



Protecting the ocean and its wildlife





2016 will be remembered as an historic year for the ocean. The protection of the Ross Sea, expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Monument, the establishment of the first Atlantic Ocean monument, the creation of the Pitcairn and Ascension Islands marine reserves, and the ban on Arctic drilling were all important victories. All of these successes were the result of the tireless efforts of many governments, non-profit organizations, and individuals.

When I founded Ocean Elders in 2010, very few outside the ocean community were talking about the drastic decline in ocean health. Inspired by the powerful words of Dr. Sylvia Earle, I committed myself to learning as much as I could about the extent of ocean degeneration. I was fortunate to participate in Mission Blue One, the Lindblad Expeditions voyage to Galapagos organized by TED, where I observed the fragmentation of activities within the non-profit sector. This provoked me to create an organization that would merge the deep knowledge of scientists with the power of amplifiers; people who could reach broader audiences and policy elites. Ocean Elders brought together global leaders of all ilks to use their collective influence, in cooperation with others, to pursue the protection of the ocean's habitat and wildlife. Our objective was to be *the voice for the ocean* as it was in such desperate need of an ardent and concerted defense.

Over the last five years, we have worked closely with partners to advocate for the creation, continued protection or expansion of numerous marine protected areas (MPAs), the creation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, bans on shark finning, protection of rays, a ban on Arctic drilling, bans on bottom trawling, protection of Antarctica, and a treaty for the high seas. This year brought much of that work to fruition.

Since the beginning, our work has demonstrated collaborations on these shared objectives with partners including America's Cup Healthy Ocean Project, AREDAY, Benioff Ocean Initiative, Conservation International, Environmental Defense Fund, Exposure Labs, High Seas Alliance, IUCN, MaiTai Global, Mission 31, Mission Blue: Sylvia Earle Alliance, National Geographic Society, National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Ocean Preservation Society, Ocean Unite, Pew Charitable Trusts, Polynesian Voyaging Society, Students on Ice, The Nature Conservancy, The Ocean Cleanup, and WildAid. Furthermore, we have worked closely with many individuals in high-level departments of many nations, including heads of states and ministers, as well as those at the United Nations (UN) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Ocean Elders is stronger and more influential because of these alliances.

As we prepare to move forward as an organization and intensify our efforts to protect the ocean and its wildlife, we were reminded of how important this work can be on our visit to Cuba in December 2016. During our mission, we had the opportunity to meet with scientists, academics, and government officials to learn how they are protecting the pristine ecosystems around the island. These meetings reinforced the importance of marine protected areas and how critical it is to implement solutions to preserve marine ecosystems. We made some wonderful connections and we left the country believing that we could make a meaningful contribution in support of Cuban priorities for the protection of this vital area.

In the years ahead, we will continue to call on world leaders to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030, end overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as well as implement a binding international

law of the high seas. With recent events, the stakes have been raised. We must accelerate our efforts to ensure that we keep the momentum moving forward to protect the ocean.

All of this work would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the Ocean Elders themselves who have devoted their time and energy as well as their voices to this important cause. To each and to all, I owe my thanks and a debt of gratitude.

Mahalo to all our partners, supporters, ohana, and friends. With our first lustrum behind us, and a solid foundation beneath us, we are certain we can do so much more in the years to come.



Gigi Brisson
Founder and CEO, Ocean Elders
January 2017



Ocean Elders Meeting - May 4, 2012 - New York City



Ocean Elders Sir Richard Branson, Dr. Sylvia Earle, Wade Davis, Capt. Don Walsh & Jackson Browne at The Ocean Gala 2015. Credit: Peter Ruprecht

A Locus of Collaboration

Ocean Elders was created to be a locus of collaboration in the field of ocean conservation. By working with and leveraging the work of other ocean organizations, Ocean Elders influences government and business decision-making to stimulate the protection and preservation of marine ecosystems.

The idea for Ocean Elders began on the Mission Blue voyage to the Galapagos Islands in April 2010, where over 100 scientists, business leaders, philanthropists, and entertainment icons came together to support Dr. Sylvia Earle, 2009 TED Prize Winner, in her TED Wish to draw public attention to the urgent need for ocean protection. Since welcoming Dr. Earle as the first Ocean Elder in June of that year, we have grown to include many of the most influential voices not only in ocean protection and conservation, but in biodiversity, cultural wisdom, and nature, as these disciplines are inextricably linked.

