

Fishing for Public Engagement

Making Conservation Happen Webinar Series #10

June 14, 2019 1:00-1:30 PM EDT



Overview

- Survey results
- Pilot project results
- Next steps and opportunities to participate
- See you at AZA! (Workshop and sessions)

Survey

Aquarium & zoo interest in advancing conservation policy



Thanks to support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, The Ocean Project explored the following topics in a baseline survey (Fall 2017) and with a follow-up survey and supplemental set of interviews (Winter 2019):

- Interest in conservation policy issues at state and/or federal level
- Willingness to engage policymakers and/or the visiting public
- Current and anticipated capacity for doing so
- Overall priorities among ocean issues
- Specific interest in fisheries issues

Both surveys were circulated broadly and open to participation by all staff, though priority in analysis was given to responses from those who self-identified as working directly on policy or communications.

The interviews were by invitation only, confidential conversations with decision-makers from leading aquariums and zoos in three key regions for fisheries policy.

Participation

1. Survey response included more than 100 respondents, including representatives from the following*

- Alaska SeaLife Center
- Aquarium of the Pacific
- Arizona Center for Nature Cons.
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- Blank Park Zoo
- Brandywine Zoo
- Brevard Zoo
- Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
- California Academy of Sciences
- Central Florida Zoo
- Denver Zoo
- Florida Aquarium
- Jenkinson's Aquarium
- Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk
- Minnesota Zoo
- Monterey Bay Aquarium
- Museum of Science (Boston)
- Mystic Aquarium
- Niabi Zoo
- National Aquarium
- National Mississippi River M & Aq.
- New England Aquarium
- New Mexico BioPark Society
- Newport Aquarium
- North Carolina Aquarium PKS
- Oakland Zoo
- Oklahoma City Zoo
- Oregon Coast Aquarium
- Palm Beach Zoo
- Philadelphia Zoo
- Point Defiance Zoo & Aq.
- Rolling Hills Zoo
- San Diego Zoo Global
- San Francisco Zoological Society
- Santa Barbara Zoo
- Scovill Zoo
- SeaLife (Michigan)
- SeaLife (Other)
- Seattle Aquarium
- SeaWorld Parks
- Sequoia Park Zoo
- South Carolina Aquarium
- St. Louis Aquarium
- Utah's Hogle Zoo
- Utica Zoo
- Zoo New England

** A strong, albeit self selecting sample, noting respondents could opt to take the survey anonymously and many did.*

2. Interviews completed with 10 aquarium and zoo leaders from key regions for fisheries: Gulf Coast, NE & Pacific NW

Takeaways

Engaging on public policy issues...

- Aquariums and zoos often have more interest than capacity
- Current interest, as well as current activity, is centered on visitor engagement
- A divide between the few who are very active, and the many who are less active with policymakers
- Some suggestion of a shift to working at the state, as compared to the national level
- Top ocean issues being addressed include threatened species, marine debris & sustainable seafood
- Interest and experience in sustainable seafood can be connected to efforts to advance fisheries policy
- Eager to participate in public engagement, but want assistance in coordination and messaging
- Willing to collaborate in policymaker engagement, and appreciating networking opportunities

Findings

Survey shows that interest often greater than capacity*

...your organization's current interest in engaging on policy issues at the national level?

N=69



...your organization's current capacity for engaging on policy issues at any level?

