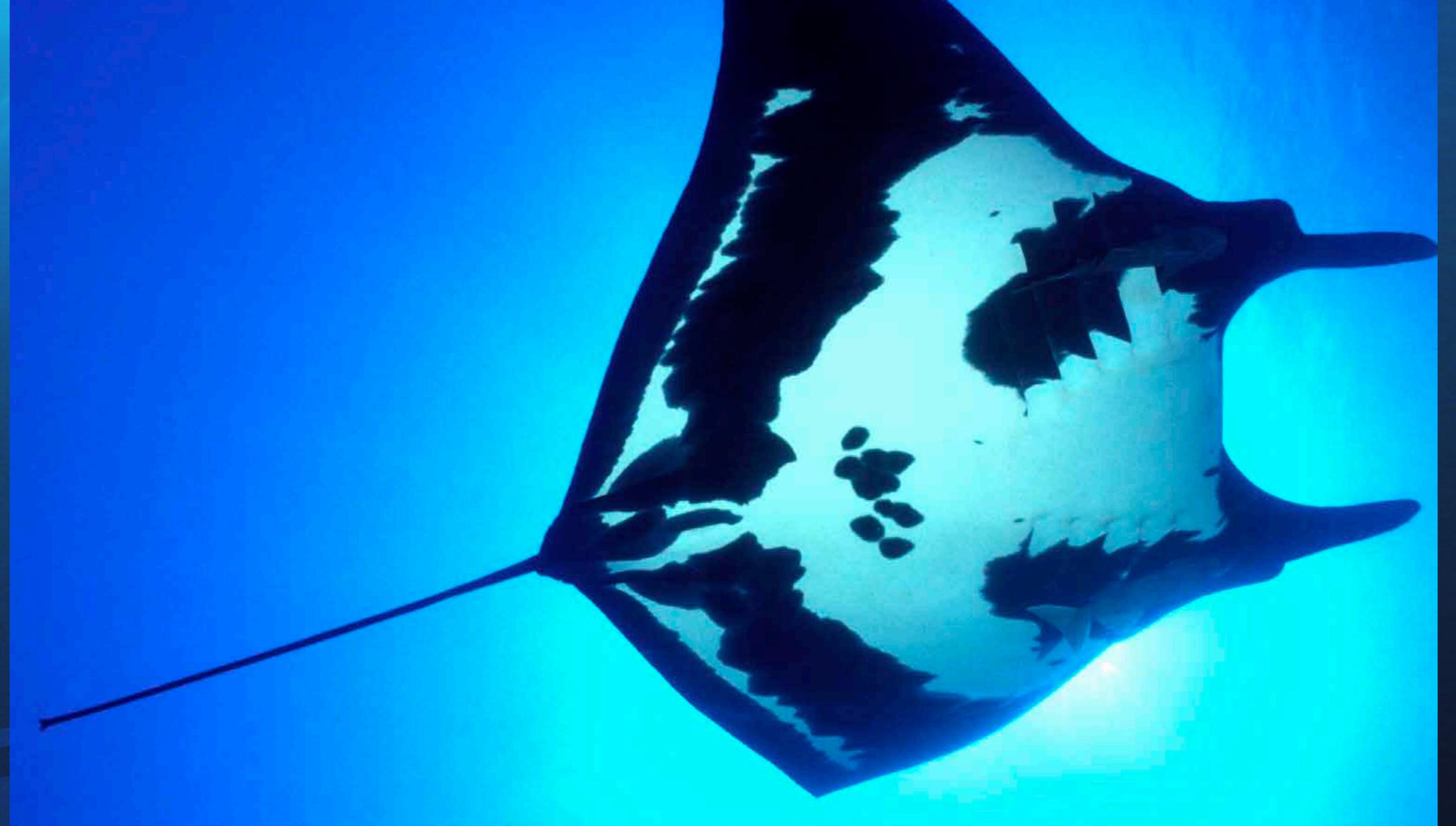




Peter  
Benchley  
Ocean  
Awards  
Honorees

### About the Benchley Awards

The Peter Benchley Ocean Awards are the world's preeminent ocean awards and are unique in acknowledging outstanding achievement across many sectors of society leading to the protection of our ocean, coasts and the communities that depend on them. Co-founded by Wendy Benchley and David Helvarg, and named in honor of Peter Benchley, author of *Jaws*, this Award celebrates the life and legacy of a man who spent more than 40 years educating the public and expanding awareness of the importance of protecting sharks and ocean ecosystems.



# about



The phenomenon of *Jaws* changed ocean awareness and put Peter Benchley on a 30-year journey to help educate the public about the importance of protecting sharks and our seas.

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## Celebrating the Benchley Honorees

The fifty-five honorees showcased in this book are the best of the best in their unique fields. Each one has made an extraordinary contribution in safeguarding and revitalizing our seas. The collective impact of innovative ideas, breakthrough research, and new solutions put forward by all the honoree's efforts has been transformational for marine conservation and span a wide array of expertise, including: overfishing, habitat destruction, species extinction, climate change, acidification, pollution, dead zones, shark finning, marine protected areas, marine spatial planning, smart coastal development, fisheries reform, revoking foreign fishing licenses, rigorous regulatory enforcement, coral reef restoration, reverse fishing licenses, molecular forensics, deep-sea exploration, transformational port management, coastal clean-ups, recycling programs, ocean economic development, green jobs, inspirational journalism, photography, and films along with powerful grass roots activism.

These individuals are an inspiration to their peers and to all of us who care about protecting our blue planet.



## Categories of Excellence

Peter Benchley Ocean Award recipients are chosen annually from among hundreds of global nominations submitted by respected marine organizations and individuals. The selection committee is focused on recognizing truly exceptional efforts, therefore not all categories are awarded each year.

