



# America, the Ocean and Climate Change: Research Insights for Conservation, Awareness and Action

## Insights and Updates: Winter 2012

- **Information and insights about engaging the youth audience**
- **Second round of small grants awarded!**
- **"Rethinking the way we do what we do"**

Building upon the spirited success of the recent AZA annual meeting, and inspired by the ambitious plans that so many of you have in place for 2012, The Ocean Project is pleased to present this latest update on our market research initiative. In this issue we respond to requests from our zoo, aquarium, and museum (ZAM) partners for a closer look at the research results as related to youth, highlight the winners of our second round of small grants, and present a new opinion column with some inspirational words from John Racanelli, CEO of the National Aquarium. We hope you find it all useful as you develop strategies and tools to engage your visitors in conservation action. As always, we welcome your [feedback!](#)

### Information and insights about engaging the youth audience

"Today's teens are more socially conscious than any prior generation and, regardless of race or ethnicity, they tend to consider the conservation of the ocean to be a high priority," says Deb Kerr, who founded YouthMuse, an organization that facilitates social change campaigns.

The Ocean Project's initiative has shown how there is higher than average interest among individuals between the ages of 13 and 25. So, with the research confirming that the youth audience is indeed more interested, what does it tell us about how they can be activated?

1. "Engage in a way that ensures authenticity," advises Dave Glenn, youth engagement coordinator for the Seattle Aquarium. "Allow youth to help develop your outreach efforts, guiding them as needed, and in that way you are more likely to end up with authentic and effective programs." Glenn has been putting this approach into practice with a new effort entitled [PS: We Love You](#).

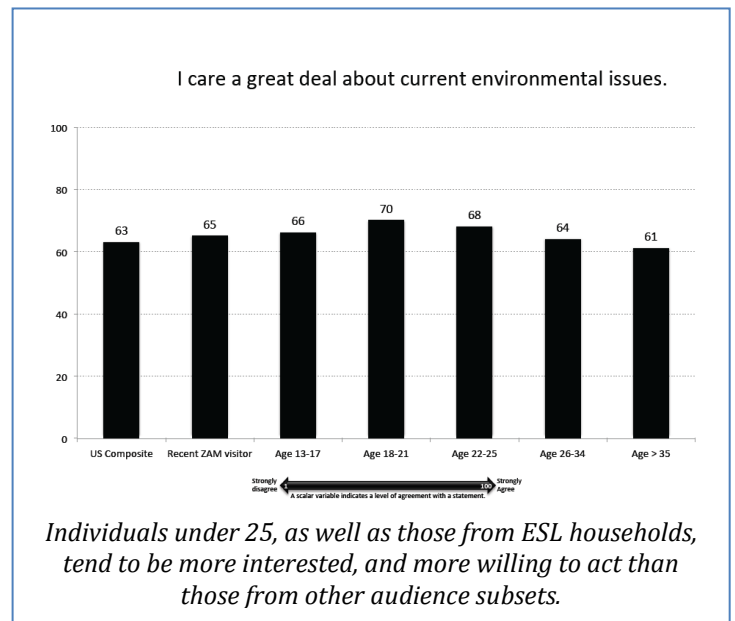
2. "Focus on solutions, especially personal actions," says Douglas Meyer, who helps interpret the market research for The Ocean Project. "The research tells us that youth are the most likely to say they recognize the problems, but it also tells us that they are the least likely to know the solutions. Youth are especially interested in solutions that entail personal action steps, as they are among the most likely to believe that those can make a difference."

3. "The research clearly reveals the way in which parents are turning to their teens for insights on how to be 'green'. We are committed to working with youth to develop essential tools such as websites and social media to help them take their message to friends and family," says Don Lisowy, Director of Education at WCS – our latest Priority Partner. For more, see our [youth FAQ](#).