N=68

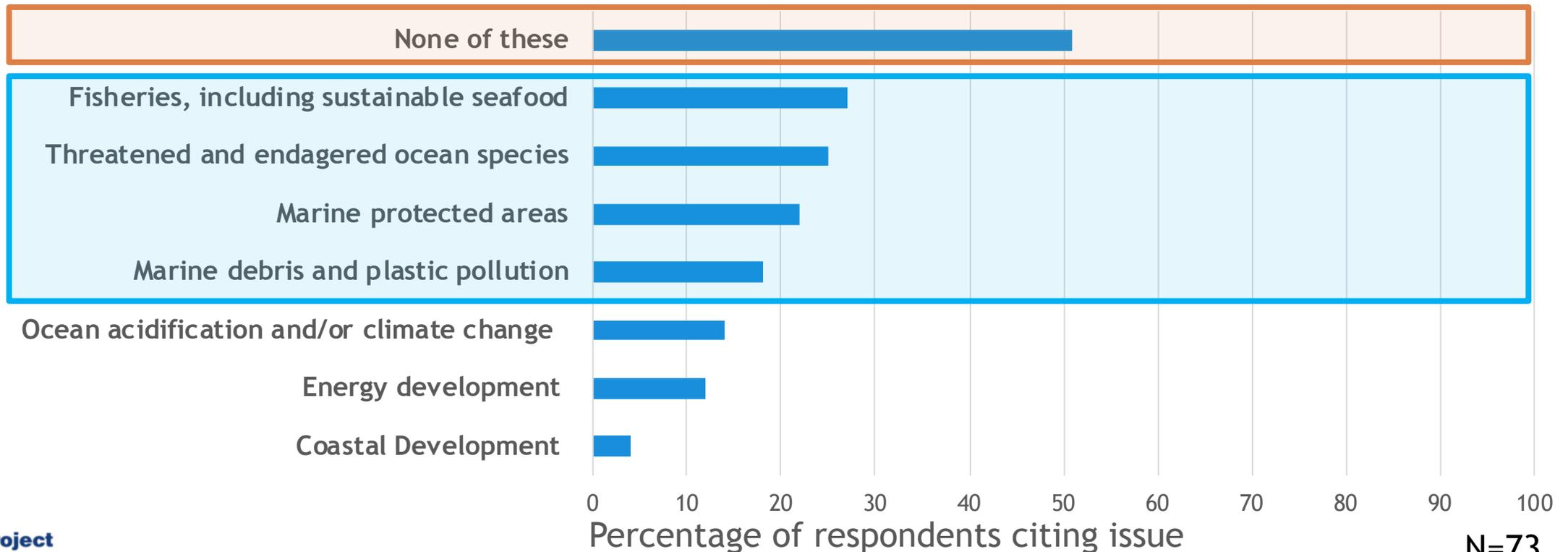


* Response from those who have a role in policy and communication decisions

Findings

At the national level, less activity than at the state level, but more attention to fisheries/sustainable seafood issues

Over the last twelve months, about which of the following ocean issues did your organization communicate with elected officials or agency representatives at the national level?
(Please select any/all that apply or "none of the above")



Percentage of respondents citing issue

* Response from those who have a role in policy decisions

N=73

Findings

* Response from those who have a role in policy and communication decisions

Survey suggests an interest in improving all efforts, and making a connection with sustainable seafood efforts

Please indicate how your organization would want to engage on these issues

N=68

	Not interested	Interested, but satisfied with effort "as is"	Wanting to improve or expand effort	D/K or N/A
Informing or educating our on-site/online visitors about these issues	2	9	48	9
Working collaboratively with other zoos and aquariums in informing state or federal officials	1	12	46	10
Incorporating these issues into our related work on seafood sustainability	5	17	40	7
Sharing our own institutional perspective on these issues directly with state or federal officials	4	21	31	13
Gathering and sharing the perspective of our visitors with state or federal officials	8	18	31	12
Encouraging our visitors to contact state or federal officials directly about these issues	8	17	29	14

**“We’re really supportive (going forward)...
we were so surprised by the turnover from the
fisheries pilot with The Ocean Project –
I don’t think we expected that.”**

Overview

- Survey results
- **Pilot project results**
- Next steps and opportunities to participate
- See you at AZA! (Workshop and sessions)



The Pilot Project

- **Primary goal:** Engage the visiting public so as to (1) raise their awareness of, and (2) document their interest in supporting science-based fisheries management policies
- **Secondary goal:** Engage the visiting public in a way that maintains, if not improves, (1) the quality of their experience and (2) their recognition of aquariums' role in advancing ocean conservation