Excellence in National Stewardship

Excellence in Science

Excellence in Policy

Excellence in Media

Excellence in Solutions

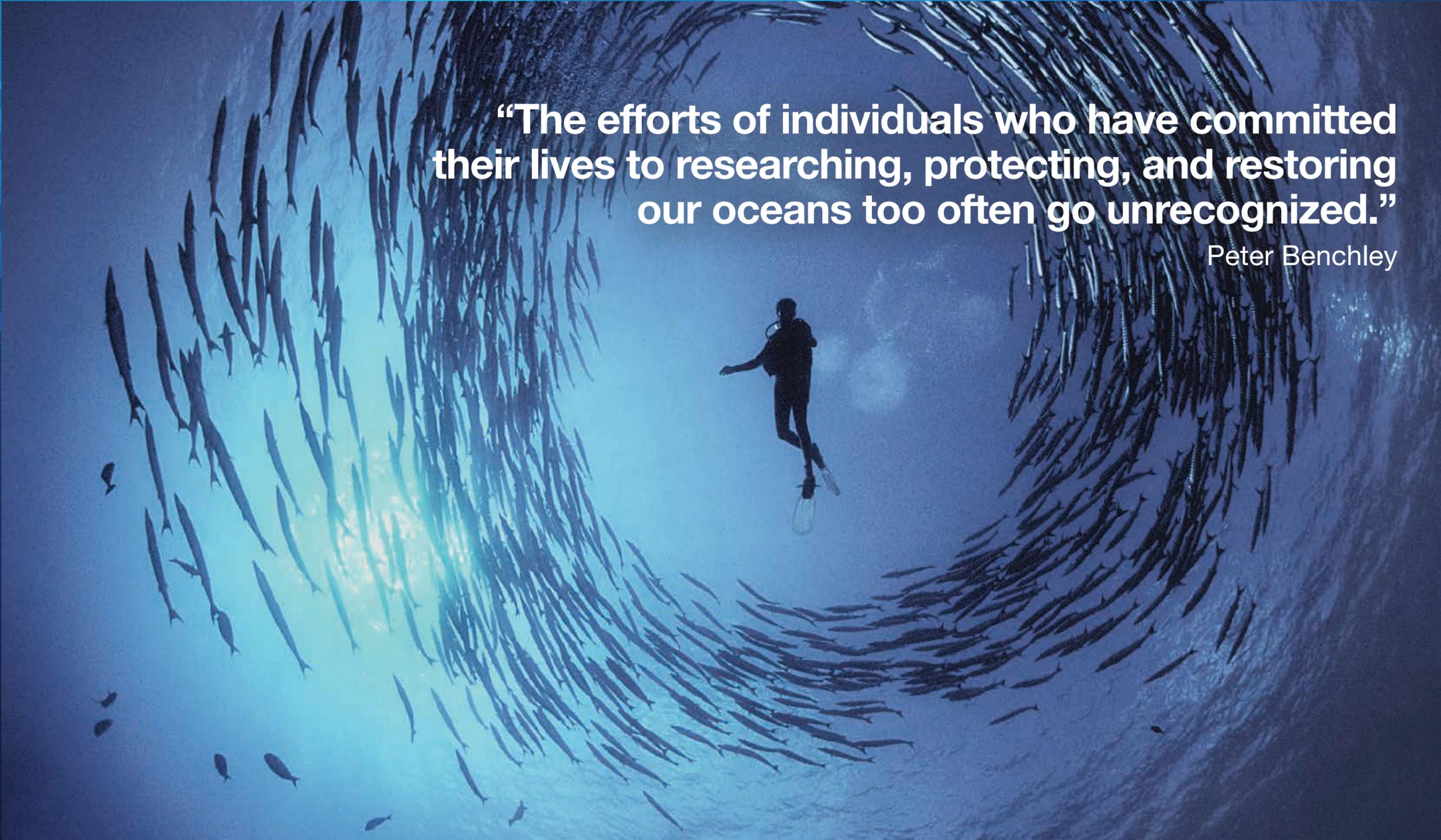
Excellence in Marine Exploration

Ocean Spirit Foundation Award

Christopher Benchley Youth Award

Hero of the Seas Award

excellence

An underwater photograph showing a diver in silhouette swimming through a massive, dense school of fish. The fish are arranged in a circular pattern around the diver, creating a tunnel-like effect. Sunlight filters through the water from the top, creating a bright glow. The overall color palette is deep blue and cyan.

**“The efforts of individuals who have committed their lives to researching, protecting, and restoring our oceans too often go unrecognized.”**

Peter Benchley



# national stewardship of the ocean

Awarded to the representative of a nation that has made a unique and exceptional contribution to the protection, restoration and appreciation of our global oceans.



## National Stewardship, 2011

**Laura Chinchilla**, President of Costa Rica

President Chinchilla took courageous action to protect the ocean and support her nation's economy by signing an executive decree establishing a new 2,900 square mile marine reserve around the world-famous Cocos Island National Park, renowned as home for many kinds of sharks. This created the second largest marine protected area in the eastern Pacific after the Galapagos Islands.



## National Stewardship, 2012

**Anote Tong**, President of Kiribati

President Tong was instrumental in creating one of the world's largest and most biologically rich marine protected areas, the Phoenix Islands Protected Area. Speaking out forcefully against the threat of climate change and sea level rise, he led a group of 15 Island nations to come together to form the Pacific "Oceanscape," a staggeringly large space that covers more than ten percent of the world's ocean area and is the largest conservation declaration in history.





## National Stewardship, 2013

**Macky Sall**, President of Senegal

As one of his first acts after his election in 2012, President Sall rescinded the licenses of 29 pelagic fishing vessels belonging to foreign countries in Senegal's Exclusive Economic Zone. Within months of his action thousands of local fishermen were seeing their catches dramatically increased and their families and communities food supply and livelihoods restored. President Sall is moving forward with plans to ensure a sustainable domestic fishery free of foreign exploitation, which will serve as a model for other West African nations whose fisheries have also been ravaged.

## National Stewardship, 2014

**Maria Damanaki**, EU Commissioner

Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries for the European Union, Greek politician and author, Maria Damanaki has initiated and enforced groundbreaking policies to end illegal fishing practices across the EU and around the globe. She has guided the creation of a new fisheries management model to transform the recovery of the bluefin tuna—a highly endangered and prized apex predator—through improved scientific data monitoring, boosting compliance, improving recovery plans, and enforcing tough decisions. She has also led ambitious efforts to reduce by-catch, promote sustainable fishing practices, and shape policies to encourage a vibrant 'Blue Economy' across the EU and Europe.





## National Stewardship, 2015

### HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco

Prince Albert II of Monaco is a fourth generation ocean champion, who has followed in the footsteps of his great great-grandfather Prince Albert I and his father Prince Rainier III—both strong proponents of environmental protection. Like his ancestors, he is an intrepid voyager who frequently takes part in marine scientific expeditions to directly observe the ocean's most pressing threats—notably he is the only Head of State ever to travel to both poles. Prince Albert II was among the first to bring focus to the alarming state of Mediterranean blue-fin tuna stocks due to uncontrolled overfishing. He has sounded a loud warning about the threats posed by ocean acidification, including the destruction of coral reefs and marine food webs, which will threaten food security for millions. Widely respected for his ocean conservation commitment, Prince Albert II led the preparation of the “Oceans” component of the Rio +20 conference.

His Foundation is dedicated to the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development on a global scale across three geographical zones: the Mediterranean basin (home of the Principality of Monaco), the Polar regions, and the least developed countries, which are severely impacted by the effects of climate change and the loss of marine biodiversity.



# excellence in science

Awarded to an individual or individuals who have provided cutting edge marine science either through his or her efforts or as leader(s) of a team that has advanced the cause of understanding ocean processes, marine ecology and conservation biology.



## Excellence in Science, 2004

### Dr. Ransom “Ram” Myers

Dr. Myers was an eminent fisheries biologist who first sounded the alarm about the damage we were doing to global fisheries with research that showed the number of large fish in the world’s oceans had dropped by 90 percent in the past 50 years. An expert on wildlife extinctions and historic changes to populations, he stunned the world with revelations about dramatic changes in recent decades to the size of large fish—tuna used to be twice as big and marlins were once as large as killer whales. He was an influential leader in the call for policies to save fish species and reform global fisheries.



## Excellence in Science, 2009

### Dr. Jeremy Jackson and Dr. Nancy Knowlton

Two extraordinary leaders in the field of marine ecology and conservation—Dr. Jackson is a distinguished marine ecologist and paleontologist and Dr. Knowlton is an acclaimed coral reef biologist. Working separately and together, they have done extensive research on the impact humans are having to the health, diversity, and abundance of today’s ocean and, in particular, its vital coral reefs, compared to pristine marine ecosystems. Dr. Jackson is a professor at the Scripps Institution for Oceanography, and Dr. Knowlton is Smithsonian Institution’s Sant Chair for Marine Science.





## Excellence in Science, 2010

**Jesse H. Ausubel**

Jesse Ausubel is an environmental scientist and ecology researcher who played a major role in the formulation of the U.S. and world climate research programs. He was instrumental in organizing the first UN World Climate Conference, which elevated the global warming issue on both scientific and political agendas. He helped initiate the Census of Marine Life, an international observation program to assess and explain the diversity and abundance of life in the oceans. Jesse also helped found the Barcode of Life initiative, which aims to provide short DNA sequences that identify all animal and plant species.