Advocating for Ocean Protection

At the core of our efforts is the active championing for the creation or expansion of marine protected areas, referred to as *Hope Spots* by Dr. Earle. We believe that marine protected areas are critical to both the protection and the recovery of marine ecosystems from human impacts. To support these efforts, we have used a number of approaches to leverage the collective influence of the Ocean Elders to encourage government leaders to take action, including meetings, phone calls, social media, and opinion pieces. The primary focus of this section of the Impact Statement is how Ocean Elders has addressed government leaders directly through advocacy letters and articles that advance our point of view. Before these letters are sent, they are shared with all the Ocean Elders for their review and approval, as well as their option to sign in support. Working with our partners over the last five years, we have focused our efforts on numerous marine protected areas including, but not limited to:

- The Ross Sea and East Antarctic
- Antarctica and the Southern Ocean
- New England Canyons and Seamounts
- Papahānaumokuākea Monument
- High Seas
- MPAs in Canada and the Arctic
- Pitcairn Island, Ascension Island, and other British Overseas Territories
- Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea
- The Marine Park Network, Australia
- Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary
- The Palau National Marine Sanctuary
- Sargasso Sea
- Chile – Easter Island (Rapa Nui) Marine Park

The Ross Sea Marine Protected Area: Beginning in 2013, Ocean Elders, along with many others, advocated for the creation of the Ross Sea Marine Protected Area. Initially, we called on all member countries in a July 2013 letter to “take the necessary steps to support the establishment of permanent MPAs without time limits as the only right solution in the Southern Ocean.” At the same time, we wrote specifically to President Vladimir Putin asking him to “support the Ross Sea and East Antarctica marine

protected area proposals.” Captain Don Walsh, Sir Richard Branson, Dr. Sylvia Earle, and James Cameron also wrote individual letters to President Putin. Captain Don Walsh then followed with a letter to polar explorer and Russian Academy of Sciences member Artur Chilingarov. These letters were followed by Sir Richard’s meeting with Secretary Kerry in April 2016, and that autumn, two op-eds penned by Her Majesty Queen Noor and Jose Maria Figueres. The Ross Sea Marine Protected Area was approved by CCAMLR on October 27, 2016.



Ocean Elders Ted Turner, Sven Lindblad, Dr. Sylvia Earle & Sir Richard Branson on Expedition in Antarctica

February 2012

Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument: In October 2015, Ocean Elders wrote to President Obama to “enthusiastically support permanent and full protection of the New England coral canyons and seamounts, including Cashes Ledge.” Dr. Sylvia Earle continued to actively lobby the Obama Administration for the creation of the monument, and Ocean Elders worked to support our partners, including Mission Blue and NRDC in their efforts. On September 15, 2016, President Obama announced the creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument.

Papahānaumokuākea Monument: In June 2006, President George W. Bush created the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument under the authority of the Antiquities Act, a decision that was influenced by Ocean Elders Jean-Michel Cousteau and Dr. Sylvia Earle. Increasingly, it became apparent that the monument, renamed Papahānaumokuākea, needed to be expanded to better protect the extensive coral reefs, which are home to more than 7,000 marine species, a quarter of which are only found in Hawaii, as well as the habitats for the threatened green sea turtle and the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. In 2014, the Ocean Elders sent letters to both Hawaii Senator Schatz and President Obama advocating for further expansion, and in July 2016, joined forces with the Benioff Ocean Initiative, supporting their letter to President Obama, along with additional efforts, encouraging the expansion of the Monument. The Papahānaumokuākea Monument was expanded by President Obama on August 26, 2016.



President Barack Obama and Ocean Elder Dr. Sylvia Earle on Midway Atoll, September 2016 Credit: Brian Skerry

The High Seas: Since its first meeting, Ocean Elders has advocated for a treaty on the high seas. In May 2012, we sent a letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon requesting the establishment of a high seas treaty. In May 2012, the article “Plundering the New Wild West” by Sir Richard Branson appeared in *Business Day* with a call-to-action to world leaders to take notice of the declining ocean health, and encouraged action at the upcoming Rio+20 conference. During that conference, Ocean Elders held a meeting with several influential country officials, including Jean-Pierre Thebault, Ambassador for the Environment of France, Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental & Scientific Affairs, Ms. Kristine Gramstad, State Secretary of Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs of Norway, Donna Petrachenko of Australia, Chief Advisor International Biodiversity and Sustainability & Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), and Jacqueline Adler, UNEP Coordinator of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Branch to further discuss the high seas.

