Ocean Conservancy®

A CONSERVATION PROPOSAL AND REPORT

Fall 2024 / Winter 2025

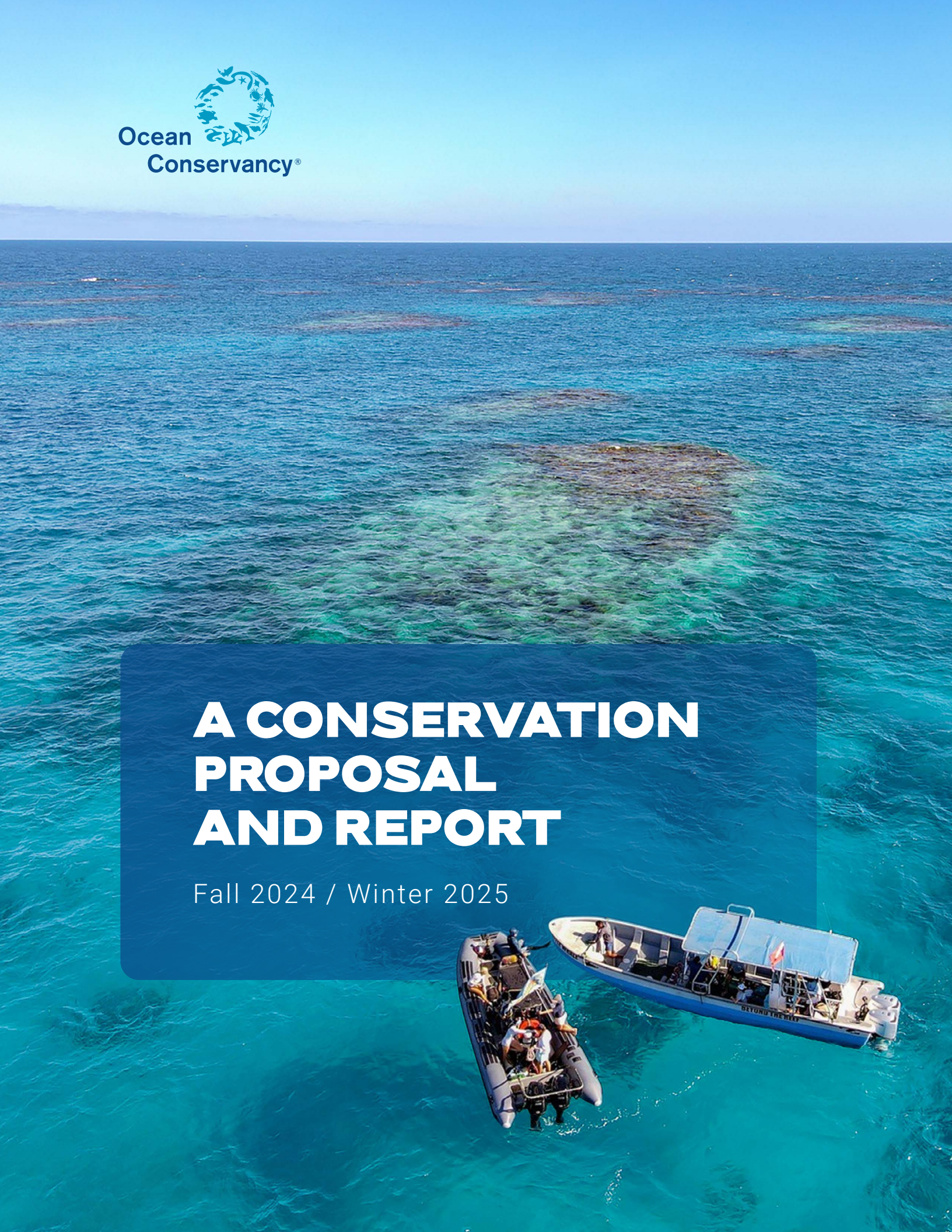


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Photo: Team Seas Cleanup Event in Virgin Islands (British). Photo by Rondel Smith 2023

Skjervøy, Norway. Photo by Max Emanuelson 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, new scientific discoveries further reveal the mystery and delight of the ocean. Ocean waters move heat from the equator to the poles in a thousand-year slow dance. The ocean regulates our climate and weather, feeds billions of people, provides much of our breathable air and is the largest habitable space on the planet. Species that are indescribably different from all known life glow and thrive in deep, dark environments beyond our imagination, but not beyond our impact.