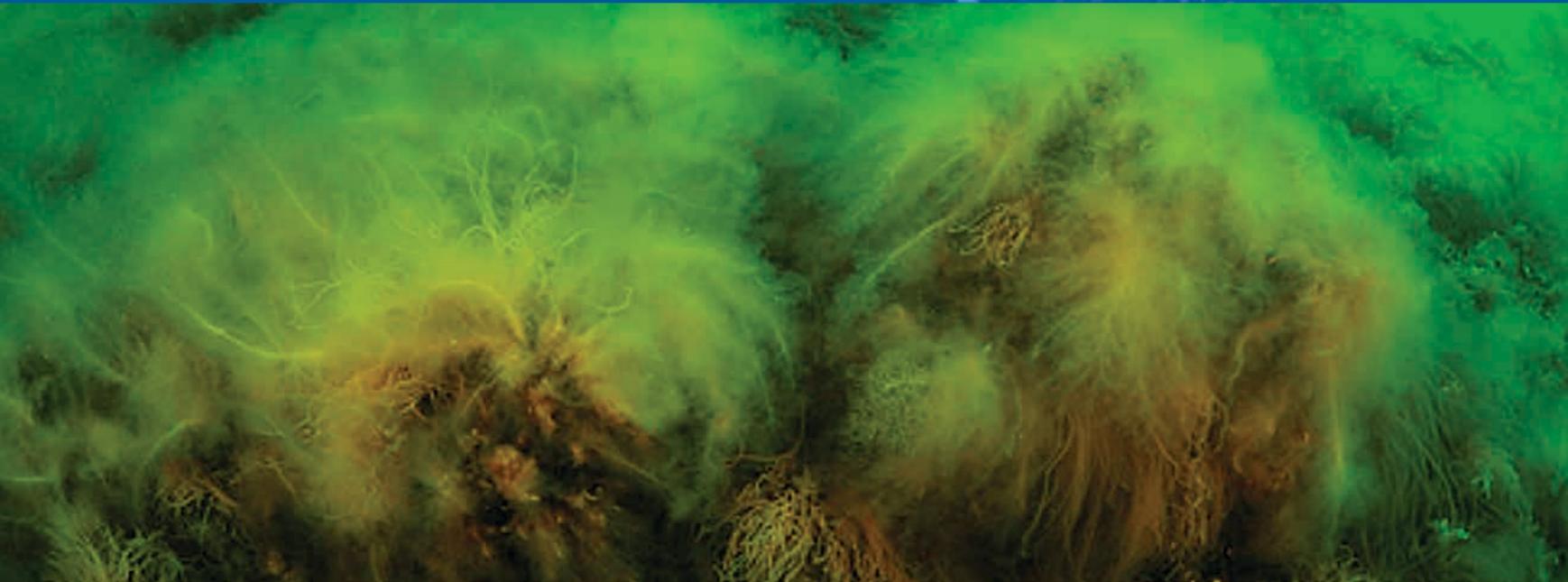


## Excellence in Science, 2011

**Dr. Stephen Palumbi**

Dr. Palumbi is a marine biologist at Stanford University and the director of the Hopkins Marine Station. He pioneered using genetic technologies to better understand marine species and ecosystems. Using molecular forensics, he uncovered the sale of illegal wildlife and has tested the veracity of seafood labels globally at venues ranging from grocery stores to high-end sushi restaurants. He is using these innovative genetic technologies to help design more effective marine parks for conservation.





## Excellence in Science, 2012

### Dr. Nancy Rabalais

Called the “Mother of Dead Zones,” Dr. Rabalais helped to discover and define the Gulf of Mexico’s oxygen depleted dead zone that has grown to the size of New Jersey. While advancing the science on hypoxia for nearly three decades, she has also worked tirelessly to find ways to reduce the surplus fertilizer from agriculture that runs down the Mississippi river into the Gulf of Mexico causing dead zones.

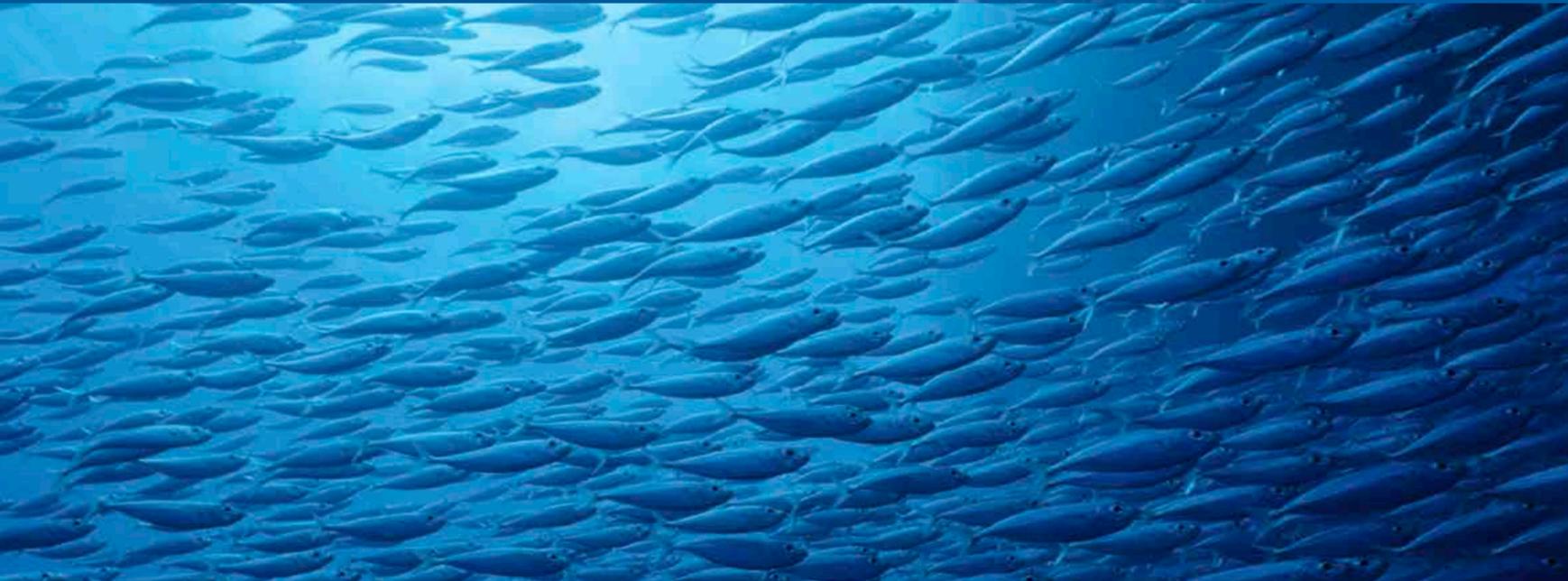


## Excellence in Science, 2013

### Dr. Boris Worm and Dr. Heike Lotze

Working both separately and in collaboration, this husband and wife team of scientists from Dalhousie University in Canada, have significantly increased the world’s knowledge about the changing abundance and diversity of the planet’s fish and marine wildlife populations. Their research is focused on how human activities—fishing and hunting, habitat transformation, and nutrient loading—have strongly accelerated over the centuries and moved from inshore regions to the open ocean and deep sea, causing large-scale patterns of change. Their research has tremendous value for marine conservation initiatives.





## Excellence in Science, 2014

### Dr. Steve Gaines

Steve Gaines is Dean at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at UC Santa Barbara. Steve is a pioneer in the field of sustainable fisheries management, where he has led research efforts to do what's considered impossible —improve both the ecological and economic performance of fisheries. His work in building effective marine reserves, addressing the challenges of exotic species, and analyzing climate change impacts have proven vitally important to the health of our blue planet. Equally valuable is his work building scalable solutions through partnerships among researchers, industry, non-profit groups and governments and the role he's played in mentoring the next generation of marine scientists.