A year later, an important milestone was made with the op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* in August 2013, signed by James Cameron and Sir Richard Branson, which heightened awareness of the risks and troubles of international waters, those “that lie beyond the jurisdiction of any country, known as the high seas. This vast realm constitutes two-thirds of the oceans and covers nearly half the planet’s surface, and harbors the largest remaining reservoir of unexplored biodiversity left on Earth. Yet these waters face escalating pressure from overfishing, deep seabed mining, ocean acidification, chemical and noise pollution, huge gyres of plastic waste, dead zones, ship traffic and destructive fishing tactics such as bottom trawling.” The op-ed called on President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry to support a new treaty, and it was reprinted and widely distributed at the start of the UN Informal Working Group meetings on the high seas in New York City that week. At these meetings, this op-ed, supported by social media activity, including tweets using #waveofchange and Facebook posts (all of which were also physically posted with post-it notes outside the conference rooms) generated significant dialogue amongst attendees. It was during these meetings that the U.S. finally addressed the issue of treaty of the high seas, which to date, had been omitted from earlier forums.

"I wanted to tell you the RB/JC op-ed and tweets by HMQN, OEs and RB really had an impact. By Friday it became clear that the ground has shifted toward an implementing agreement. While [some] countries did not endorse a new agreement, they did not oppose it, which is a change. By Friday the discussion was focusing not on whether to do an agreement, but what it should cover.

Starting with our collaboration on the LA Times op-ed by Mr. Cameron and Sir Richard Branson back in 2013 ... the Ocean Elders have been key to elevating the high seas in the press and among key governments. Letters, meetings and the OE dinners have given Ocean Elders the opportunity to weigh in with senior government officials from a number of key countries on a range of issues, including the high seas and the need for protected areas in the Arctic.

The impact has been substantial. For example, it has been beyond gratifying to watch the tone and position of the United States on the high seas treaty shift gradually over the last 3 years from one of foot-dragging reluctance to positive, constructive engagement. At the UN meeting that ended last week, delegates kept coming up to me and asking in amazement what had happened to the US. The Ocean Elders deserve credit for helping to make that happen.

This is just one example of the impact the Ocean Elders have had on a whole range of issues. It has been a great privilege to work with you and the Ocean Elders. Thank you."

-Lisa Speer, NRDC

The Arctic: In September 2015, Ocean Elders sent a letter, written by Captain Don Walsh, to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to express our concern "about imminent plans by the five nations bordering the Arctic Ocean to explore and drill for hydrocarbons in that environmentally fragile region. These actions present tremendous ecological dangers, and would pose significant challenges in responding to a spill or accident, should one occur. In the United States, the decision to open up new areas for Arctic oil and gas stands in conflict with the Obama Administration's strong recent announcements to shift to cleaner forms of energy and reduce the impacts of dangerous and escalating climate change." In November 2016, the



WES BAUSMITH
Los Angeles Times

Troubled waters

By Richard Branson and James Cameron

WE SHARE a deep and abiding passion for and fascination with the ocean that has led us since childhood to wander the world under the waves. We also share an increasing concern that the health of the ocean is rapidly deteriorating under the strain of human pressure and neglect. The evidence is everywhere, from plastic waste at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean to flattened remains of deep ocean reefs hundreds of miles from land, bulldozed by bottom trawlers. No part of the ocean, no matter how deep or remote, is safe anymore.

At particular risk are international waters that lie beyond the jurisdiction of any country, known as the high seas. This vast realm constitutes two-thirds of the oceans and covers nearly half the planet's surface, and harbors the largest remaining reservoir of unexplored biodiversity left on Earth. Yet these waters face escalating pressure from overfishing, deep seabed mining, ocean acidification, chemical and noise pollution, huge gyres of plastic waste, dead zones, ship traffic and destructive fishing tactics such as bottom trawling.

Like most commons, the high seas are poorly regulated. Environmental controls on mining, fishing, pollution and shipping are inconsistent, weak or altogether absent. There are no uniform requirements to assess and manage industrial activities, no mandate for modern, ecosystem-based management, and no mechanisms to create marine refuges where sea life can live undisturbed.

In the controlled waters of the United States and other nations,

governments have set aside reserves for ocean life. In contrast, less than one-three-hundredth of 1% of the high seas has been protected. Scientists believe that such protected areas are essential for ocean health and global resilience in the face of increasing human pressures.

An important opportunity to begin responsibly managing half the planet lies before us. The United Nations will hold meetings this week to discuss the future of the high seas. Led by Bra-

On the high seas, environmental rules are inconsistent, weak or absent.

zil, the European Union, Argentina, Mexico, Monaco and others, a coalition of developed and developing nations has proposed an international agreement to modernize governance of the high seas.