Our unfathomably powerful and precious ocean is imminently vulnerable. Climate change is driving the hottest days in history and the hottest ocean surface temperatures ever recorded. This year, we learned that rising ocean temperatures directly contributed to an unprecedented collapse of the Bering Sea snow crab fishery and the mass starvation of billions of snow crab. Carbon pollution is making our ocean more acidic. Plastic pollution creates mortal danger for marine life and is hazardous to humans. It is not just the ocean under threat—we are facing the consequences in our food systems, economies and communities.

As the world's leading ocean conservation organization, we are committed to understanding, protecting and advocating for the ocean and all who depend on it. For over 50 years Ocean Conservancy has advised governments, built coalitions and engaged citizens to implement evidence-based solutions to the ocean's greatest challenges.

We take aim at the biggest threats facing the ocean:

1. **Climate Change**
2. **Plastic Pollution**
3. **Biodiversity Loss**

Ocean Conservancy's work combines upstream systems change with downstream, hands-on action. Both are essential to sustain the ocean and the wildlife and communities that depend on it. Our nonpartisan approach is the foundation of our fifty-year legacy of victories in the places that matter most to the ocean, internationally and across the United States (U.S.). Regardless of the outcome of any election, Ocean Conservancy continues our relentless, patient pursuit of high impact, strategically chosen actions to protect our ocean and ensure a sustainable future.

Our strategic focus on climate change, plastic pollution and threats to biodiversity led to successes this year that are worthy of celebration. From mobilizing cleanups on local beaches, to advancing national and global policies that protect our ocean, to increasing public awareness through the media and high-profile events, our work is driving the change we need to see. Our world-class scientists, policy experts and conservation advocates position Ocean Conservancy to continue to protect the ocean from today's greatest global challenges. With your support, we will double down our efforts to advance our shared vision of a vibrant thriving ocean that supports all life on our blue planet.

Highlights & Wins

Climate · Plastics · Biodiversity

Activated over **485,000 volunteers** worldwide to remove nearly **8 million pounds of trash.** Since the International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC) began, more than **18 million volunteers** around the globe have removed an astounding **382.5 million pounds of trash** from shores and waterways, covering more than 621,000 miles.

Launched an ambitious **new campaign to protect the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO)**—one of the last pristine, intact ocean ecosystems—from shipping and deep-sea mining. We already made early progress, with the first Arctic coastal state (Canada) announcing that it will not allow deep-sea mining in areas under its jurisdiction, including the continental shelf that extends into the CAO.

Won inclusion of key policy priorities in the **first-ever global plastics treaty** during negotiations in April 2024, including reducing plastics production, addressing ghost gear and microplastics, and elevating the voices of workers from the informal waste sector in waste-reduction strategies.

In August 2024 Ocean Conservancy hosted a global dialogue with **G20 leaders** to accelerate efforts in **expanding offshore renewable energy** for ocean climate action, with Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry delivering the opening address.

Recycled **81,073 pounds of end-of-life fishing gear** through our Global Ghost Gear Initiative®, protecting countless marine animals from entanglement and death.

Ocean Conservancy was selected by the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) for a new, four-year $5.2 million award to remove Large Marine Debris (LMD)** from U.S. coastal waters. This grant will allow us to distribute more than $2 million to communities around the country to supercharge cleanup efforts, including in remote locations heavily impacted by trash.

In a July 2024 op-ed, Ocean Conservancy **CEO Janis Searles Jones** took a strong stance, calling on President Biden to support a **full moratorium on deep-sea mining,** warning of potential ecological damage and calling for prioritizing scientific research to assess environmental impacts before allowing commercial operations to proceed.

Changed the global standard for climate progress at the United Nations' 28th Conference of the Parties, held in Dubai in December 2023. Our intensive advocacy brought the ocean to the fore, **ensuring clean ocean energy is now part of the global "report card"** measuring progress toward climate goals.

Released, as part of our Clean Ocean Energy program objective to rapidly transition away from offshore oil and gas toward clean ocean energy, a **first-of-its-kind analysis on affordable financing for offshore wind** in developing countries, an important advocacy tool for scaling responsible offshore wind production and achieving 100% clean ocean energy by 2050.