## Excellence in Science, 2015

### Dr. Daniel Pauly

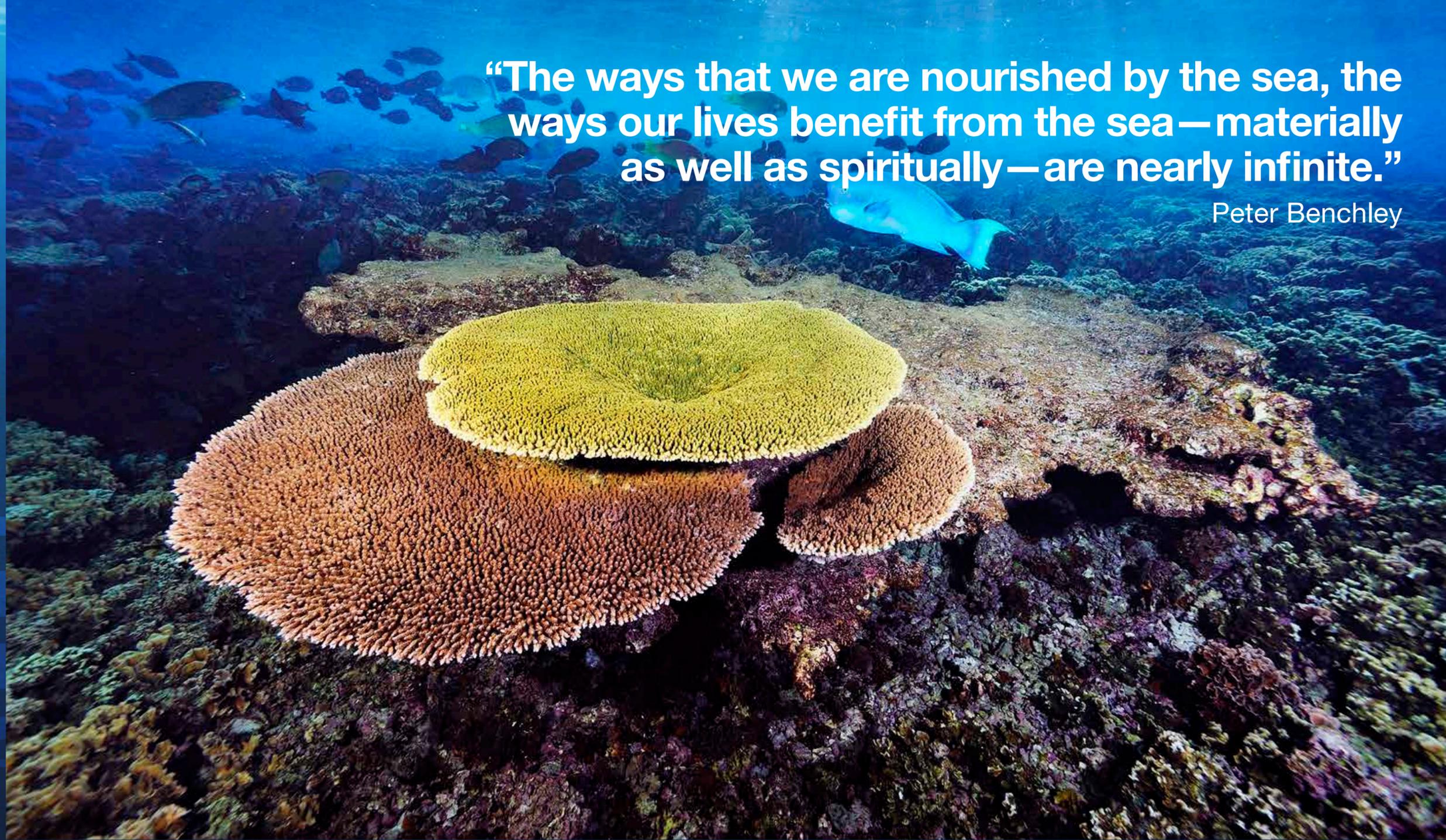
Dr. Daniel Pauly is a preeminent authority on global fisheries and has identified overfishing as a major threat to global food security. He is the founder and principal investigator at the "Sea Around Us Project" at the University of British Columbia, which analyzes the impact of the world's fisheries on marine ecosystems. He is renowned for developing the concept of "Shifting Baselines", which refers to a shift over time in the expectation of how abundant a fish species population was before human exploitation. He is also credited with defining the theory of "fishing down the food web"—a process whereby fisheries having fished out large predatory fish at the top of the food chain must turn to increasingly smaller species and invertebrates.

He has vigorously denounced the damage done by heavily subsidized industrial fishing fleets and their use of technology such as bottom trawling. He is also a leading voice for establishing and enforcing marine protected areas that allow fisheries and ecosystems to recover. A prolific writer and communicator with more than 500 peer-reviewed publications, several books and years of research based out of Germany, the Philippines and Canada, Dr. Pauly is widely respected by policymakers, the media, and his fellow scientists.



**“The ways that we are nourished by the sea, the ways our lives benefit from the sea—materially as well as spiritually—are nearly infinite.”**

Peter Benchley





# excellence in policy

Awarded to an individual who contributes to advancing the cause of sustainable ocean use and protection based on the best available science and through the establishment of effective and enforceable laws and regulations.



## Excellence in Policy, 2004

**U.S. Senator Ernest (Fritz) Hollings**

Often called “The Father of NOAA,” Senator Hollings has been an incredible supporter of our seas. In 1969, he led the way in creating the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which guides the use and protection of U.S. ocean and coastal resources, the national weather service and hurricane center, and directs the establishment of marine sanctuaries. Throughout his distinguished career, he championed marine science research and other vital ocean initiatives including the introduction of the National Ocean Policy and Leadership Act in 2004.

## Excellence in Policy, 2009

**U.S. Representative Sam Farr**

Congressman Sam Farr is a fifth-generation Californian who is the founder and the co-chair of the House Oceans Caucus. He has consistently fought successful battles to fund a wide range of ocean programs and legislation that address marine debris, prevention of off-shore oil drilling, coral reef conservation, and banning genetically engineered salmon.





## Excellence in Policy, 2010

### Dr. Jane Lubchenco

Dr. Lubchenco was appointed by President Obama to be the Under Secretary of Commerce and the Administrator of NOAA, The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, where she was an exceptional leader and visible public voice for the oceans with policy makers. She is a marine ecologist and environmental scientist by training, with expertise in oceans, climate change, and the complex interactions between the marine environment and humanity.



## Excellence in Policy, 2011

### Admiral Thad Allen, USCG Retired

Admiral Allen was instrumental in leading efforts to address significant sea ice melting in the Arctic, and to convey urgency around the need for policies to address the issue of climate change. He was widely praised for his outstanding performance directing the federal response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and for his work as National Incident Commander of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

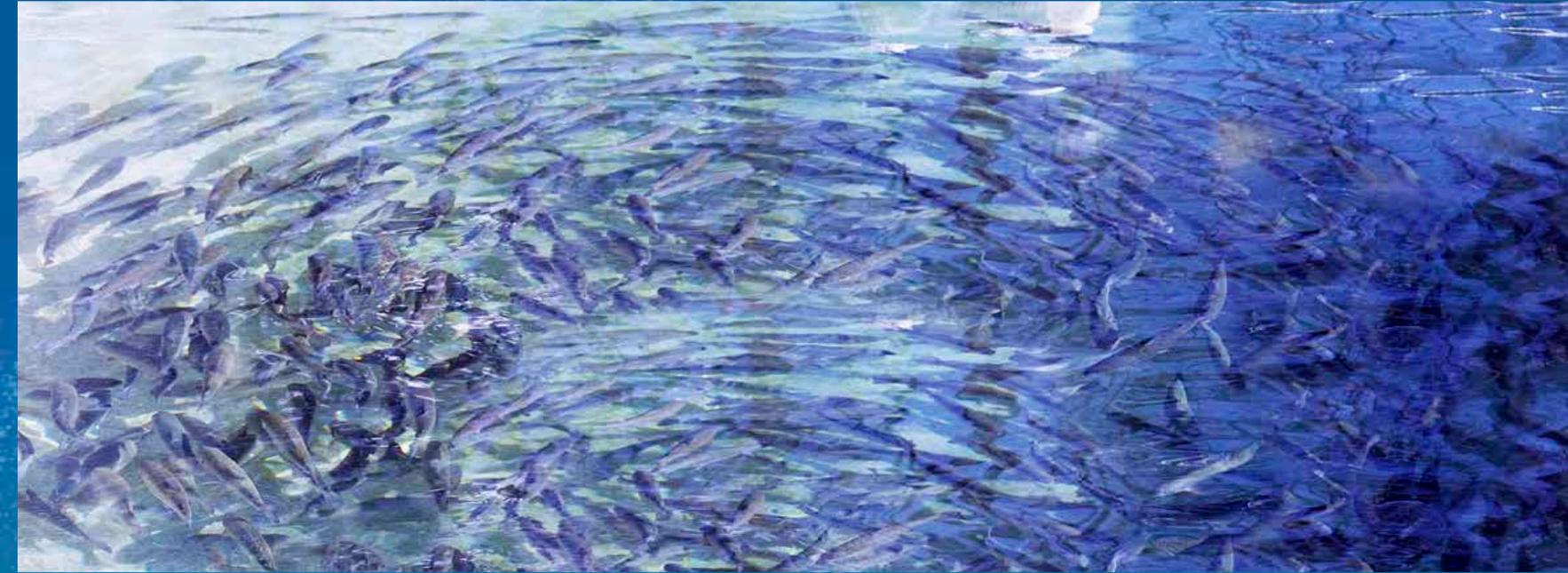




## Excellence in Policy, 2012

### U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

With America's oceans and coasts under increasing pressure from pollution, acidification, and severe storms, Senator Whitehouse is a staunch ocean champion who is fighting to understand, preserve and safeguard the oceans. He helped establish the Senate Oceans Caucus and continues to lead the Senate effort to establish a National Endowment for the Oceans.



## Excellence in Policy, 2013

### U.S. Representative Ed Markey

Representative (now Senator) Ed Markey has a powerful record of support for the oceans including as an outspoken critic of offshore drilling and of BP's handling of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. He has promoted legislation to address climate change and ocean acidification, supports sustainable fishing policies and, as the ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee, he was a strong defender of the U.S. National Ocean Policy, the Clean Water Act and other environmental protections.





