

# OCEAN FOR LIFE

An Initiative to Increase Cultural Understanding through Ocean Science



Photo documentation of the field study.  
Photo: Susanna Frohman



Hands-on field monitoring to immerse students in environmental science. Photo: Zachary Veshancey

*"If we truly want a legacy of peace for our children, we need to understand that this is a war that will ultimately be won with books, not with bombs."*

— Greg Mortenson, 2006

National marine sanctuaries are not only special ocean areas that promote conservation. National marine sanctuaries provide solutions for global issues, and can serve as neutral environments to bridge the cultural divide in a non-threatening way. The Ocean for Life program targeting the Middle East is an integrated solution that engages participants to better understand each other's cultures and societies to build a strong foundation for tomorrow's global leaders. Problems facing the ocean today cross national boundaries and require global solutions. Through this context, the Ocean for Life program is a year-long cultural exchange, which kicks off with an immersive two-week field study that will foster cross-cultural learning, appreciation, and relationship building experiences among students of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

The Ocean for Life program includes a series of two-week field studies in our national marine sanctuaries involving Middle Eastern high school students selected from GLOBE schools in their home countries to participate alongside Western high school students. Thirty high school students from diverse backgrounds will participate in each two-week field study. This collaboration is in partnership with the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, The GLOBE Program, Scubanauts International, Meridian International Center, National Geographic Society, American

University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

**The partners bring the following assets to the table:**

**Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies** – funds, staff support, and cultural sensitivity expertise

**Meridian International Center** – travel logistics, three-day introduction to the U.S., Washington, DC itinerary

**The GLOBE Program** – student selection from 299 schools in the Greater Middle East, along with long-term follow up with program participants

**Scubanauts International** – liability coverage, collaborator in initial 3-day introduction in Washington, DC, and student mentors

**National Geographic Society** – camera equipment and expertise on photo documentation of the experience with still images, along with mentors to develop the Youth Media Project

**American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking** – video equipment and expertise on documentation of the experience using video, along with mentors to develop the Youth Media Project

**National Marine Sanctuary Foundation** – fiscal agent, reception and dinner in DC for participants and invited guests



NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARIES





**Immersive field experiences foster relationship building. Photo: Claire Fackler**



**Hands-on learning inspires ocean literacy and conservation. Photo: Ben Brandes**



**Students analyze water quality samples and study the health of the ocean. Photo: Seaberry Nachbar**

The Ocean for Life program offers youth from a variety of countries an opportunity to learn about the United States, as well as each other's different countries and cultures. The field study allows students to connect and share cross-cultural common experiences. This is accomplished through collaborative ocean research expeditions, exploration, and scholastic achievement. We anticipate this resulting in a meaningful understanding of our global relationships providing perspectives that will remain for a lifetime and become a foundation for our future leaders. Understanding the environment and how we are all interconnected by one global ocean is an excellent means by which to promote these new relationships.

From 2001 to 2004, the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in partnership with National Geographic Society hosted several National Marine Sanctuaries Field Studies Programs to the following field sites: Channel Islands, Florida Keys, Gray's Reef, and Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale. The lessons learned during these experiences will be incorporated into the planning and implementation of this newly expanded initiative.

Evaluation literature suggests that doing these types of hands-on, immersive field experiences foster cross-cultural learning, appreciation, and relationship building. These field experiences

are not only valuable for children to understand their connection to the environment, but it encourages them to engage in conservation activities and ultimately instills a stewardship ethic in the participants.

Two immersive, two-week field studies will be piloted during the summer of 2009. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Field Study will take place at Marine Lab in Key Largo, Florida from July 15-30, 2009. The California National Marine Sanctuaries Field Study will be hosted by the Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries from July 27-August 9, 2009 in collaboration with the Headlands Institute and Camp Sea Lab. Both field studies will overlap with a three-day visit to Washington, DC coordinated by Meridian International Center.

For more information about the Ocean for Life program, please contact:

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