Celebrated the successful conclusion of the **#TeamSeas campaign**, a global phenomenon championed by two of the world's top YouTubers, by announcing that as a core partner, Ocean Conservancy helped **remove 34,080,191 pounds of trash** from the ocean, beaches and rivers since January 2022. As the official Ocean and Beaches partner of the campaign, Ocean Conservancy conducted nearly 2,000 beach, underwater and ghost gear (abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear) cleanups, mobilizing more than **172,000 volunteers** across 73 countries.

Fought for and defended a new Florida statute, signed into law in June 2024, **prohibiting the intentional release of balloons,** one of the most common forms of beach debris in Florida's coastal counties. Our work resulted in major media attention including a *New York Times* front-page story.

SPOTLIGHT

SAFEGUARDING THE CENTRAL ARCTIC OCEAN

The Arctic region holds tremendous ecological and cultural importance. It provides 20% of the world's freshwater, supports habitat for iconic wildlife, and is home to Indigenous Peoples who have relied on the area's marine ecosystems since time immemorial. As a vital regulator of climate and a driver of global ocean currents, the Arctic has an impact that extends far beyond its boundaries.

At the heart of the Arctic lies the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO). Comprised of 1.1 million square miles of international waters around the North Pole, through most of human history this place was completely covered with a thick, protective layer of Arctic sea ice which cooled the planet and stabilized the jet stream, moderating extreme weather. Water currents here connect to Arctic rivers, coastal seas and the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, helping drive global ocean circulation. Wind patterns are an integral part of weather throughout the Northern Hemisphere. But in recent years, the Arctic has come under intense man-made threat. Climate change is rapidly melting the sea ice, bringing a cascading series of changes to the Arctic. Industries are proposing new, destructive activity in these formerly inaccessible waters. Arctic coastal states have claimed ownership of the seabed here, a precursor to deep-sea mining in this precious place. And a new global shipping route is being proposed as a shortcut through these waters for manufactured goods and even oil and gas.

Ocean Conservancy brings decades of experience in advocating for the protection of the Arctic and the people and wildlife who call it home. When faced with a similar threat to the CAO from the potential start of commercial fishing in 2018, Ocean Conservancy and allies rallied the global community to sign an international agreement to place a binding moratorium on high-seas fishing here. The agreement established a multinational cooperative research program, recognized the special relationship Arctic Indigenous Peoples have to the Arctic and ensured their active participation in implementation of the agreement. The 2018 international agreement Ocean Conservancy helped bring to life was the first of its kind in the world. In 2020, we built on that legacy, and successfully negotiated a ban in Arctic waters on the use and carriage of Heavy Fuel Oil—the world's dirtiest and most toxic marine fuel.

Today, Ocean Conservancy is issuing a global call to protect the CAO again, as it faces fresh threats including deep-sea mining and shipping. In a new effort, we're calling on international partners to declare that the Central Arctic Ocean is too vital to place at risk. Our campaign has already made early progress, with the first Arctic coastal state (Canada) announcing that it will not allow deep-sea mining in areas under its jurisdiction, including the continental shelf that extends into the CAO. We are calling on companies to pledge that they will not ship across or use minerals from the CAO. And, we are calling on all global citizens to safeguard this place that is so important to our planet. At this urgent moment in history, we must act quickly and decisively to protect the Arctic as a global support system for future generations.

"The Central Arctic Ocean is a vital part of the world's balance, and as its ice melts, we must prioritize protection over exploitation. We know that safeguarding these waters is essential for the well-being of future generations and the planet."

'Wáahlaal Gidaag, Haida, Tlingit, Ahtna Athabascan
Vice President, Arctic, Ocean Conservancy

CONSERVATION AND ADVOCACY

Ocean Conservancy takes a strategic, pragmatic approach that ensures a lasting impact. We are proud to share an inside look at our strategies and successes over the last year and our goals for taking on the challenges of the near future.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

ENDING PLASTIC POLLUTION

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is the single biggest threat to the health of our ocean, our planet and ourselves. We cannot save the ocean without cutting the carbon emissions that cause climate change, and we cannot reach our decarbonization goals without ocean-based solutions. We have focused our strategy on the one-third of global emissions we can reduce through an ocean-based approach. Ocean Conservancy's climate portfolio will achieve that global emissions milestone by prioritizing two goals:

1. Decarbonizing Maritime Shipping
2. Advancing Clean Ocean Energy

Decarbonizing Maritime Shipping

Of all goods traded globally, 90% travel via maritime shipping, and the emissions from those ships contribute one billion metric tons of carbon each year. Global emissions from this industry affect everyone's health. An estimated 250,000 premature deaths and 6,000,000 childhood asthma cases globally are attributed to shipping emissions. Because they happen in international waters, such emissions are not included in the the Paris Agreement on climate change signed in 2016 but instead are governed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a specialized body of the United Nations which oversees global shipping.