The agreement would provide for high seas protected areas, and require countries proposing to engage in destructive activities to assess and manage their effects. It would also deal with the lack of any rules governing how revenue derived from developing genetic resources in international waters will be shared, an important bar to commercializing new products derived from international waters. Most important, such an agreement would begin to bring to the high seas modern management as practiced in the U.S. and elsewhere since the 1970s. Such an agreement has been discussed and debated for years at the United Nations. It is time to move beyond words to action and begin negotiations.

The United States has been the single most significant obstacle to a new high seas agreement, with the State Department citing potential opposition from members of Congress who are critics of the United Nations. Possible opposition from pharmaceutical, biotech and/or cosmetics companies involved in marine genetic research has also been mentioned, although no such opposition has surfaced in the more than six years these issues have been widely discussed.

We do not believe it makes sense to hold this hugely important ocean conservation initiative hostage to possible opposition in the Senate or unspecified potential concerns by unnamed interests. This is not leadership.

Spearing negotiations on the conservation and management of the high seas could give the U.S. a big win on a global issue. It would level the playing field by making sure that activities on the high seas are subject to the same kinds of requirements routinely imposed on ocean industries in U.S. coastal waters. Such an agreement would also provide predictability and certainty to companies that take risks to develop commercial products from genetic resources sourced from marine areas beyond national jurisdiction.

How many chances does a president get to influence the future of half the planet for the benefit of all that live on it? That opportunity is here. We urge President Obama and Secretary of State John F. Kerry to seize it, at this critical moment, by joining the call for a new agreement to protect the high seas.

RICHARD BRANSON is founder and chairman of Virgin Group. JAMES CAMERON is a film director, producer and deep-sea explorer.

Obama Administration announced a ban on new Arctic drilling until 2022. In May 2018, Ocean Elders will lead an expedition to the Arctic to heighten awareness among key stakeholders on the imperative to halt oil and gas drilling in the region altogether.

Pitcairn and Ascension Islands, United Kingdom: In February 2015, Sir Richard Branson wrote to Prime Minister David Cameron to encourage the British government to create a marine reserve around the Pitcairn archipelago. Dr. Sylvia Earle was also heavily engaged in discussions with government members and other organizations advocating for protection. Subsequently, Ocean Elders wrote to the Prime Minister to “express our strong support of the proposals by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Marine Reserves Coalition to designate fully protected marine reserves in the British Overseas Territories of Ascension Island, the Pitcairn Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. This action would protect over 1.75 million square km of near pristine ocean and deliver a lasting legacy for the UK government towards the conservation of marine ecosystems.” On September 15, 2016, at the Our Ocean conference, the British government designated Pitcairn and Ascension Islands, St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha as marine protected areas.

Australia: In June 2016, Ocean Elders wrote to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to urge him to take action on climate change and to protect the Great Barrier Reef. The letter stated “We hope it is not too late to save the Great Barrier Reef, but the window is closing fast. Of course, Australia alone cannot achieve this but your leadership is crucial. The moral decision to save the Great Barrier Reef rests in your hands.” In addition to the letter, Dr. Earle released a video message imploring the Prime Minister to use his power and influence to address climate change because the world was watching what was happening to the Great Barrier Reef.

Previously in September 2011, Ocean Elders wrote to Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the Rt. Hon. Tony Burke, the Minister of the Environment, to advocate for enhanced protection of the Coral Sea. Imogen Zethoven of Pew Charitable Trusts in Australia wrote *“The Ocean Elders letter definitely took the campaign to a new level with our PM.”* This letter was quoted in an article in the Melbourne Age the following month, followed by a full-page color advertisement by Ocean Elders in the Brisbane Courier Mail in May 2012; all in support of the Coral Sea being created as a large marine reserve. Ms. Zethoven added *“I was thrilled that a member of federal Parliament (Graham Perrett, a Labor MP) held up a copy of the ad in Parliament as evidence that the Coral Sea proposal was a good thing, supported by such an eminent group of people. The ad helped empower the then federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett (along with thousands of grassroots emails) to subsequently declare the Coral Sea a Conservation Zone. This was an interim measure that would be replaced later on by a more permanent marine reserve. It was important for us to show both grassroots and grass tops support.”* In June 2012, the government of Australia announced the creation of the world’s largest system of marine protected areas, including a massive fully protected no-take marine reserve in the Coral Sea.

