



WORLD OCEAN
Observatory®

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

2023
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On a winter afternoon in 2003

in Cambridge, Mass, I ducked into a used bookstore on Harvard Square to get out of the weather. Browsing, I found an interesting book, *The Ocean Our Future* – Report of the Independent Commission on the Oceans (Cambridge University Press, 1998), and settled down to read. My life changed. As a maritime museum and preservation professional, I had never understood and contextualized the full implication of the ocean: past, present, and future, caught in the conventional mindset of the ocean as a place from the past, apart.

The Report was the outcome of a 1998 commission convened by Mario Soares, former President of Portugal, and comprised experts across discipline and geography, not an official United Nations enterprise,

but rather an opportunity for a fresh look at the ocean and its value for the benefit of all mankind. The members brought different perspectives to the problem. Uninvited, they produced a plan that, to my mind, is still the clearest, most prescient set of recommendations that could still guide our future engagement with the sea, its sustainability, and its contribution to every aspect of our lives, from fresh water to spiritual solace.

Circumstances have revealed the foresight of the Report as climate and sea level, pollution and acidification, coastal development and international development have continued the real and symbolic erosion of the value of the ocean as the incontrovertible natural system that connects us all.

The key to the Report was the premise that the ocean was “an integrated, global, social system,” thereby transcending conventional focus on species and habitat to relate the ocean to climate, fresh water, food, energy, health, trade, transportation, technology, science, work, finance, policy, law, community development, and cultural traditions.

The penultimate recommendation of the Report’s was this:

There should be a web-based world ocean observatory, an infinitely accessible place of exchange of responsible science and educational service that would unite a constituency of citizens of the ocean worldwide.

That short paragraph was the inspiration and motivation to create the World Ocean Observatory as a transformational tool for ocean awareness through communication.

I proposed the idea to Patricio Bernal, then the Executive Secretary of the UN Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO IOC), to Robert Gagosian, then-President of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute; and to Julie Packard, founder and director of the Monterey Aquarium--in search of permission or validation that such an important, albeit ephemeral thing, could be undertaken by a maritime preservationist without further qualification, without any resources other than energy,

imagination, and a given strategy by which to inform--if not change--the world. Not one of them said *no*; each in their way answered my question with a *why not?* Provocation indeed.

What has ensued is twenty years of invention and innovation, connection through multiple platforms of communication: all at no cost, all promoted relentlessly through social media, networks, partnerships, and all celebrations of the successes of the ocean community worldwide. This work has been supported by financial contributions from family

foundations and individuals who understand the efficiency and economy of the W2O model, and who appreciate the astonishing return on their philanthropic investment embodied in the measurable progress of two decades of commitment to ocean understanding worldwide. We are grateful for the support.

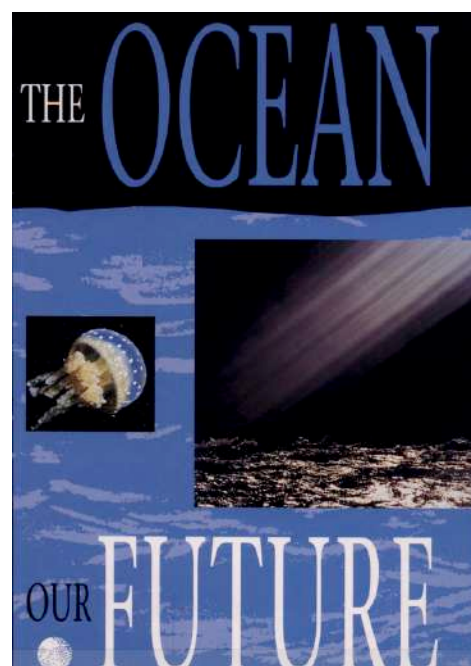
Leonardo de Vinci is said to have observed,

*WATER IS THE DRIVING
FORCE OF NATURE.*

It is a continuum, a dynamic place for the mind and the senses, and a source of energy and inspiration. In our 21st year to come, I submit that the World Ocean Observatory, sourced from a quiet idea, has and will continue to grow as an oceanic function of such force, how, in what form, remains to be discovered, downstream, in our third fluvial decade to come.



Peter Neill, Director



The Ocean Our Future
Independent World Commission on the Oceans
Edited by Mario Soares
Published by Cambridge University Press, 1998
ISBN: 9780511564529





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MISSION

World Ocean Observatory (W2O) is a leading organization advocating for the health and sustainability of the ocean through an accessible worldwide network of communication. Through education, partnership, information exchange, public connection, and relentless communications, W2O is committed to building an expansive global community of *Citizens of the Ocean* to promote and conserve marine resources for the future of all mankind.