Until last year, the IMO had pledged to reduce emissions from shipping by at least 50% by 2050, a target insufficient to limit warming to the 1.5° C needed to prevent extreme impacts from climate change. Ocean Conservancy built global momentum for a more ambitious target of 100% decarbonization, and following years of advocacy and extensive engagement with a variety of nations, we successfully met our goal when in 2023 the IMO updated its target to 100% reduction by 2050. However, this global agreement is not self-executing. We are now working to ensure the IMO stays on track for full decarbonization and makes decisions in the near term to enact short and mid-term measures to reduce emissions rapidly on the way to full decarbonization.

Looking Ahead: A Just and Equitable Transition to Clean Shipping

With a stronger 2050 goal now in place at the IMO, we are pursuing three approaches to expand our impact. First, we are advocating for reduced energy consumption on ships. Second, we are pushing to increase fuel standards to more quickly achieve emissions reductions. And third, we are championing a fee for carbon polluters that provides revenue to smaller countries. Such a fee would fund technology upgrades and prevent price increases for countries that can least afford them. Each of these approaches makes a real impact on reducing shipping emissions and will lead to improved public health conditions as well as lessening the worst effects of climate change. Ocean Conservancy, a recognized national and international expert on this issue, leads an advocacy coalition and provides coalition members, research and expertise in advance of key IMO meetings. Our work with individual countries, particularly in the Pacific Islands and Latin America, strengthens our advocacy by adding critical voices and perspectives to the policy conversation.

Advancing Clean Ocean Energy

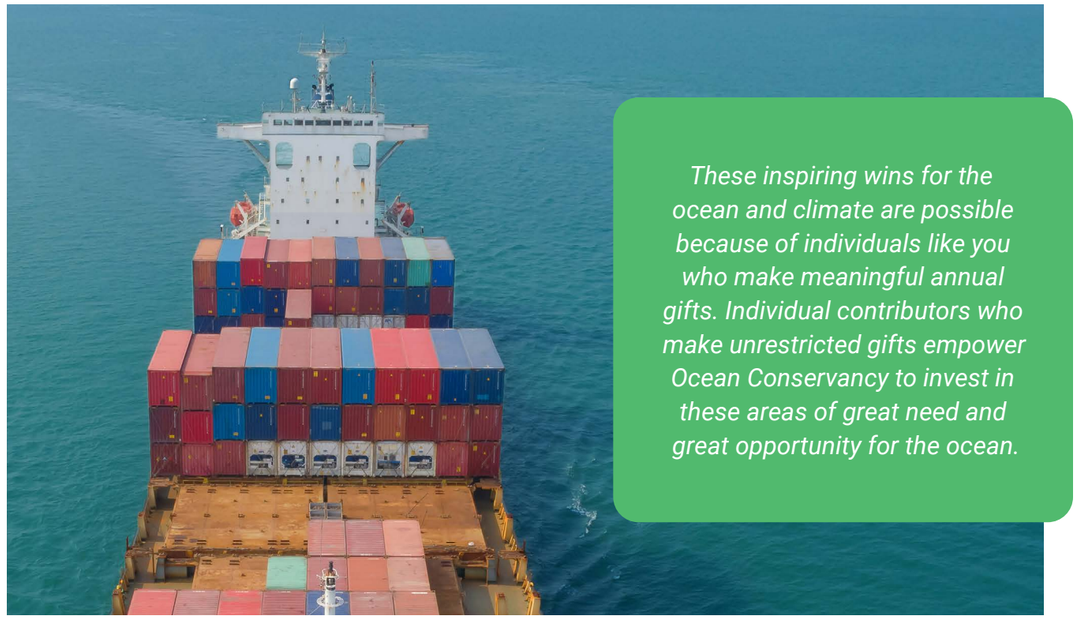
The science is clear—to save the ocean, we need to stay within 1.5° C of planetary warming. Accomplishing this requires a 45% cut in global emissions by 2030. Ocean Conservancy is working to implement international and national climate policies that will mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and support a clean-energy future, with a focus on advancing offshore wind energy.