After the announcement, Ocean Elders continued to support Mr. Burke’s efforts, which included a blog by Sir Richard about the success of the protection of the Coral Sea, and a video featuring Ocean Elders Jean-Michel Cousteau, Jackson Browne, Sir Richard Branson, and Neil Young in support of the creation of the Marine Park Network. In September 2013, we presented the Environment Minister with the first Ocean Elders Ocean Leadership Award for the establishment of the Marine Park Network around Australia and his tireless work for the protection of the ocean and its wildlife.

“One of the challenges for any group trying to protect the planet is where to draw the line between the possible and the perfect. Some groups aim too low. Some groups will criticise anything which is not deemed perfect which can have the perverse impact of taking away any incentive for government to act.

The Ocean Elders has operated with precision in Australia in the campaign to protect the oceans. I saw this first hand as Australia’s Environment Minister when we were determining our network of Marine Protected Areas. During the consultation phase the Ocean Elders encouraged the government to be as ambitious as possible. When I released the maps proclaiming the world’s largest network of marine

protected areas, the Ocean Elders helped co-ordinate a series of video messages which backed the decision in. This took off on social media and served three purposes: it spread the word the decision had been made, it showed clear support for the decision, and it sent a message to the Cabinet that good environmental decisions would be backed in.

Not many organisations have operated as constructively as this. Too often the complaint is made that groups will simply complain that any reform is inadequate. The decision of the Ocean Elders to participate in the video provided a clear example which told all decision makers there would be public support if good environmental decisions were made.

The holding of regular events where supporters in different governments and parliaments around the world can get together has also been important. Just as activists generally benefit from these gatherings, it is a reminder for present, former and future government ministers that they are not alone and are part of an international movement to protect the ocean.”

-The Hon Tony Burke, MP, Former Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Australia



The Hon Tony Burke, MP at the 2014 Ocean Elders Summit in New York City

We continued to work with Mr. Burke after his departure from his post, in support of the Marine Park Network, and the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea. Since then, a number of letters written by Graeme Kelleher, a native of Australia who has been credited with writing the *bible* on MPAs, have included not only scientific reasons for the protection of these areas, but the many reasons to prevent any mining near the Great Barrier Reef. These letters, which were often released to newspapers and to non-profit organizations in Australia, along with vocal public demonstrations, likely influenced Deutsche Bank's decision to withhold funding of mining at Abbott Point in May 2014. In May 2015, we followed up with a letter to Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, also advocating for the support of the Marine Park Network, protection of the Great Barrier Reef, and the prevention of nearby mining and related dumping. In an op-ed in the Sydney Morning Herald in September 2016, Graeme Kelleher continued the conversation and argued against the Carmichael mine.

New Zealand: Beginning in May 2013, Ocean Elders worked closely with Bronwen Golder of Pew Charitable Trusts to support efforts to create the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary. In June 2013, we sent a letter to New Zealand Prime Minister John Key to advocate for its protection. Ms. Golder wrote *“the OE’s letter has been very helpful. Initially because the OE’s individual and collective profile demands the attention of national leaders and senior decision makers. Even though the letter did not immediately move the Prime Minister to declare the Kermadec Sanctuary, it did, based on the profile of those who signed, raise and reinforce the international value and importance of the Sanctuary proposal. Ultimately it was that international importance that “tipped” the Prime Minister in favour of the Kermadec Sanctuary...For the Kermadec Campaign the Ocean Elders’ letter was also important because it backed up our advocacy around the international importance of the Sanctuary, and supported the narrative that declaration of the Sanctuary would reinforce New Zealand’s profile internationally.”* In September 2015, the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary was declared.

Palau: Although members of Ocean Elders already enjoyed a strong bond, in June 2013 we were formally introduced to Palau President Tommy Remengesau, Jr. at the Monaco Blue Initiative, an annual conference hosted by HSH Prince Albert II. At the time, President Tommy was already leading ocean efforts with the powerful idea of protecting up to 80% of Palau’s waters from any extractive activities, and closing off the remainder to foreign commercial fleets. He and South Pacific island leader Anote Tong, then President of Kiribati, were vocal advocates for the protection of the ocean. They understood the impacts of climate change and the declining ocean health on their small island nations, as these nearly sea level islands were on the front line. These two leaders received the Ocean Elders Ocean Leadership Awards at our Ocean Elders Ocean Summit in September 2014. In February of 2015, Ocean Elders sent letters to senators in Palau, urging them to support their president’s push to establish the sanctuary. In October 2015, the Palau National Marine Sanctuary was announced, the 6th largest fully protected marine area in the world, thereby protecting more than 1300 species of fish and 700 species of coral.