GOALS

TO BUILD an educational initiative incorporating ocean information into exhibits, educational innovations, public programs, and informational services.

TO SHARE these resources through partnerships with existing museums, science centers, aquaria, libraries, NGOs, schools and other educational institutions, thereby reaching audiences around the world with the greatest effect and economy of scale.

TO EXPAND public awareness of the implication of the ocean for the future of human survival.

TO SERVE as a central place of exchange for ocean information, education and public discourse as an independent forum and focus for ocean affairs.

TO ADVOCATE for the ocean through an open, worldwide network of communication.

TO PROVIDE a window on the future of the ocean for the general public and decision-makers around the world.

WORLD OCEAN OBSERVATORY

is dedicated to information, education, and public discourse about the ocean defined as an integrated global social system. We believe that informed citizens worldwide can unite to sustain the ocean through adaptation and change of human behavior on land and sea. Our focus is the full spectrum of ocean issues: climate, fresh water, food, energy, trade, transportation, public health, finance, governance, security, recreation, and culture.

For TWENTY YEARS World Ocean Observatory has advocated for the ocean through access to independent, responsible, apolitical science, and has been committed to advancing public understanding of ocean issues through institutional collaboration and partnership, pro-active programs, multiple communications tools, and connection with individual subscribers around the world.

The sea connects all things...

FOLLOW US:



worldoceanobservatory.org

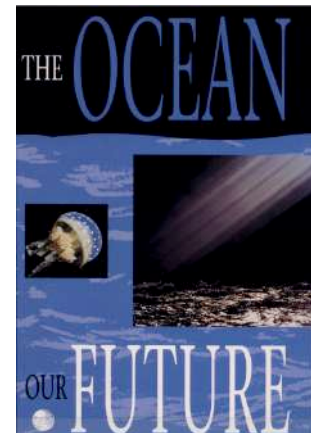
worldoceanobservatory.org



A HISTORY OF THE W2O

1998

Mario Soares, former President of Portugal, organizes the Independent World Commission on the Ocean, comprising leaders and experts from around the globe to create an agenda for the sustainability of the world ocean.. The final outcome of this commission was a report entitled "The Ocean Our Future."



2001

Peter Neill finds a \$1 used copy of *The Ocean Our Future*, Report of the Independent Commission on the Future of the Oceans, in a Cambridge, Massachusetts bookstore. In it he discovers the penultimate recommendation: that there be established a web-based World Ocean Observatory "to serve as a focal point for bringing relevant information from all sources," and "to enable those with an interest in the oceans—and their interactions with land-based activities, rivers, and coastal areas—to better articulate their concerns and express their aspirations."



2002

Neill conducts due diligence interviews with ocean leaders to discuss the opportunity to create the Observatory under the auspices of the South Street Seaport Museum in New York City. Encouraged, Neill begins planning to create the Observatory and to incorporate it into the future-oriented exhibits and programs of South Street Seaport. Museum Board leadership decides not to endorse the project because of its financial implications. Neill does not renew his contract as Executive Director and sets out to undertake the Observatory as an independent project.



2003

Neill establishes the World Ocean Observatory under the interim auspices of The Open Space Institute, a national conservation organization based in New York. WorldOceanObservatory.org is created and a web-based catalog of educational resources and references begins to grow.



2010

World Ocean Radio broadcasts its first five-minute episode on a Wednesday morning on WERU-FM Community Radio in Blue Hill, Maine USA. This is where the concept was born: an idea that was welcomed with open arms, and where every edition to date has been originally broadcast. Since that time World Ocean Radio has expanded its broadcast range, now available at more than 70 college and community radio stations around the world, and available for podcast everywhere.



2014

The inaugural issue of *World Ocean Journal* is published, establishing a digital magazine dedicated to ocean culture and solutions to today's ocean issues. Subsequent issues have included topics related to island living, fresh water, ocean and human health, ocean literacy, and profiles in ocean solutions.

2015

The W2O writes its own bylaws and is established as an independent non-profit organization in Maine USA. W2O is organized as a governing body, an advisory board is established and a board of trustees created to oversee the organization. With the help of a group of prescient donors—private family foundations and individual supporters—W2O expands its comprehensive website and continues to build multiple communications platforms to advocate for the ocean; sharing responsible science and educational services; and building a community of *Citizens of the Ocean* as a constituency for ocean sustainability and conservation worldwide.



2018

W2O joined forces with Bucksport, Maine USA to co-host the International Maritime Film Festival. Since then, the annual festival has taken place either in-person at the Alamo Theatre in Bucksport and/or online during and since the Covid pandemic. The 7th annual festival will take place in-person in September and for one month online after the in-person event. The IMFF is available for maritime museums nationally and internationally as a compendium to their winter programming.