To meet global climate targets, a staggering 380 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind capacity must be installed by 2030 and 2,000 GW by 2050, with much of this new deployment needing to come from countries outside the Group of Twenty, the nations and regions with the largest economies. The high initial costs of offshore wind projects pose a significant barrier, and no existing financing vehicle focuses solely on accelerating offshore wind at the pace required to meet net-zero goals. Ocean Conservancy is advocating for responsible development of offshore wind energy, ensuring the build-out occurs in a way that protects the biodiversity of ocean ecosystems and marine life. Globally, we focus on ramping up available financing for offshore wind in small countries and removing barriers to its responsible expansion by championing sustainable ocean plans, community engagement and capacity building.

We are also focused domestically. In June 2024, we advocated for our clean ocean-energy platform at Capitol Hill Ocean Week, a high-profile, multi-day conference that convenes policymakers and ocean experts like those at Ocean Conservancy to discuss the significant issues that impact our ocean. As part of this year's event, Ocean Conservancy ran bus and digital ads which urged policymakers to "shift to responsible clean ocean energy." We also co-organized and moderated a congressional briefing on the status, opportunities and challenges of marine renewable energy in the U.S., with Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), co-chair of the House Oceans Caucus, providing remarks. We elevated the case for marine renewable energy among congressional staff, Department of Energy staff and officials, industry representatives and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Looking Ahead: Measuring the Worldwide Investment

Ocean Conservancy will continue to leverage international forums to advance commitments to build up marine renewables and keep up the pressure to secure domestic investment. We will support scaling up responsible clean ocean energy by engaging multiple countries to integrate offshore wind and other renewables into their sustainable ocean plans. And we will keep championing a path forward for scaling offshore wind by creating access to affordable financing for less wealthy countries including guardrails to ensure responsible development.



These inspiring wins for the ocean and climate are possible because of individuals like you who make meaningful annual gifts. Individual contributors who make unrestricted gifts empower Ocean Conservancy to invest in these areas of great need and great opportunity for the ocean.

Jacksonville, Florida. Photo by Nott Shots 2023

ENDING PLASTIC POLLUTION

With a growing global population using 380 million tons of plastics a year, plastics now pollute all dimensions of our ocean, from the seafloor to remote beaches. Recent Ocean Conservancy research demonstrated that plastics are present in the proteins, even plant-based proteins, most consumed around the world. Most likely, all people have ingested plastics. Ocean Conservancy advances scalable solutions to stop plastics and other trash from reaching the ocean by advocating for international, national and local reforms, changing industrial practices and cleaning up waterways and shores worldwide. We elevate and deepen public knowledge around the issue of plastics in the ocean, routinely securing coverage in hundreds of media outlets around the globe and engaging in high-profile events. Ocean Conservancy's plastics portfolio focuses on achieving two goals:

1. Cleaning Up Plastics from the Ocean and Coasts
2. Eliminating Single-Use Plastics That Are Most Problematic for the Ocean

Cleaning Up Plastics from the Ocean and Coasts

Ocean Conservancy has led global efforts to eliminate plastic pollution of the ocean for more than 50 years. One of our most powerful tools to confront this challenge is deploying beach cleanups at a global scale. Since launching the International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC) in 1986, volunteers around the globe have removed an astounding 382.5 million pounds of trash from shores and waterways, covering more than 621,000 miles. This year, Ocean Conservancy successfully concluded the ambitious #TeamSeas campaign. This campaign, started in 2021 in partnership with YouTube content creators, raised $30 million in just 65 days from over 400,000 supporters with the goal to remove 30 million pounds of trash from beaches and the ocean in three years. By ramping up our organizational cleanup infrastructure to meet this goal—including increasing our own staff capacity, enhancing our trash tracking capabilities, and growing our global network of cleanup partners around the world, among other investments—we exceeded both the pace and volume of the campaign's original ambition. By July 2024, within 2.5 years of implementation, Ocean Conservancy and our partners removed over 34 million pounds of trash from some of the most impacted beaches, sensitive ecosystems and affected communities around the world.

