OUR OCEAN. OUR FUTURE.

STRATEGIC MANIFESTO
All life is connected to the ocean.

As a species, our survival is dependent on our oceans being healthy and full of life, yet only four percent are currently protected. This leaves more than 95 percent unregulated and vulnerable to ever-increasing human pressures such as unsustainable fishing, irresponsible waste management and climate change. The consequences are already becoming clear.

In the past 200 years alone, ocean water has become 30% more acidic—faster than any known change in ocean chemistry in the last 50 million years.

We must take these threats seriously and act now to prevent further damage before it’s too late. In 2015, 150 world leaders took a first step by committing to protect the world’s oceans as part of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. One of the main goals is to protect ten percent of marine areas by 2020.

While this commitment is encouraging and completely necessary, leading experts contend we must push to protect 30-50 percent of the ocean to preserve biodiversity and life as we know it. Many large marine species play critical roles in ecosystems by maintaining habitats, enhancing nutrient cycles and balancing the food web. Their extinctions could lead to ecological cascades that would influence the structure and function of future ecosystems beyond just losing those species. The unprecedented loss of ocean giants could “disrupt ecosystems for millions of years.”

If we don’t protect marine life from destructive human activities now, the oceans face a ‘sixth mass extinction’, an extinction caused by humans. The stakes have never been higher for marine megafauna, which is why we began the Marine Megafauna Foundation (MMF) and have developed a long-term strategy called: MMF: Our Ocean, Our Future.
WHY MARINE MEGAFAUNA

Marine megafauna, also known as ocean giants, hold a place in our hearts. They captivate us in a way that few other creatures can. But they’re so much more than popular icons, as their presence tells a deeper story. They are vital to the delicate balance of the marine ecosystem and indicate the health of our oceans. When we protect ocean giants, we are also achieving umbrella protection for a wide variety of marine species and creating a stable environment for the future.

We have come to appreciate that megafauna are not merely embellishments, they are vital to the natural rhythms of life.

Professor Callum Roberts
Marine Biology Conservationist
and Author of “Oceans of Life”
Our Founders

Dr. Andrea Marshall

Dr. Marshall was the first person in the world to complete a PhD on manta rays. After her thesis, she stayed in Mozambique to spearhead the conservation of manta rays in the region and around the world. She is the lead author of the IUCN’s Red List assessments for both species of manta ray and is a member of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group. Andrea featured in the BBC Natural World documentary ‘Andrea: Queen of Mantas’ as well as the broadcaster’s award-winning trilogy ‘Sharks’. In 2013, she was inducted into the ranks of National Geographic’s Explorers as an Emerging Explorer in recognition of her efforts to protect these threatened rays.

Dr. Simon Pierce

Dr. Pierce founded MMF’s flagship research program on whale sharks, and is now studying these gentle giants in seven countries. His work on the population ecology and management of this iconic species has made him the world’s top whale shark conservation biologist. In 2016, Simon led a research team whose efforts resulted in whale sharks being recognized as globally endangered for the first time on the IUCN Red List. He is also a scientific advisor to the online global whale shark database (www.whaleshark.org), regional co-chair of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group, and supervising multiple PhD students working on threatened marine species.

Key Accomplishments

Our key accomplishments during this time have made documented improvements in research, education and conservation:

- Conducted the in-depth assessments necessary to list manta rays and whale sharks on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

- Featured in global media outlets such as CNN, BBC, National Geographic and TED

- Pioneered groundbreaking technology such as the use of satellite tags, new non-invasive methods to collect DNA samples, and algorithms and photo recognition software to track populations

- Expanded our scope to implement marine protection strategies in Africa, Southeast Asia and Central America, modeled after our successful pilot program in Mozambique

- Led the first ranger training program in Bazaruto Archipelago Marine National Park in Mozambique

We are proud of what we have done, but there is still so much more we can do. We can take advantage of this momentum and apply our proven local approach on a global scale to achieve long-lasting change. We also recognize there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. We will continue to use a combination of research and community engagement to recommend effective protection strategies tailored to the unique needs of the areas we work in.
To achieve our mission and bring our vision to life, it is critical that we look at the problem holistically.

We have identified four interconnected strategic pillars to give focus to the various roles we play.

**MISSION + VISION**

Our vision:

A world where marine life and humans thrive together

Our mission:

Save threatened marine life using pioneering research, education and sustainable conservation solutions

We need research to understand the threats facing marine life and their root causes, but data alone is not enough.

It is our responsibility to use our scientific findings to educate and inspire the general public, local communities, and national and world leaders so that we can develop sustainable conservation solutions together.

A WORLD WHERE MARINE LIFE + HUMANS THRIVE TOGETHER
As we move toward 2030 and beyond, we seek to preserve the most biodiverse marine habitats on the planet.