Palau President Tommy Remengesau, Jr. at the 2014 Ocean Elders Summit in New York City

Raising Awareness of Ocean Issues

One of the most powerful ways that Ocean Elders has supported our partners and the broader movement to protect our ocean has been through awareness-building efforts, including public appearances, speeches, media interviews, and social media. These activities were focused on engaging not just elected officials but also members of the public, including the next generation of explorers, to heighten awareness of the current state of the ocean and what needs to be done to protect and conserve our blue planet. Over the last five years, the Ocean Elders have participated in a broad range of conferences, expeditions, and meetings. These attended events include the World Economic Forums, Our Ocean Conferences, IUCN World Congresses, Mission Blue 1 & 2, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, The Economist's World Ocean Summits, UN International Conferences on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) meetings, Blue Ocean Film Festivals, and TED Conference ocean related meetings.



Ocean Elders Jackson Browne, Nainoa Thompson, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Capt. Don Walsh & Dr. Sylvia Earle at the launch of Mālama Honua - 2013

Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage: The Ocean Elders have actively supported the Polynesian Voyaging Society's (PVS) Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage to galvanize support and activity in local communities around the world. Led by Master Navigator Nainoa Thompson, PVS embarked upon this worldwide voyage of Hōkūleʻa, the Polynesian voyaging canoe, to advocate for greater protection and care for Island Earth - Mālama Honu. The voyage itself joins, supports, and amplifies the global movement toward a more sustainable world. It has been a reminder that we all need to care for the ocean and Earth. Many Ocean Elders have supported the voyage over the last four years and several participated in the initial launch of Hōkūleʻa for its statewide sail, before leaving for its global voyage.



Ocean Elders Nainoa Thompson and Sir Richard Branson on Hōkūleʻa
British Virgin Islands, March 2016

In March 2016, Sir Richard Branson welcomed Hōkūleʻa and her crew to the British Virgin Islands and shared discussions of ways to protect the ocean with local students, teachers, and officials as well as non-profit leaders. Additionally, members of our team have supported PVS on its sail around the world, in many ports of many countries, and were present to help highlight June 8th, 2016, World Oceans Day, in NYC as Hōkūleʻa sailed by the United Nations with a warm welcome from the UN Secretary-General.



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomes Hōkūleʻa to New York City - June 8, 2016

“The collaboration with the Ocean Elders has been priceless and invaluable. Everything that we have been able to accomplish on the movement to protect our ocean could not have been done without the support and council of the Ocean Elders. The Ocean Elders provided council when needed and allowed PVS to create strategic ocean partnerships all over the world.

The Ocean Elders helped to give Hōkūle‘a and Polynesian Voyaging Society a national and global voice for the protection our ocean. It was a deep honor and privilege to have the Ocean Elders sail with us on the deck of the canoe — each and every one of them.

I would like to send our aloha from the entire voyaging family for all you have done for the mission of the Worldwide Voyage. I am looking forward to continuing our work together for the future of our blue planet. Mahalo nui!

-Nainoa Thompson, Master Navigator, Hōkūle‘a, Polynesian Voyaging Society and Ocean Elder



Cuba Mission

In December, HM Queen Noor, Dr. Sylvia Earle, Jackson Browne, Captain Don Walsh, and Graeme Kelleher participated in a delegation to Cuba to meet with the National Center for Protected Areas, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and the Environment, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Aquarium, and the University of Havana's Center for Marine Research as well as Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis, Chargé d'affaires and Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy. Cuba's coral reefs are among the healthiest in the world and the active measures that the Cuban government, in partnership with scientists and civil society, have protected the marine ecosystems around the island. Over the course of the week, we were able to better understand their key priorities and areas where we could help support their efforts and priorities in the years to come. We are currently reviewing the areas in which the Cubans believe we can have the most beneficial impact.



Ocean Elders Jackson Browne, Her Majesty Queen Noor, Dr. Sylvia Earle, & Graeme Kelleher (& Captain Don Walsh - not pictured) learning about Cuba's marine protected areas in Havana, Cuba. December 6, 2016

Wildlife and Species Protection

The Ocean Elders have individually supported wildlife protection campaigns through letters, public statements, participation in international conferences and regional symposiums, and social media. Sir Richard Branson has been a staunch advocate for the protection of sharks and rays, and was instrumental in getting Giant Mantas protected in Australian waters in October 2012. Both Dr. Sylvia Earle and Jean-Michel Cousteau have been tireless campaigners for the unrepresented fish and all sealife, with Mr. Cousteau laser-focused on the release of captive orcas. As an organization, Ocean Elders has supported campaigns to enhance the protection of sharks, rays, turtles, cetaceans and tuna, including support for WildAid's continued efforts to reduce the demand for and eliminate the transportation of shark fins.