## Excellence in Policy, 2014

### Secretary Leon Panetta

Leon Panetta was born and raised on the scenic Monterey Bay coastline of California, an area he later served as a Member of Congress before becoming White House Chief of Staff, Director of Central Intelligence Agency, and U.S. Secretary of Defense. He led the prestigious Pew Ocean Commission, a blue-ribbon panel that examined the health of our public seas and sounded the alarm on overfishing, pollution, and climate change (among other marine threats). This noteworthy report was a wake-up call for our nation and ushered in formation of the U.S. National Ocean Policy now being implemented. He also played a central role in the establishment of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in his home waters.



## Excellence in Policy, 2015

### Secretary of State John F. Kerry

Few policy makers are able to make a difference at every scale, but Secretary Kerry has done so as a staunch ocean supporter for more than four decades. His love and respect of the ocean was instilled at an early age—clamming, fishing, and sailing in Massachusetts (in Buzzard's Bay and on the Cape) and serving in the Navy spending time on many Pacific Islands. As a U.S. Senator for 28 years, he worked hard to restore the health of Boston Harbor and to shape legislation that would encourage coastal states to implement strong coastal zone management plans. He served as chairman of the Senate Oceans and Fisheries Subcommittee where he updated the landmark Magnuson-Stevens fishery laws several times to include important provisions for sustainable fisheries and to bolster ocean conservation. He authored legislation that created the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, a marine protected area in Massachusetts Bay.

As Secretary of State, he has integrated oceans, climate, energy, and other critical global environmental issues into the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy. He has advanced efforts to end illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and encouraged President Obama and other world leaders to expand marine protected areas such as the U.S. Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, which expanded six-fold in size and is now the world's largest marine protected area. He initiated and hosted the first "Our Ocean" global leadership conference in June 2014 to discuss the threats facing our ocean and catalyze innovative marine conservation ideas across all sectors of society. As chair of the eight-nation Arctic Council, Secretary Kerry will bring an appreciation for this fragile climate-impacted region to the important deliberations on its future.



An underwater photograph showing the hull of a boat in the upper left. The water is clear and blue. Various marine animals are visible, including several large rays swimming towards the camera, and many smaller fish scattered throughout the scene. The lighting is bright, suggesting a shallow depth.

**“The sea is worthy more of respect and protection than of fear and exploitation.”**

Peter Benchley

# excellence in media

Awarded to an individual or media outlet that shows exceptional ability in communicating ocean issues of concern to the public in ways that inform and/or inspire people to act as engaged citizens.



## Excellence in Media, 2004

### Naples Daily News

The *Naples Daily News* was recognized as a recipient in our inaugural awards for the outstanding news coverage they have continuously given to the Gulf of Mexico, specifically a 15-part series called “*Deep Trouble: The Gulf in Peril*” about the region’s extensive environmental challenges.



## Excellence in Media, 2009

### Mark Shelly

Mark Shelley is Founder and the Executive Director of Sea Studios Foundation, a non-profit team of filmmakers, scientists, and social entrepreneurs, united by a common passion to inspire a healthy and sustainable future and a deeper understanding of the vital role the ocean plays in Earth’s life support system. A producer of many award-winning films, Sea Studios Foundation is best known for its award-winning National Geographic prime-time series, “*Shape of Life*” and “*Strange Days on Planet Earth*” hosted by Edward Norton.





## Excellence in Media, 2010

### Louie Psihoyos

Academy Award winning director, Louie Psihoyos, who is Executive Director of the Oceanic Preservation Society, shocked the world with a breakthrough environmental documentary, *The Cove*. Using hidden cameras and microphones, he uncovered the savagery and environmental horrors taking place inside a hidden cove in Taiji, Japan. Psihoyos' movie paints a clear analogy with this small seaside village serving as a microcosm of massive ecological crimes happening worldwide.



## Excellence in Media, 2011

### Juliet Eilperin

As newspapers drastically downsized environmental and marine science coverage, Juliet Eilperin's continuous and informed environmental reporting stayed front and center at *The Washington Post*. As part of covering the "global blue beat" she also penned an outstanding book about sharks called *Demon Fish: Travels Through the Hidden World of Sharks*, an eye-opening adventure investigating the fascinating ways that different individuals and cultures relate to the ocean's top predator.





## Excellence in Media, 2012

### **Brian Skerry**

A veteran National Geographic underwater photo-journalist and visual storyteller, Brian Skerry uses the power of his lens to give voice to the world's oceans and to connect people emotionally to its incredible beauty and destruction. Most people will never get a chance to dive in the oceans, but everyone on Earth depends upon them, so Brian uses his photography to create urgency and to compel the world to take action.



## Excellence in Media, 2013

### **Nancy Baron and COMPASS**

Trained as a zoologist and science writer, Nancy Baron is the longtime Ocean Science Outreach Director for the Communications Partnership for Science and the Seas, known as COMPASS. She is renowned for training marine scientists in communications skills necessary to talk to the media, policymakers, and the public about their findings in a relevant, understandable way. She has played a pivotal role in establishing strong links between thousands of scientists and journalists, ensuring that critical changes and discoveries about our oceans become news and information that the world can benefit from and use.





## Excellence in Media, 2014

### Gabriela Cowperthwaite

First time documentary director, Gabriela Cowperthwaite, created a powerful work of investigative reporting in her widely seen *Blackfish*. The film takes a close look at important issues of worker safety, corporate duplicity and the treatment of captive whales, following the death of a SeaWorld trainer in 2010, killed by an aggressive bull orca that had been held in captivity for 30 years. Gabriela's work has led to protests and boycotts over concerns about the treatment of whales, dolphins, and other marine wildlife that are used for shows and exhibitions.



## Excellence in Media, 2015

### The *Economist*

The *Economist* has been an influential weekly news publication since 1843 with a contemporary circulation of some 1.5 million highly educated readers. Unlike many news outlets where environmental journalism has receded, The *Economist* has dedicated a significant amount of its news coverage to the growing and varied challenges facing the world's ocean and provided thoughtful analysis on their impacts on the global economy.

Along with superior and consistent coverage of crucial marine issues ranging from the Arctic to the high seas to ports, over-fishing and climate change, The *Economist* has also distinguished itself by establishing a superb high-level "World Ocean Summit". This annual Summit brings together world leaders, policymakers, innovators, businesses, scientists and journalists to talk about the ocean in new way—igniting an informed dialog about what the world needs to do to create a "blue economy" where economic opportunity and growth are balanced by responsible investment in a sustainable ocean.

The interest and enthusiasm that the "World Ocean Summit" has created for ocean has broadened the blue community well beyond the confines of traditional marine conservation and encourages scalable, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable innovations that contribute to the long-term health of the oceans.





**“Save the sharks, and we can save the oceans.”**

Peter Benchley

# excellence in solutions

Awarded to an individual who helps find or create a practical solution to one of the many environmental challenges confronting our seas.



## Excellence in Solutions, 2011

**Dr. Greg Stone**

Dr. Stone is one of the world's leading authorities on marine conservation policy and ocean health issues. A lifelong scientific explorer and prolific diver with more than 8,000 dives to date, he led a decade long effort to create the world's second largest marine protected area (an area about the size of California) around the Phoenix Islands in the country of Kiribati, which was later designated a World Heritage Site.

## Excellence in Solutions, 2012

**Dr. Geraldine Knatz**

As Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles—America's Port—Dr. Knatz was the first woman and first marine biologist to run a major port. She led the clean-up of the largest port complex in the Western Hemisphere, where a billion dollars of goods is moved daily. She greatly improved air quality (over 75 percent) and water quality to the extent that sea lions and sharks now visit a harbor whose waters were once black and full of garbage.



# excellence in exploration

Awarded to an individual or group that contributes to our understanding of the seas through bold exploring and courageous efforts to uncover new and different aspects of our ocean planet.



## Excellence in Exploration, 2010

### Don Walsh

Oceanographer, explorer, and marine engineer, Don Walsh and Jacques Piccard were the first explorers to descend to the deepest point of the world's oceans, the Mariana Trench. Designated the U.S. Navy's first submersible pilot, for 50 years he has spearheaded bold engineering projects including the design, manufacture, and operations of world-class undersea systems.

## Excellence in Exploration, 2012

### Ocean in Google Earth

Inspired by a challenge from ocean explorer Dr. Sylvia Earle, Ocean in Google Earth has revolutionized ocean access by offering a below-the-surface portal to anyone with a computer to virtually explore the wonders of our vast oceans in ways that previously could only be experienced by a handful of highly experienced divers.