Looking Ahead: Annual, Targeted Removal of 50 Million Pounds

While the #TeamSeas campaign was time bound, Ocean Conservancy's commitment to the ocean is not. Our long-term goal is to grow the impact of our cleanup efforts to enable the collection of 50 million pounds per year. We will focus our removal efforts where they are needed most: places with high ecological and species value, high levels of impact on human communities and well-being, and where we will be able to remove the greatest volume of plastic debris. We are building a roadmap to tackle trash in places where the cleanup impact will achieve the greatest conservation good.

Protecting the amazing species that live in the ocean has always been a hallmark of Ocean Conservancy's work. Our Wildlife Impact Calculator will launch this year, allowing everyone to see the direct connection between cleanup work and the protection of the marine animals we hold dear, including seabirds, marine mammals and turtles. This powerful tool will increase understanding of the ecological impacts of existing plastic pollution, improve evaluation of new interventions to prevent or remove pollution and inform scientifically based management priorities.

Eliminating Single-Use Plastics That Are Most Problematic for the Ocean

The scale of the plastics problem is immense, and we must make less plastics if we hope to have a plastic-free ocean one day. Ocean Conservancy is a powerful influencer in strategic policy arenas to stop the production and flow of single-use plastics which are most problematic for the ocean. With just 4% of the world's population, the U.S. created 17% of the world's plastic waste in 2018. Recent studies have also challenged the widely held belief that the U.S. is adequately "managing"—that is, collecting and properly landfilling, recycling or otherwise containing—its plastic waste. The studies further underscore that the U.S. has outsourced its massive plastic waste footprint to smaller countries and, in so doing, has become a top contributor to the global ocean plastics crisis.

Our domestic plastics policy work focuses on eliminating and reducing virgin plastics production and transitioning to a circular economy within the U.S. that extends the life cycle of products as long as possible and emphasizes producer responsibility. Our international policy work on plastics is currently focused on achieving wins for the ocean in the international legally binding instrument (ILBI), more commonly known as the "global plastics treaty," which is currently under negotiation by the United Nations to prevent plastic pollution and protect human health. This past year, bringing together 14 of the negotiating states, Ocean Conservancy achieved major advances toward our priorities for the treaty. We are at a pivotal moment as negotiators aim to finalize the agreement by the end of 2024. Reduction, a main point of contention, remains absolutely essential if plastic pollution is to be controlled.

Bangladesh. Photo by Kewkradong 2023

Looking Ahead: Achieving Less Plastic Pollution Everywhere

Building on our decades of experience and in-house science and policy expertise, Ocean Conservancy will advance domestic and international policies to help governments aggressively curb the flow of plastics into the ocean. In the U.S., we will develop and broadly disseminate model legislation and a Plastics 101 Handbook to enable more aggressive action at the state level. Internationally, we will ensure the finalized global plastics treaty contains Ocean Conservancy's policy priorities to address the full lifecycle of plastic pollution.

Seattle, Washington. Photo by Patty Chambers 2024

An anonymous Ocean Conservancy donor's generous commitment of over $1 million created solutions to marine debris through cleanups and fishing gear removals in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. This work was celebrated alongside partners and cleanup volunteers at an ICC flagship cleanup event in Seattle, Washington, in September 2024.

Myeik Archipelago, Myanmar. Photo by Shin Arunrugstichai 2023

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

The ocean covers approximately 70% of Earth's surface. It's the largest livable space on our planet and is home to more life than anywhere else on Earth. An estimated 91% of marine species are yet to be identified. Biodiversity enables marine ecosystems to remain productive, resilient and adaptive to change, preventing one species' extinction from causing wider environmental impacts on an ecosystem. Conserving marine biodiversity is essential for the health of our planet, wildlife and communities. Ocean Conservancy's biodiversity portfolio focuses on achieving four goals:

1. Removing Fishing Gear and Restoring Marine Life
2. Protecting Fisheries Through Climate Uncertainty
3. Safeguarding Arctic Seas and Wildlife
4. Conserving Florida's Beaches and Waterways