### Second round of grants awarded!

The quantity and quality of applications received reflected the way in which so many aquariums and zoos are rising to the challenge of offering new and innovative programs that inspire visitors to conservation action. All of our winners are developing projects that engage youth and/or minorities, audiences identified in the research as having the potential to shift the baseline in conservation participation. After an extensive selection process, and working with our Small Grants Advisory Panel, we are pleased to announce the following grant recipients:

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- [Florida Aquarium](#) - Fully funded at \$9,975 to deliver three professional development workshops for middle school teachers, preparing them to educate students about climate change and advance conservation actions.
- [Fresno Chafee Zoo](#) - Fully funded at \$15,000 to expand the scale and scope of "TEEN Leaders," a peer-to-peer outreach program aimed at youth from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.
- [Gladys Porter Zoo](#) - Fully funded at \$15,000 to support "Champions of the Blue," a program that partners middle and high school youth with university students in this predominantly Latino community.
- [Lincoln Park Zoo with the Chicago Botanic Garden](#) - Fully funded at \$15,000 to develop teen-driven campaigns that carry climate change messages to the surrounding community.
- [New England Aquarium](#) - Fully funded at \$15,000 to support "Live Blue Ambassadors," a program that brings teens from a variety of backgrounds together for hands-on environmental stewardship projects.

With thanks to generous support from NOAA, The Ocean Project developed a national competitive [small grants program](#) that provides up to \$60,000 to ZAMs each year through 2013. We had a very competitive pool of applicants, and would like to thank all of those who applied. The next deadline is Sept 1, 2012. Look for the RFP in June!

## "Rethinking the way we do what we do"

### Guest Editorial by John C. Racanelli, CEO of the National Aquarium



Over the course of my career, I've had the good fortune to work with ardent ocean defenders, outstanding nonprofit organizations, and three world-class aquariums. And I've learned that our institutions - aquariums, zoos and science museums - are incredibly powerful platforms from which to inspire the public. I recently reviewed a collection of aquarium and zoo mission statements and I found that nearly every one had that exact word, "inspire," as its operant verb. This naturally led me to the real question: What, exactly, do we want to inspire people to do?

For my part, I believe we have an opportunity to take our visitors beyond inspiration to action, building what could become the core of a new global conservation movement. The ongoing research by The Ocean Project affirms that we have the public's trust and with it, the moral authority to do so. Yet, that same research also tells us clearly that, to be successful, we need to rethink the way we do what we do. To paraphrase my friend and mentor Julie Packard, we can't just have a mission statement; we have to be on a mission.

This research offers good insights about our audiences, what they want to see and hear, and how we should engage them. It tells us, for example, that there are two new groups of environmental stewards - "Millennials" and ESL households - that are ready to embrace us. We know from this work that these two cohorts, more than most others, already support conservation and want our specific suggestions as to how they can be part of the solution -- things like "skip the plastic bags for the sake of the sea turtles," or "wash clothes in cold water to conserve coral reefs." Moreover, the research challenges our old assumptions by noting how the better starting point for these stories is not the root of the problem, but the steps to a solution.

At the [National Aquarium](#), we are increasing the time, talent, and financial resources we invest in social media, mobile and web platforms to communicate with largely untapped audiences. And we're re-examining our messages to go beyond mere awareness towards driving conservation action at individual and community levels.

I recently heard someone say, "Well, zoos and aquariums aren't really controversial." I think they meant that as a good thing. For me, the dire situation with our world ocean demands just the opposite. I agree with my colleague Sylvia Earle: the next ten years may be more important to the ocean's future than the next 10,000. It's time to stir things up!

**About this Initiative:** Made possible with funding provided by NOAA. Earlier reports, including our *2011 Annual Update*, as well as complete copies of the two landmark studies – *America, the Ocean, and Climate Change: New Research Insights for Conservation, Awareness, and Action* (2009) and *Communicating About Oceans: Results of a National Survey* (1999) – can be found on our [website](#).

To learn more about The Ocean Project and how you can get involved in our growing global network, please visit our [website](#).