## Excellence in Exploration, 2014 Prince Khaled bin Sultan & Living Oceans Foundation

An avid scuba diver and conservationist, his Royal Highness Prince Khaled bin Sultan of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, established a visionary ocean research and expeditionary non-profit in 2000, the KBS Living Oceans Foundation, around the concept of “Science Without Borders.” Its major research vessel, The Golden Shadow, has explored many of Earth’s coral rich seas, producing new and detailed maps of reef ecosystems, creating valuable new databases for science, promoting a new generation of coral researchers as well as new sensing and mapping technology.

## Excellence in Exploration, 2015 Nainoa Thompson



Charles Nainoa Thompson is a native Hawaiian navigator and the president of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. He is best known as the first Hawaiian in seven centuries to practice the ancient Polynesian art of long-distance navigation known as “wayfinding,” a practice which relies on navigational clues using the sun and stars, winds and clouds, seas and swells, and birds and fish—but no western instruments. Nainoa’s successful launch and navigation of Hōkūle‘a, a traditional double-hulled voyaging canoe to Tahiti in 1976, proved the efficacy of this non-instrument navigational system to the world and inspired a revival of Hawaiian knowledge and culture. For decades, he has dedicated himself to teaching the skills and values of wayfinding to generations of navigators throughout the Pacific Islands.

Nainoa has sailed the Hōkūle‘a over 145,000 nautical miles throughout the Pacific and is currently on a journey around the world to grow the traditional knowledge movement and ensure a more sustainable future for Earth’s ocean.



**“Without the oceans there  
would be no life on Earth.”**

Peter Benchley

# ocean spirit foundation

The Ocean Spirit Foundation Award went to a charitable foundation whose work provided measurable and enduring benefit to the cause of ocean and coastal protection and restoration. This prize category has been discontinued.



## Ocean Spirit Foundation, 2010

### Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

GORDON AND BETTY  
**MOORE**  
FOUNDATION

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, established by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore and his wife Betty, develops large-scale projects in the areas of environmental conservation and scientific research that will improve the quality of life for future generations. Their ocean focus is on reforming fisheries, implementing marine spatial planning, and supporting national ocean policy in British Columbia, the U.S. West Coast, and New England.

**“Sea creatures are exotic, complex  
and more intriguing than anything ever  
imagined by the mind of man.”**

Peter Benchley





# christopher benchley youth award

Awarded to a young person who early in life has already made a significant contribution to marine conservation and public education about our seas.



## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2009

### Zander Srodes

Zander Srodes is passionate about sea turtle conservation—creating an interactive sea turtle seminar for children called “Turtle Talks” at age eleven, writing a children’s activity book that has been distributed for free to more than 250,000 students in six languages, and participating in TEDxTeen talks. Zander is busy traveling the world promoting marine conservation and eco-tourism, and hosting college students on two-week volunteer service trips to Costa Rica, where they work with other NGOs to preserve Leatherback turtle nesting sites.



## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2010

### Kyle Thiermann

Kyle Thiermann is a pro surfer with a passion for systemically affecting change. Combining surfing great waves globally with making short films about current affairs & environmental issues, he focuses on the power we all have to create a better world through everyday actions. He uses the support from his sponsors to generate publicity that encourages people to take action to transform and protect our oceans. As the founder of Surfing for Change, Kyle’s voice has been heard by thousands of young people at universities, high schools, and elementary schools throughout California.



RE-USE  
ME



## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2011

**Rudy Sanchez**

Rudy Sanchez believes in the power of positive change and found his calling in tackling the enormous challenge of plastic pollution in our oceans. He helped start and lead the Rise Above Plastics Youth Speaker Program—a partnership between Green Ambassadors and Surfrider Foundation. He has helped train hundreds of young volunteers to spread the message that everyone can be responsible for changing how they use plastic in their daily lives—especially parents.

## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2012

**Ta’Kaiya Blaney**

Ta’Kaiya Blaney was a ten year-old first-nations Canadian activist and singer who in 2011 courageously fought a proposed tar-sands oil pipeline and tanker terminal planned for British Columbia’s coastal waters. When she learned oil kills sea otters, her favorite animals, she became an activist with Greenpeace and others. Her beautifully sung emotional protest song “Shallow Waters” became a YouTube sensation that touched children and adults alike.

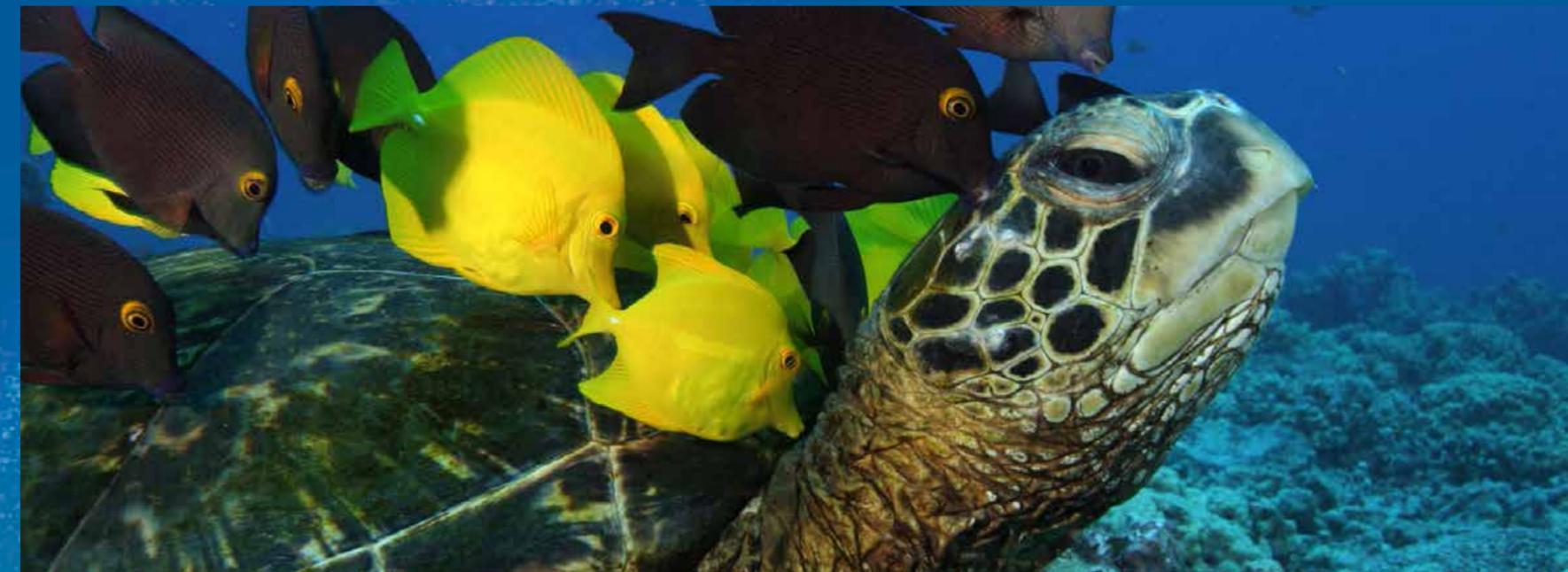




## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2013

### Sean Russell

Twenty-year-old Sean Russell became aware of the tremendous harm that discarded plastic fishing-line was inflicting on marine wildlife as a high school intern at Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida. In response, he founded the “Stow It—Don’t Throw It” project, a statewide monofilament fishing line recycling program that has since gone national. Sean helped lead the first Youth Ocean Conservation Summit, which inspired the creation of the activist Youth Ocean Conservation Team. He has also given countless hours to community service projects while serving as a member of the Florida 4-H Program. Sean is now a senior at the University of Florida.



## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2014

### Casey Sokolovic

16-year-old Casey Sokolovic is a native of North Carolina and the founder of L.A.S.T. (Love A Sea Turtle) whose motto is “Let’s Help Them LAST.” She began supporting sea turtles at the age eight following a third-grade field trip to the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue Center in North Carolina. She has grown and evolved her advocacy efforts from baking and selling turtle-shaped sugar cookies into an educational outreach program and outdoor environmental summer science camp that helps students trace the path of fresh water to the ocean’s coastline. She works with other activists and speaks about sea turtles to young people and adults across the U.S.A.