Appendix

Ocean Elders Letters, Articles, & Submissions

Letter Recipient or Publication	Date	Subject	Category
Press release - Edelman – Ted Turner, Dr. Sylvia Earle and Sir Richard Branson Unite to Form Ocean Elders	8/22/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
SurfSpot - Ted Turner, Dr. Sylvia Earle and Sir Richard Branson Unite to Form Ocean Elders	8/26/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
Mother Nature network - Richard Branson, Ted Turner launch Ocean Elders	8/26/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
Aquaculture hub - New Ocean Elders	8/27/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
EcoAffect - New Ocean Conservation Group Lets Individuals Voice Ideas	8/29/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
Forbes – Sir Richard Branson, Ted Turner Launch Ocean Elders	9/2/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
Just means -Venture Philanthropy Forms Ocean Elders to Protect the World's Oceans	9/5/2011	article on Ocean Elders' start	Media - article
America's Cup Healthy Ocean Project	10/16/2011	participation, Gigi Brisson speech at event, Sir Richard Branson speech	event
TheBlu	3/21/2012	collaborative media platform for artists - ambassador species	support - NGO
President Olafur Grimsson - Iceland	4/30/2012	bottom trawling	destructive fishing practices
Australian newspaper advertisement	5/1/2012	support for Marine Park Network	MPA
UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon	5/9/2012	plea for high seas treaty	high seas
Rio newspaper - for Rio +20	6/14/2012	high seas regulation	high seas
Reuters - Plundering the New Wild West – Sir Richard Branson	6/18/2012	article on upcoming Rio +20 and need for high seas regulation	Media - article

Meeting with OE at Rio+20	6/21/2012	discussion with Ministers on high seas regulation	high seas
Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment	11/5/2012	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Prime Minister Julia Gillard - Australia	11/5/2012	manta ray protection - from Sir Richard Branson	protection - species
Louie Psihoyos, ED - Oceanic Preservation Society	11/30/2012	campaign to illuminate the ongoing mass species extinction - became Racing Extinction	support - NGO
Prime Minister Julia Gillard	12/12/2012	letter to praise MPN - from Graeme Kelleher	MPA
The Wired World – Sir Richard Branson - UK edition	12/19/2012	Article - 2013 will be the Year of the Ocean	Media - article
Letter to Mission Blue	5/2/2013	support Mission Blue Live May 2014, and Mission Blue Voyage II	support - NGO
The Hon Tony Burke – Australia event - w/ Sir Richard Branson	5/10/2013	launches Marine Park Network video at Sydney Aquarium	event -MPA
Prime Minister John Key – New Zealand	6/11/2013	Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary	MPA
CCAMLR Commission	7/12/2013	Antarctica and the Southern Ocean	protection - Polar
President Vladimir Putin - Russia	7/12/2013	Antarctica and the Southern Ocean - 4 separate letters from Dr. Sylvia Earle, Sir Richard Branson, James Cameron, Captain Don Walsh	protection - Polar
Reuters - Open letter to President Putin published	7/15/2013	Nations to decide on creating vast Antarctic marine reserves	Media - article
Global Ocean Commission	8/12/2013	request for regulation of the high seas, offer of collaboration	high seas
Los Angeles Times Op-Ed - Troubled Waters	8/18/2013	High Seas – James Cameron and Sir Richard Branson	high seas
Premier Craig Cannonier - Bermuda (cc: Sylvan Richards - Minister of Environment)	10/31/2013	Bermuda Blue Halo, including Sargasso Sea - from Sir Richard Branson	MPA
People of Bermuda - Open Letter	10/31/2013	Bermuda Blue Halo, including Sargasso Sea - from Sir Richard Branson	MPA
President Laura Chinchilla - Costa Rica	11/1/2013	Costa Rica shark finning	protection - species

Dr. Russell Reichelt, Chairman GBRMPA	1/25/2014	Great Barrier Reef, opposing coal port at Abbot Point	MPA
International Fishing Conference	3/13/2014	Sir Richard Branson speech	event
Fabien Cousteau in Aquarius	6/4/2014	support of 31 days in Aquarius	support - NGO
Prime Minister Matteo Renzi - Italy	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey - Spain	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho -Portugal	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Minister of Affairs Mark Rutte - Germany	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Prime Minister Donald Tusk - Poland	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
President François Hollande - France	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Chancellor Angela Merkel- Germany	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
Prime Minister David Cameron – United Kingdom	7/2/2014	deep-sea bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting, North-East Atlantic	destructive fishing practices
President Barack Obama – United States	8/8/2014	Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument	MPA
Prime Minister - Keith Mitchell - Grenada	8/22/2014	shark and ray sanctuary - from Sir Richard Branson	protection - species
Kedrick D. Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister of Natural Resources	8/22/2014	shark and ray sanctuary - from Sir Richard Branson	protection - species
President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón - Columbia	8/22/2014	shark finning and need for protection	protection - species
President Juan Carlos Varela - Panama	8/22/2014	shark finning and need for protection	protection - species