Approach

1. Common message and ask

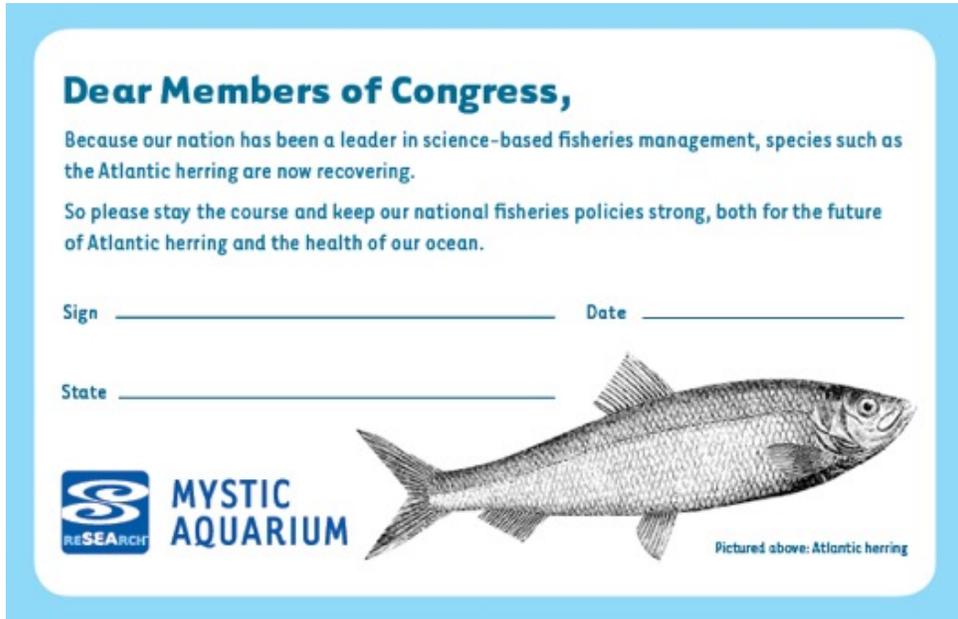
2. Site specific implementation

- Mystic Aquarium created and aired a 90 second video PSA in marine theater prior to start of sea lion show.
- Seattle Aquarium incorporated messaging into a 10 minute dive show
- Texas State Aquarium served up the messaging along with red snapper samples

3. Common evaluation

- Tracked response rates for the comment cards
- Informally collected qualitative staff feedback
- Conducted quantitative visitor exit surveys

Summarized: <https://theoceanproject.org/2018/06/visitors-respond-positively-to-fisheries-engagement-pilot-project>



HEARTWIRED TO LOVE THE OCEAN

A MESSAGING GUIDE FOR ADVOCATES



Findings

- **Strong support for the hypotheses that aquariums and zoos can effectively engage visitors on this issue of science-based fisheries management, improving the quality of the experience and improving perceptions of aquariums in relation to ocean conservation**
 - E.g. Visitors who were engaged expressed higher concern about seafood sustainability, higher belief that their actions could make a difference, and higher understanding about the impact of policy; as well as greater appreciation for the role of aquariums, when compared to visitors who were not engaged
- **Each of the approaches had strengths and weaknesses**
 - Video PSA was most effective overall, with the best reach
 - Diver talk had best message retention, but lower card completion
 - Seafood sampling had best rate of card completion, but lowest message retention, and most difficult to implement
- **Messaging recognized by the Packard Foundation's Ocean Messaging Project as example of best practice in their new guide**
 - Available at <https://heartwiredforchange.com/ocean>

Overview

- Survey results
- Pilot project results
- **Next steps, and opportunities to participate**
- See you at AZA! (Workshop and sessions)

Phase II

Thanks to ongoing support from the Moore Foundation

- **Primary goal:** Building upon the results of successful pilot phase, develop and refine easy and effective approaches with which zoos and aquariums can leverage their experience around the issue of sustainable seafood so as to (1) raise visitor awareness of, and (2) document visitor support for science-based fisheries management policies
- **Secondary goal:** Ensure that these approaches maintain, if not improve (1) the quality of visitor experience and (2) visitor perceptions of aquariums and zoos as conservation leaders



MYSTIC
AQUARIUM



New England
Aquarium



TEXAS STATE
AQUARIUM®



VIRGINIA
AQUARIUM
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

The Aquarium Conservation Partnership





Video Templates

- The Mystic model, ready for you to adapt and use
- Opportunity to insert your own logo and expert too
- Gulf and New England versions planned



Talk Toolkits

- Building upon the experience in Seattle with the diver talks
- Adaptable for use in a keeper talk or for those waiting in line





Food Service Strategy

- Taking the Texas State example to Texas-sized scale
- 100% of these aquariums serve 100% sustainable seafood!
- A possible opportunity to showcase, and provide positive reinforcement to food service partners



Go time?

Overview

- Survey results
- Pilot project results
- Next steps, and opportunities to participate
- **See you at AZA! (Workshop and sessions)**

2019

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

New Orleans

September 7-11

Mark Your Calendars

- **SATURDAY, SEPT. 7**
 - **10:00AM-5:00PM Pre-Conference Workshop: Conservation Engagement and Advocacy Skills Boot Camp**
- **MONDAY, SEPT. 9**
 - **4:00-5:30PM Empowering our Youth: Giving Passion a Platform**
- **TUESDAY, SEPT. 10**
 - **10:00-11:30AM Making Waves in Conservation: How Aquariums are Experimenting with Tools and Metrics to Increase our Conservation Impact**
- **WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11**
 - **8:00-9:30AM Becoming True Agents for Change: Mobilizing Our Audiences to Take Meaningful Action for Conservation**
 - **10:00-11:30AM Making the Most of Special Conservation Days**

For more about this webinar:

Douglas Meyer
Strategic Advisor to The Ocean Project
dmeyer@theoceanproject.org

To view prior webinars:

<https://theoceanproject.org/policy>

This webinar series is made possible thru support from

GORDON AND BETTY
MOORE
FOUNDATION