## Christopher Benchley Youth Award, 2015

### Madison 'Pip' Stewart

"I work for sharks, they are everything to me," says Madison Stewart. The 21-year-old Australian underwater filmmaker has been swimming with sharks for over a decade and has made it her life's mission to halt the decimation of a species she considers her family. Madison Stewart, to friends 'Pip' — her dad was a pirate, her mum was a hippy, and so she became 'Pippy' — is best known as 'shark girl'. She began scuba diving at age 12, and turned to home schooling at age 14 so she could focus more of her time on diving and filming tiger sharks and other endangered apex predators on the Great Barrier Reef.

Over the last seven years, she's campaigned against the shark meat and shark finning trade in Australia, Mexico, Fiji, Palau and in other locales. She was the subject of an award-winning Smithsonian documentary, "Shark Girl," and believes that the most important career she can be involved in is the protection of the planet — and thus her own future.





**“We know now that if we don’t stop the decline  
we may damage our planet irreparably—  
economically, environmentally, even existentially.”**

Peter Benchley

# hero of the seas

Awarded to a marine grassroots activist or activists who have made a major and long-term commitment to improving the quality of our seas and the communities that depend on them.



## Hero of the Seas, 2004

**Derickson "Dery" W. Bennett**

Dery Bennett was a coastal conservation trailblazer who found his life's calling when he joined a fledgling nonprofit, the American Littoral Society, which was dedicated to the preservation of coastal habitats and wildlife. He fought to end dumping of sewage sludge, stop dredging/filling of coastal wetlands for development, and to protect public access to the beach. He saved many natural coastal lands from development and mentored an entire new generation of coastal advocates.

## Hero of the Seas, 2009

**Richard Charter**

Richard Charter has worked for three decades with local, state, and federal officials to ensure continued protection of coastlines threatened by offshore oil and gas drilling, to restore coastal ecosystems, and to create new marine protected areas. He led the 27-year bipartisan Congressional moratorium on offshore oil and gas leasing which, until 2009, had prevented new drilling along the U.S. West Coast, the East Coast, and in Southwest Florida.





## Hero of the Seas, 2010

### Cynthia “Cyn” M. Sarthou

Cynthia Sarthou has been Executive Director of the Gulf Restoration Network, headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana since 1995. The GRN is a diverse network committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the dwindling resources of the Gulf Region. She works to coordinate among and build the capacity of the grassroots groups across the Gulf, and pursues regional campaigns on priority issues that include: monitoring the BP oil spill aftermath, water pollution, wetlands protection, sustainable fisheries, and species at risk. She elevates regional issues to a national level and monitors federal agency actions that affect the Gulf States.



## Hero of the Seas, 2011

### Kathy Fletcher

A fifth generation Washingtonian, Kathy committed her career to restoring and healing the Pacific Northwest's coastline from the impacts of industrial abuse and aggressive development. In 1991 she founded and led a citizens organization, People for Puget Sound, which fostered hands-on restoration work and educated tens of thousands of “Sound Stewards.” She has been exceptional in eliminating coastal contamination, halting the destruction of natural habitats, enforcing regulations, and holding public officials accountable.





## Hero of the Seas, 2012

### **Peter Douglas**

Called the “Sentry of California’s Coast,” Peter Douglas, fought for decades to preserve the California coast’s vast stretches of pristine beaches, jagged cliffs and delicate wetlands. For 26 years, he was the Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission, the powerful state agency that he helped create, with a mandate to keep the coast open to the public by limiting coastal construction, ensuring public access to beaches and advocating for regulation of offshore drilling. He helped create thousands of acres of parklands and public trails, secured more than 1,300 easements for paths to the shore through private property, and led the preservation of Highway 1 as a two-lane road weaving through farmland, cliffs and dunes.



## Hero of the Seas, 2013

### **Karen Garrison and Kaitilin Gaffney**

For more than a decade, Karen Garrison and Kaitilin Gaffney have worked tirelessly to ensure effective design and implementation of California’s Marine Life Protection Act, resulting in a landmark network of ocean wilderness parks that now cover 16 percent of California state waters. While working for the Natural Resources Defense Council and Ocean Conservancy, Karen and Kaitilin built important relationships with scientists, conservationists, and policy-makers, but kept a keen focus on grassroots organizing, which allowed them to listen to people’s concerns and work to find solutions that met everyone’s needs.

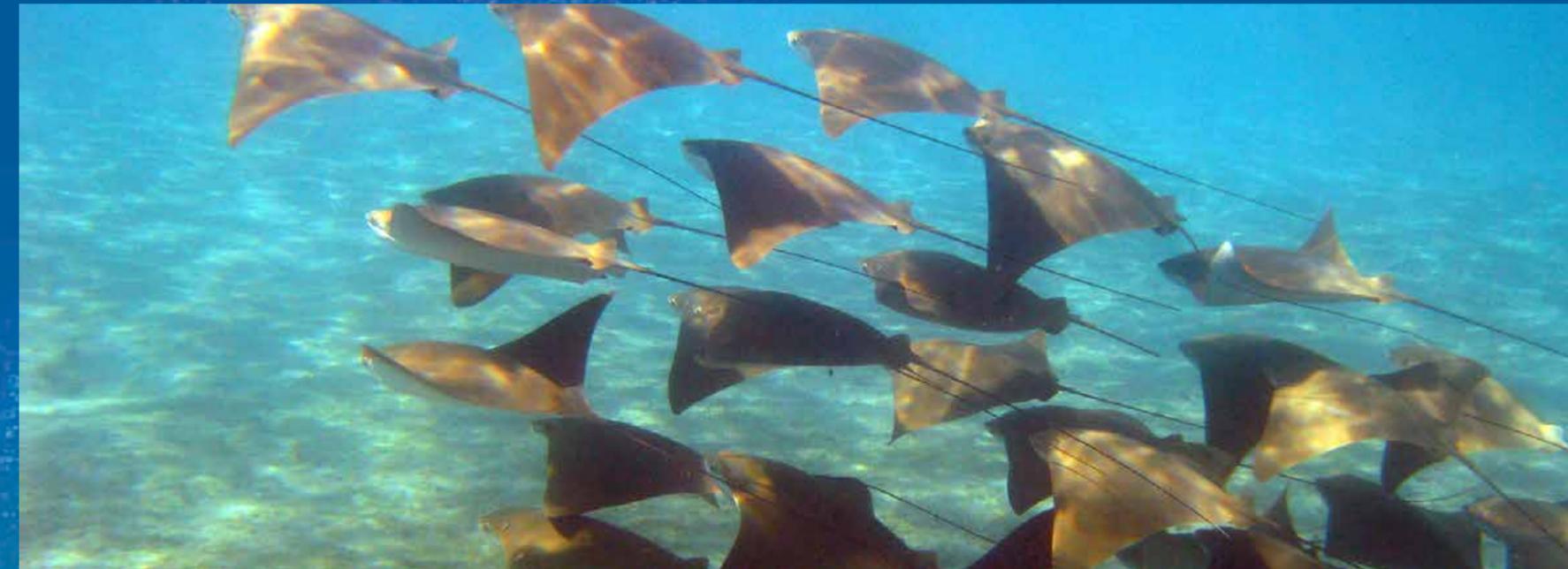




## Hero of the Seas, 2014

### **Captain Charles Moore**

Captain Charles Moore grew up on the Pacific Ocean, sailing from a young age. He founded the Algalita Marine Research Institute in 1994 “to protect and restore the marine environment.” In 1997 he charted an ocean course through the North Pacific Gyre and discovered “The Great Pacific Garbage Patch”—an enormous floating vortex of plastic debris and trash. Despite its size and density, this patch is not visible by satellite photography or as a continuous debris field to the human eye. Algalita helped develop protocols for monitoring marine and beach micro-plastics that are now in use worldwide. His research voyages and the media attention that his published papers generated have helped us better understand the magnitude of our plastic “footprint” and its dangerous impacts to fish and human health.



## Hero of the Seas, 2015

### **Todd Miller**

Coastal North Carolinian native Todd Miller was raised fittingly in the community of “Ocean” where he and his sisters spent endless joyful hours swimming, sailing, fishing, shrimping, and exploring the natural habitats of Bogue Sound. In 1982 he founded the North Carolina Coastal Federation to empower coastal residents and ordinary citizens to protect and restore the water quality and important natural marine habitats in North Carolina.