2019

World Ocean Radio broadcasts its 500th 5-minute episode.



2022

World Ocean Explorer launched with its first exhibit: DEEP SEA in collaboration with Schmidt Ocean Institute. Today the Explorer platform consists of THE HUB and DEEP SEA with future modules in development to include POLAR REGIONS, FRESH WATER, CORAL REEFS, MARITIME WORK, SCIENCE AT SEA, CULTURAL OCEAN and more.



2023 and beyond

The W2O website received a 21st century overhaul early in 2023 as a way to better categorize and thematically group web-based content. Resources and programs are amplified and exchanged worldwide through relentless social media, organizational collaborations, network relationships, and educational innovations to reach, after twenty years, a global audience and constituency measured by millions of *Citizens of the Ocean* worldwide.





ADVOCACY THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS

The world ocean remains critically challenged, and yet we must depend on it for every aspect of our future survival: fresh water, food, energy, physical health and mental well-being. While the environmental community has made some progress in certain areas of regulation and conservation, that effort has not succeeded in building adequate public awareness, understanding, and political will. World Ocean Observatory uniquely occupies a strategic niche as a major utility for ocean communication as a means to advance public awareness by providing comprehensive resources on ocean issues.

WORLD OCEAN RADIO

680 editions, 70 college and community radio outlets. Weekly five-minute insights dive into ocean science, advocacy and education.
worldoceanobservatory.org/world-ocean-radio

WORLD OCEAN EXPLORER

A virtual aquarium project, an educational, interactive 3D platform for ocean exploration and discovery of ocean systems.
worldoceanexplorer.org

WORLD OCEAN FORUM

Interactive blog posts fresh ideas, offering new solutions, celebrating the successes of others, and sparking imaginative conversations for the sustainable future of the world ocean.
worldoceanforum.org

OCEAN CURRICULUM CATALOG

Comprehensive list of links to educational content, lesson plans, and educational activities for K-12 and secondary programs.
worldoceanobservatory.org/ocean-curriculum-catalogue

An updated website; a vast social network of hundreds of thousands of individuals and organizations; multiple worldwide partnerships: for twenty years the WORLD OCEAN OBSERVATORY has provided responsible science-based information to institutions, experts, students, teachers, and curious citizens around the world.

Communication and outreach remains our purpose today: to expand strategies related to sharing resources and teaching tools on ocean issues, conservation, and solutions. The future of the ocean depends on a dramatic amplification of these tools and this conversation. Our aim is to build audiences exponentially and to be a major catalyst for transformative behavior for the future of the ocean.

STATISTICS

WEBSITE VISITATION

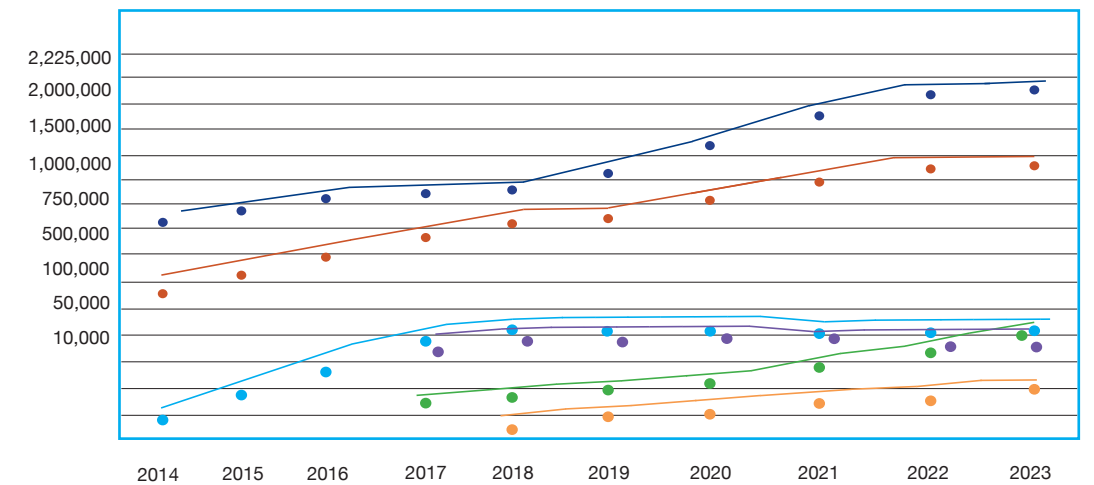
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

E-NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

LINKEDIN ENGAGEMENT

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

WORLD OCEAN FORUM ENGAGEMENT



WORLD OCEAN FORUM®

Fresh ideas, new solutions, provocative and imaginative conversations about the future of the ocean.
A program of the World Ocean Observatory® online at worldoceanobservatory.org