**Three priority regions**

Based on our current global research activity, we have identified three priority regions that:

- Have a high number of threatened marine species
- Represent the highest levels of ocean biodiversity
- Face significant threats from growing human pressures

**We will focus our efforts in:**

- **Americas**
- **Western Indian Ocean**
- **Southeast Asia**

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**How inappropriate to call this planet Earth when it is clearly Ocean.**

Arthur C. Clarke
Scientific Fiction Writer and Undersea Explorer

As these areas continue to develop, the human pressures on the marine environment will only increase, with nearly 60 percent of the world’s population living within 100 kilometers of the coast and growing.

We need to get involved now, bringing our locally tested research and conservation strategies to save these critical species from extinction and preserve the biodiversity of our oceans.
By 2030, we will be one of the main explorers of marine ecosystems, focusing on megafauna as our flagship species.

**MMF will be a:**

- Pioneering researcher with state-of-the-art facilities, research vessels and leading research staff
- Primary research educator for future researchers through theoretical and practical experience
- Global research facilitator, fostering knowledge exchange and enabling research opportunities

To achieve this outcome, MMF will maximize its impact by focusing on the following areas between now and 2030:

- **CONDUCT** exploratory marine megafauna research
- **PUBLISH** frequent high-quality, conservation-oriented scientific papers
- **EXPAND** research both in species and geographic locations to increase global impact
- **EDUCATE** the science community by training and supporting local scientists alongside international students from top-tier universities
- **FACILITATE** knowledge exchange by providing the necessary platforms and organizing conferences and workshops

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**Research**

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**Educate**

By 2030, we will be one of the main educators of future generations, inspiring them to take action to protect the ocean’s biodiversity.

**MMF will be a:**

- Global educator raising public awareness and providing opportunities to take action
- Local educator to affect behavioral change by working directly with targeted coastal groups

To achieve this outcome, MMF will maximize its impact by focusing on the following areas between now and 2030:

- **GENERATE** appealing mass media contributions (broadcast, print and online outlets) to educate and raise general public awareness of the importance of marine megafauna conservation
- **DEVELOP** inspiring messages to educate consumers about products made from endangered species
- **COLLABORATE** with same sector organisations to share learnings and develop best practice focusing on regional and behavioural change
- **EDUCATE** major stakeholders in our priority regions such as local community members (especially fishermen) and tourists (especially divers)
- **INSPIRE** the next generations to become ocean guardians of the future

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We will continuously measure the effectiveness of our research initiatives. Among others, our priority metrics will be:

- Number of high-quality research papers published (percent leading to conservation solutions; number of citations)
- Number of local nationals trained in scientific methods

We will continuously measure the effectiveness of our education initiatives. Among others, our priority metrics will be:

- Number of people reached globally and locally through our education initiatives
- Number of mass media impressions for educational content

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Research

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Educate

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We will continuously measure the effectiveness of our research initiatives. Among others, our priority metrics will be:
We will continuously measure the effectiveness of our initiatives to inspire. Among others, our priority metrics will be:

- Number of agreements achieved with governments and international policy makers
- Number of workshops and conferences hosted to educate government officials

**Inspire**

By 2030, we will be one of the main inspirations behind the preservation of oceans across the world.

**MMF will be a:**

Leading influencer of governments, international policy makers, businesses, and individuals to inspire behavioral change and action

To achieve this outcome, MMF will maximize its impact by focusing on the following areas between now and 2030:

**INFLUENCE** international policy by sharing research findings and working with influential public figures to inspire change

**COLLABORATE** with other global organizations to inspire conservation action

**FACILITATE** interdisciplinary workshops and conferences to educate governments and build productive relationships

**ENABLE** our supporters to experience inspirational encounters with marine megafauna in the most amazing locations around the world

**ADVOCATE** for focal species globally through a multitude of channels to build and inspire a wide network of supporters

**Protect**

By 2030, we will be one of the main protectors of marine ecosystems.

**MMF will be a:**

Globally respected leader improving the management of existing marine protected areas (MPAs) and developing effective, long-term conservation strategies to protect and restore key habitats

Trusted regional conservation leader empowering local communities to manage marine resources sustainably

To achieve this outcome, MMF will maximize its impact by focusing on the following areas between now and 2030:

**LAUNCH** global and local programs to advocate for effective marine protection strategies

**TRAIN** rangers of protected areas to protect in a sustainable way and advise governments and law enforcement on effective marine protection strategies

**FACILITATE** cross-border collaboration to establish and manage protection strategies in our priority regions

**ENABLE** our supporters to experience inspirational encounters with marine megafauna in the most amazing locations around the world

**ADVOCATE** for focal species globally through a multitude of channels to build and inspire a wide network of supporters

**Join Us**

The challenges are great, but with your help we can deepen our impact and continue to work towards creating a world where marine life and humans thrive together.

We encourage fellow visionaries to partner with us.

GETINVOLVED@MARINEMEGAFANA.ORG

SOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST
“We are supportive of MMF’s work and acknowledge the significant, positive contribution they make towards the active research and conservation of marine megafauna across the globe.

The National Geographic Society