Removing Fishing Gear and Restoring Marine Life

As fish populations dwindle, between 5% to 30% of the decline in some fish stocks can be attributed to lost, discarded or abandoned fishing gear, commonly known as "ghost gear." Once lost in the ocean, fishing gear becomes the deadliest form of marine plastic pollution. Ocean Conservancy's Global Ghost Gear Initiative® (GGGI) works to combat this form of pollution worldwide. As a global leader on the issue, we inform policy processes in both the public and private sectors, catalyze practical and replicable solutions for on-the-ground and in-the-water removal, mitigation and prevention of ghost gear, and build the global evidence base to improve understanding of the scope, scale and impacts of ghost gear. Fishers are at the forefront of these solutions, and their efforts contributed greatly to the 81,073 pounds of recycled gear we collected this year in Mexico alone.

Fishing gear is very expensive, and rarely, if ever, is losing it the fisher's intent. To feed their families and the rest of the world, fishers lament gear loss. Rough weather, unseen snags and unintended interactions with other marine traffic lead to losses. As part of our fisher workshops in Nova Scotia this year, one 35-year experienced fisher, initially skeptical about this work, was alarmed when he witnessed the traps he recovered contained 25-pound lobsters in the peak of their breeding potential—hundreds of thousands of unfertilized eggs that will never spawn. This opened his eyes to the importance of loss prevention and the disposal and removal of abandoned gear to sustain the future of his catch and the marine ecosystem overall.

The GGGI partners with seafood-industry and retail leaders to establish concrete commitments to evaluate and take action within their respective supply chains. The past year saw major successes with companies Bumble Bee Seafood and Gorton's Seafood both agreeing to actual supply-chain evaluations. Industry investment, encouraged by GGGI, enables fishers to improve their practices and prevent gear loss.

Looking Ahead: GGGI is Growing Global Impact

Ocean Conservancy is committed to expanding the scale and impact of our GGGI programs. We will continue to invest in partnerships across the seafood-supply chain, from fishers to industry leadership, to ensure we take on ghost gear and prevent its worst impacts. By 2030, we aim to develop six national or regional action plans addressing ghost gear, train 650 fishers on best practices for reducing ghost gear, remove at least 350,000 pounds of ghost gear from the environment, and recycle at least 275,000 pounds of fishing gear. The impact of this work will result in less ghost gear in the ocean, reducing stressors on animals and contributing to resilient ecosystems and communities.

Protecting Fisheries Through Climate Uncertainty

We use the word "fisheries" not just to refer to fish, but also to encompass all relationships among fish, habitats, other marine species, and the human communities that steward them, including Indigenous communities and recreational and commercial fishers who depend on those fish for food, jobs, recreation and culture. Taken holistically, each fishery is a front line in the movement for people to sustainably coexist with marine resources, even through the changing effects of the climate. A complex network of legal protections supports U.S. fisheries, and most of Ocean Conservancy's fishery-policy efforts focus on reforming the management frameworks that minimize human impact while providing sustainable levels of fishing. Today's fishery-governance models are not adequately prepared for climate change, and we're already witnessing disasters driven or worsened by warming, acidification and other climate-change effects. Our advocacy is focused on achieving tangible policy change to improve the resilience of fisheries, helping fish and communities prepare to bounce back, even when catastrophes do occur. Our work this year overcame barriers to climate-ready fisheries through changing governance policy and advancing ecosystem-based approaches.

Looking Ahead: 100% of U.S. Federally Managed Fisheries are Sustainable and Climate Ready

The U.S. fishery management system is beginning to crack under the weight of climate change. We aim to modernize U.S. fishery management by advancing sustainability, resilience and equity in the face of systemic challenges. Ocean Conservancy works to strengthen existing best practices for fishing, develop new solutions that will reduce human impact on the ocean and support the long-term futures of coastal communities, ensuring fisheries thrive through adversity and bounce back after climate impacts.

Safeguarding Arctic Seas and Wildlife

The Arctic, which serves as the globe's air conditioner, is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet, facing cascading and interconnected changes threatening fragile marine ecosystems and coastal communities. Industrial fishing, shipping, deep-sea mining and offshore oil and gas are clamoring to access previously ice-covered and remote parts of the ocean. This year, we upheld legislative protections to prevent drilling in sensitive areas of Alaska. Ocean Conservancy joined partner organizations in opposing an appropriations bill that would mandate oil and gas lease sales in Alaska. We also led a coalition meeting focused on decreasing the environmental impacts of shipping on Alaskan Arctic communities and ecosystems. We continue to advance a wide range of responsible fishery management policies and processes in the U.S. Arctic and adjacent international waters. In all our Arctic work, we partner with Indigenous tribes and peoples whose economies, culture and foundational ways of life are deeply entwined with the region's natural abundance.