Under Miller’s guidance, the federation has actively campaigned in the face of excessive coastal development pressure for restoration programs encompassing over 40,000 acres of estuaries and 8,500 acres of land acquired for preservation. These efforts have rejuvenated oyster reefs, salt marshes, local wildlife and other key components of North Carolina’s uniquely beautiful coast.



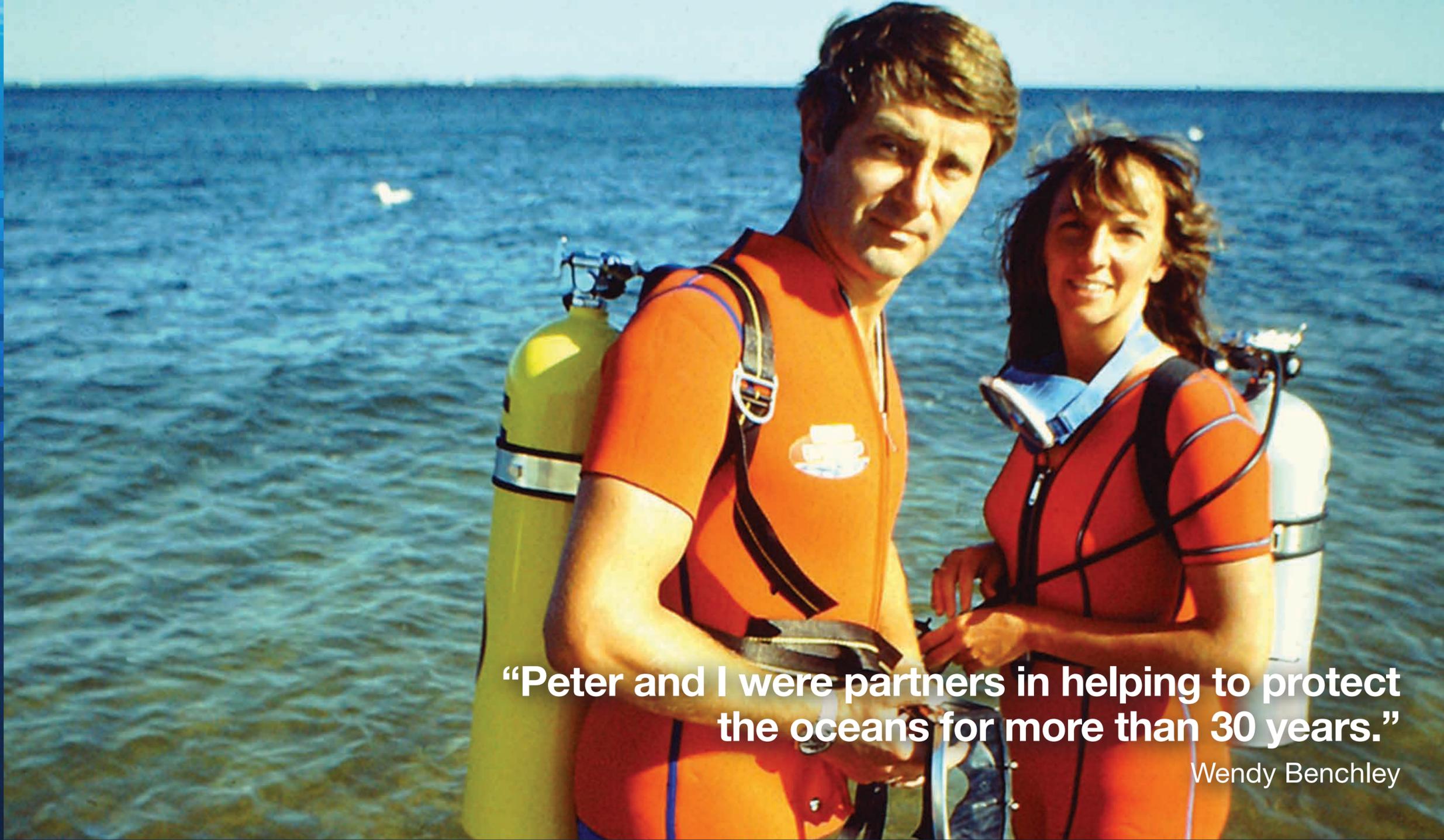


## Hero of the Seas, 2015

### Dana Beach

Protecting the air, water and landscape that make South Carolina a special place has been Dana Beach's life's work. He was twenty-eight when he quit his job as a New York investment banker, got married and went on his honeymoon to Rwanda, where he and his wife were transformed by the gentle touch of a young gorilla. He returned from this experience and founded the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League. Today, the Columbia S.C. native is his state's most prominent and influential environmentalist. Dana has systematically built an eco-political powerhouse that dwarfs other environmental groups in the state. Along with successfully fighting industrial hog farms, coal plants and other unsound development, his group and its partners have protected over one million acres of South Carolina's spectacular coastline.





**“Peter and I were partners in helping to protect the oceans for more than 30 years.”**

Wendy Benchley



# award co-founders

Celebrating The Seventh Annual Benchley Awards



## Wendy Benchley

### Award Co-Founder

Wendy Benchley has enjoyed a long career as an environmental activist, elected government office-holder, and strong voice for supporting environmental initiatives at the local, regional and national levels. Wendy and her husband Peter Benchley, spent more than 30 years as committed conservation partners collaborating and convening with those who could most impact ocean protection—leading marine scientists and non-profits, influential policy makers, business leaders, and the media. As an avid scuba diver and global citizen who enjoys “field visits with sharks”, Wendy is a tireless champion of raising awareness and educating the public about the importance of protecting sharks and essential marine ecosystems.

Her environmental life began in the ‘70’s as a co-founder and Trustee of the New Jersey Environmental Federation, where she fought against hazardous substances in the home, developing award-winning educational campaigns to encourage people to stop using toxic products. For more than 25 years, Wendy was actively engaged in addressing national environmental issues with the Environmental Defense Fund and served as a member of their National Board of Trustees. Today, Wendy serves as an Advisory Trustee for The Environmental Defense Fund, on the International Board of WildAid, and serves on the Boards of Shark Savers and The Blue Frontier Campaign.

## David Helvarg

### Award Co-Founder

David Helvarg is co-founder of the Peter Benchley Ocean Awards, Executive Director of Blue Frontier Campaign, and an author. He is editor of the *Ocean and Coastal Conservation Guide* and the Executive Producer of the *Blue Vision Summit*, a high-level gathering of ocean activists, marine scientists and policy-makers held biennially in Washington, D.C. He is an award-winning journalist, who worked as a war correspondent in Northern Ireland and Central America, covered a range of issues from military science to the AIDS epidemic, and reported from every continent including Antarctica.

David has produced more than forty broadcast documentaries for PBS, The Discovery Channel, and others. His print work has appeared in publications and online including *The New York Times*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, *Popular Science*, *Sierra*, *Parade* magazine; his reporting has taken him to every continent including Antarctica. His books include: *Blue Frontier*, *The War Against the Greens*, *50 Ways to Save the Ocean*, *Rescue Warriors*, *Saved by the Sea*, and his latest, *The Golden Shore—California’s Love Affair with the Sea*. The updated paperback of his memoir, *Saved by the Sea* will be out with New World Library in April 2015. David is a licensed Private Investigator, avid body-surfer, and accomplished scuba diver.



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## Benchley Ocean Awards Selection Committee

<b>Wendy Benchley</b>	Ocean Conservation and Policy Advocate
<b>Dr. Sylvia Earle</b>	Pioneering Oceanographer, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence and Founder of Mission Blue Sylvia Earle Alliance
<b>David Helvarg</b>	Author and Blue Frontier Executive Director
<b>Dr. Nancy Knowlton</b>	Smithsonian Institution
<b>Dr. Jane Lubchenco</b>	Administrator of NOAA, 2009-2013, Oregon State University, Distinguished Professor
<b>Eric Sala</b>	Marine Ecologist for National Geographic
<b>Dr. Greg Stone</b>	Chief Ocean Scientist for Conservation International and Chairman World Economic Forum's Ocean Council
<b>Jim Toomey</b>	Syndicated Cartoonist and creator of <i>Sherman's Lagoon</i> and President Blue Frontier Board

## Blue Frontier

Over the last decade, Blue Frontier has become an acknowledged leader in building the solution-based constituencies needed to protect and restore our ocean, our coasts and the communities, both human and wild, which depend on them.



[www.bluefront.org](http://www.bluefront.org)



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