President Guillermo Solís Rivera - Costa Rica	8/22/2014	shark finning and need for protection	protection - species
Senator Schatz - Hawaii	8/25/2014	Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument - from Nainoa Thompson	MPA
CSRwire Talkback-Martha Shaw-Saving our Seas: Tapping into the Wisdom of Ocean Elders	10/15/2014	story on Ocean Elders and Summit https://goo.gl/VgbOnz	Media - article
Prime Minister David Cameron – United Kingdom	12/23/2014	Pitcairn Archipelago - from Sir Richard Branson	MPA
Prime Minister David Cameron – United Kingdom	2/9/2015	British Overseas Territories: Pitcairn Archipelago, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	MPA
Senator Chin, Senator Baules, and Speaker Anastacio - Palau	2/14/2015	Palau National Marine Sanctuary as proposed in Senate Bill No. 9-30	MPA
Julie Bishop - Minister for Foreign Affairs – Australia	5/4/2015	Great Barrier Reef, opposing coal port at Abbot Point	MPA
John Bullard, NMFS	5/14/2015	New England canyons and seamounts & Cashes Ledge	MPA
Dan Basta, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries	5/14/2015	New England canyons and seamounts & Cashes Ledge	MPA
Louie Psihoyos, ED - Oceanic Preservation Society	5/17/2015	OPS New York projection project	support - NGO
Huffington Post - MaiTai and OceanElders	6/3/2015	Partnership of Ocean Elders w/ Mai Tai Global https://goo.gl/AzHQBR	Media - article
World Heritage Committee	7/13/2015	Great Barrier Reef, opposing coal port at Abbot Point	MPA
Governor Gerry Brown - California	9/2/2015	climate change bills 32 and 350	climate change
Project Syndicate - published	9/4/2015	Op-Ed - Islam, Faith, and Climate Change - HM Queen Noor	Media - OpEd
Secretary of State John Kerry – United States	9/21/2015	Arctic Ocean - against drilling	protection - Polar
OpEd - Ross Sea	10/1/2015	written by Captain Don Walsh, Dr. Sylvia Earle (not printed)	protection - Polar
Personal letter to Artur Chilingarov	10/5/2015	Ross Sea	protection - Polar
President Barack Obama – United States	10/7/2015	New England canyons and seamounts & Cashes Ledge	MPA

President Vladimir Putin - Russia	10/12/2015	Ross Sea and East Antarctic marine protected areas in the Antarctic	protection - Polar
Prime Minister David Cameron – United Kingdom	10/30/2015	Ascension Island, UKOT protection	MPA
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau - Canada	12/10/2015	support of Canada MPA	MPA
Boyan Slat - Founder - The Ocean CleanUp	1/28/2016	support of The Ocean CleanUp	plastic pollution
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna – Canada	2/1/2016	ocean issues as part of climate change, suggest meeting – Sir Richard Branson	climate change
Hokule'a at BVI	3/5/2016	support of Worldwide Voyage	support - NGO
Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull - Australia	4/25/2016	Great Barrier Reef protection	MPA
The World is Watching – Ocean Elders urge Australian Government to act	5/9/2016	Incl. video message to Turnbull from Dr. Sylvia Earle, https://goo.gl/NNOu7V	climate change
Ambassador Peter Thomson - now President, United Nations General Assembly	7/12/2016	follow up to his attendance at OE meeting April 2016	UN SDG 14
Explorers Club - Honors and Flag Committee	7/18/2016	nomination of Nainoa Thompson, Bertrand Piccard, and André Borschberg for Explorers Medal	support - award
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau - Canada	8/26/2016	support for Polynesian Voyaging Society and Hokule'a visit	support - NGO
VVP - Russia – Her Majesty Queen Noor Op-Ed	10/1/2016	call for protection of the Ross Sea	protection - Polar
Jose Maria Figueres Op-Ed Ross Sea	10/1/2016	call for protection of the Ross Sea	protection - Polar