SOLUTIONS CLIMATE BLUE ECONOMY WATER FISHERIES ECOSYSTEM SERVICES SUBMIT ABOUT



WORLD OCEAN EXPLORER: A TRANSFORMATIONAL VIRTUAL AQUARIUM TOOL FOR MARINE EDUCATION WORLDWIDE

worldoceanexplorer.org

THE HUB is the central, organizing space and portal to all other aspects of the virtual aquarium experience: manned submersible; interactive mapping tools; theater for ocean films and lectures; Ocean Classroom Educational Resource Center; and access to all other exhibits including DEEP SEA in collaboration with Schmidt Ocean Institute. THE HUB allows entry into all virtual exhibits, and also contains stand-alone interactive features such as infographics, world maps and seafloor mapping, a full catalog of ocean literacy-related curricular materials, and much more. THE HUB builds the place where we welcome and introduce educational concepts and organizational themes to users anywhere, at any time, at no cost. Our ambition is to make the ocean accessible through inclusive interaction as wide, deep, and dynamic as the ocean itself. THE HUB is the heart of the knowledge contained throughout, central to the organization, circulation and access to learning contained throughout the World Ocean Explorer virtual aquarium.



WORLD OCEAN Observatory®

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN 2023



RESOURCES

ADVOCACY

EDUCATION

W2O UNVEILS WEBSITE REVAMP FOR 20th YEAR

Through the second half of 2022 our staff web design team has been working on a fresh look for our website: worldoceanobservatory.org. The updates highlight our program offerings and make them easier to access. World Ocean Radio and the Curriculum Catalog have been reconfigured and categorized by theme. The home page has received an upgrade and all web content has been reorganized to fall into three categories: Education, Advocacy, and Resources. W2O's website and resources occupy a strategic niche as a major utility for ocean communication, advancing public awareness and political will, and providing comprehensive resources on ocean issues.

Visit worldoceanobservatory.org, share with a friend, email to an educator who might be looking to enhance ocean resources and ocean literacy-related curricular materials for the classroom.

WORLD OCEAN RADIO

WORLD OCEAN OBSERVATORY.ORG

WORLD OCEAN FORUM®

fresh ideas, new solutions, provocative
and imaginative conversations about
the future of the ocean

WORLD OCEAN CURRICULUM CATALOG



DEEP SEA EXHIBIT

WORLD OCEAN EXPLORER®

A VIRTUAL AQUARIUM PROJECT

IN REMEMBRANCE AND WITH GRATITUDE: MARIO SOARES (1924-2017)



Mario Soares, former President of Portugal, socialist, statesman, "father of Portuguese democracy", educator, political prisoner, anti-colonialist, exile, bibliophile, gourmet, and cultural enthusiast, died in 2017 at the age of 92. Soares was a man of enormous spirit, moral sensibility, verbal persuasiveness, and big ideas. He was a mid-20th century statesman of great imagination, energy, and determination who stood up to dictators, served in prison and exile, and exercised his many talents in the name of democracy and statesmanship. For example, in the mid-1990s, Soares convened two independent groups of experts, scientists and politicians to address what he believed were the two most compelling challenges for the future: 1) the sustainability of the world ocean and 2) the equitable availability and distribution of fresh water to the citizens of the world without which civilization could not flourish and survive.

In 1998, the Independent Commission of the Future of the Oceans published "The Ocean, Our Future", still the most insightful and practical statement of policy requirements and recommendations to guide the international community toward the preservation of ocean resources, not just species and habitat, but all the ocean connections to climate, food, water, energy, health, trade, transportation, finance, employment, security, policy, governance, coastwise development, and the preservation of cultural traditions and individual freedoms.

The second commission was no less ambitious and effective. In that same year, the Independent Committee for the Global Water Contract proposed a *World Water Manifesto*, a framework for global understanding, access, distribution, and protection of fresh water as "an inalienable individual and collective human right... a vital good, which belongs to all the inhabitants of the Earth in common... as the patrimony of mankind." The reports were similar in their assertion of citizen participation as key in decision-making at all levels of government to guide the protection and equitable availability of fresh water for the benefit of a burgeoning world population.

What is explicit in both these reports and recommendations is the understanding that the ocean and fresh water are one continuous natural system—from mountaintop to abyssal plain, with social, financial, political, and cultural meanings and connections worldwide.

What prescience! Soares must be remembered—and thanked—for his foresight, optimism, and call for specific international action to sustain the ocean/fresh water continuum, the most essential opportunity for survival, peace, and justice of our time.

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