An Ocean Conservancy funder provided a seed funding grant of $5 million for our emerging campaign to protect the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO). We aim to safeguard the CAO from deep-sea mining, offshore oil and gas, transpolar shipping and commercial fishing. Already, we have secured a commitment that Canada will not allow deep-sea mining in areas under its jurisdiction.

Photo by Lorenzo Ragazzi 2017

Looking Ahead: Cleaner, Quieter Arctic Waters

We remain focused on the power of precautionary management approaches to address the industrial threats facing the Arctic, including vessel traffic and deep-sea mining. To safeguard the Arctic marine environment from vessel-generated noise, we will capitalize on our recent wins at the IMO to lead on establishing mandatory noise-reduction measures. We will continue working with the U.S. Coast Guard to bolster oil spill preparedness, prevention and response in the Arctic and western Alaska.

Conserving Florida's Beaches and Waterways

Florida, with its abundant ocean and coastal resources, boasts unparalleled beaches and extraordinarily diverse ecosystems. These natural treasures hold significant cultural, recreational and economic value for millions. However, escalating pressures from population growth, burgeoning coastal development, and climate change's adverse effects, like rising sea levels and severe weather events, endanger these invaluable resources and the state's economic well-being. Ocean Conservancy is working to protect the state's natural splendor.

In a major victory, Ocean Conservancy was a leading force calling attention to the intentional release of balloons as a damaging practice which hurts and kills marine life. New research finds that balloons are the highest-risk debris item for wildlife, 32 times more likely to kill seabirds than hard plastics. In June 2024, we successfully secured a ban on intentional release of balloons, making it a crime to intentionally let go of balloons that inevitably end up on Florida's shores and waterways, harming seabirds and manatees. Our work resulted in major media attention including a *New York Times* front-page story.

We are also addressing one of the biggest threats to Florida's waters—nitrogen pollution. Nitrogen in excessive amounts can threaten aquatic ecosystems, leading to issues such as harmful algal blooms and the decline of important underwater plants, consequently creating "dead zones" where fish and other marine life struggle to survive. Ocean Conservancy has launched an innovative partnership with Florida International University, the University of Florida and Florida State University to utilize a novel nitrogen-source fingerprinting and monitoring tool in Tampa Bay. This method aims to identify the specific sources of nitrogen pollution—information that will be critical for policymakers and communities to take targeted actions to reduce pollution and restore the water quality of coastal and marine ecosystems.

Looking Ahead: Infrastructure, Information and Implementation in Florida

We will continue to expand our nitrogen fingerprinting research and data collection, and, as data rolls in from our existing nutrient research, we will translate that science into clear guidance for policy making. The arc of science to policy action is always a long and complicated one—no less for nitrogen pollution. Currently, who and what is responsible for Florida's water pollution and how to fix the problem is a very muddied and confusing picture. By Ocean Conservancy shining a light on this issue, policymakers will know with much more certainty where to invest to get the biggest impact and most positive environmental benefit.

Skjervøy, Norway. Photo by Max Emanuelson 2023

CONCLUSION

Global lawmakers, heads of government, captains of industry, and billions of coastal residents around the world all look to Ocean Conservancy for leadership, innovation and expertise. Hundreds of thousands of Ocean Conservancy volunteers, members and donors are answering the call to protect the ocean for future generations. As the most trusted voice in ocean conservation, our organization is critical to the health of the ocean and everyone and everything relying upon it. An investment in Ocean Conservancy's unique strengths—systems thinking, scientific expertise, visionary leadership, advocacy at every level and a network model for mobilizing for impact on the water—ensures that we continue to drive forward solutions for a healthy ocean and planet.

Even with the serious problems the ocean faces, our strong partnerships and enduring legacy leave us enthusiastic about the future. As always, support from our funders is critical to sustained progress. Thank you for being a part of Ocean Conservancy.

Ocean Conservancy®

www.oceanconservancy.org

202.280.6283
vision@oceanconservancy.org