5th ANNUAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
Welcome to the 5th annual EarthEcho International Youth Leadership Summit! Over the next three days, you will join our community of young people from around the world – gaining inspiration, sharing ideas, and building strategies to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030.

This program will give you a quick overview of the incredible speakers, networking and skill-building sessions, and critical actions that we will all explore together through EarthEcho’s network of youth leaders and collaborators. The Youth Leadership Summit brings us together to create a global OceanEcho – amplifying the effect of collective youth-led action to protect our water planet.

Join the conversation leading up to and during the Summit on social media using hashtag #OceanEcho30x30 to share your experiences, lessons learned, and plans for action. We look forward to your participation and thank you for your commitment to this important work!
THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

5:00 - 6:15 PM – Kickoff & OurEcho Challenge Team Presentations

What better way to kickoff the Youth Leadership Summit than by featuring the 10 finalist teams in the OurEcho Biodiversity Challenge! Each middle-school aged team will present their ideas to protect or restore biodiversity in their local community.

6:15 - 6:30 PM – OurEcho Challenge Winners Announced

Philippe Cousteau and Aramco Americas announce the Grand Prize Winners of the OurEcho Challenge awarding the $10,000 prize to one innovative team of middle-schoolers.

6:30 - 7:30 PM – Networking & Ocean Trivia

Think you're an ocean expert? Join fellow Youth Leadership Summit participants and test your knowledge with interactive Ocean Trivia! This session will be conducted using Kahoot!. Participants are encouraged to download the app ahead of time.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

9:30 - 10:00 AM – Welcome, Preview of the Day with Mia DeMezza, EarthEcho International

10:00 - 11:10 AM – Dive Into 30x30 with Karen Sack, Ocean Unite; Masha Kalinina, The Pew Charitable Trusts; and Paul Rose, National Geographic; moderated by Laura Park, EarthEcho International

The future sustainability of life on earth and the health of our planet is inextricably linked to the health of our ocean. 30x30 is a global call to action to meaningfully protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 to preserve what remains of ocean biodiversity and restore the ocean to abundance. Through this session, you’ll learn about the importance of 30x30, key regions of the ocean that need protection, and how to lend your voice to this global effort.

11:15 - 11:45 AM – Networking

Join members of EarthEcho’s Youth Leadership Council to meet and learn from fellow Summit participants, growing your network of ocean champions from around the world!

11:45 - 12:45 PM – BREAK
12:45 - 2:10 PM — Ocean Lightning Talks: Water Connects Us All

- The Ocean Connects Us All, No Matter Where We Live, with Dr. Mikki McComb-Kobza, Ocean First Institute
- What Sharks Have Taught Me About Science Communication, with Melissa Cristina Márquez, The Fins United Initiative
- Coral Gardners: Youth Revolutionizing Ocean Conservation by Generating Collaborative Action, with Clara Barth, Coral Gardeners
- BLUE RENEWAL: Healing the Ocean and Humanity, with Danni Washington, The Big Blue & You
- Being Present and Spreading Stoke!, with Nick and Hans Schippers

2:15 - 3:00 PM — #OceanEcho30x30 Launch with Sean Russell, EarthEcho International

EarthEcho International's Youth Leadership Council invites Summit participants to join #OceanEcho30x30, a new initiative designed to amplify the collective impact of youth-led action to protect 30% of our world ocean by 2030. Through education and advocacy campaigns, engagement in ocean policy, and direct conservation action you will join fellow Summit participants in creating our #OceanEcho30x30 in the months ahead!

3:05 - 4:05 PM — Experience Documentar – a Time Capsule of Now!

with Cathryn Berger Kaye, CBK Associates & Shei Ascencio, Luanda International School; moderated by Akhila Bandlora, EarthEcho International

Altogether we will capture our opinions, perspectives, ideas, and visions for achieving ocean health – 30X30. What’s on your heart? What’s on your mind? Gather pens, markers, paper, your phone and you are ready for a creative memorable Summit moment. Follow @documentar_ on Instagram and #documentarEarthEcho.

4:10 - 5:10 PM — Using Entertainment to Save the World with Ashlan Cousteau featuring Vasser Seydel, Oxygen Project

Ashlan will explore how storytelling can be used to influence and motivate people to care about our planet and ocean. Using pop culture, human-centered stories and even a little humor, we can all recognize our power to change the world. Following Ashlan’s presentation, join the Oxygen Project’s Vasser Seydel for an inside look into building impactful communication campaigns.

5:10 - 7:00 PM — BREAK

7:00 - 8:30 PM — Virtual Film Screening & Panel: Sea of Hope with Dr. Sylvia Earle, Owen Pyle, and filmmakers Bob and Sarah Nixon; moderated by Olivia Blondheim, EarthEcho International

An awe-inspiring evening featuring a screening of the film Sea of Hope and discussion on the critical importance of marine protected areas. “Sea of Hope” is a National Geographic Channel / True Blue Films documentary that follows ocean legends Dr. Earle, photographer Brian Skerry, and a crew of teenage aquanauts on a yearlong quest to deploy photography and science to inspire the establishment of new Blue Parks across an unseen American Wilderness.
10:00 - 10:50 AM — Virtual Coffee Meetup: Reflections & Networking

Join the EarthEcho Youth Leadership Council and fellow Summit attendees to reflect on lessons learned, strengthen your connections, and set the stage for the sessions to come! (come with coffee, snacks, your favorite pet, etc.)

11:00 - 11:50 AM — Skill Building: Lightning Talks

- Plastic Free Cities: youth-led policy change with Sadie Thompson & Demetri Sedita
- An international perspective on the environmental movement with Nicolás Chesta & Samhita Gattupalli
- The Ins and Outs of Zoom Rooms: Success in Virtual Education with Isha Sangani
- Asserting yourself as a young person in STEM with Lela DeVine & Madison Toonder
- Why Communication is Key to Environmental Outreach with Armon Alex

12:00 - 1:00 PM — Inclusion & Antiracism Panel with René LaPointe Jameson, Elsa Mengistu, and Ivanya Johnson; moderated by Ruby Rorty, EarthEcho YLC alum

Join an amazing panel of young leaders who are building equity and justice in environmental advocacy. We will be discussing antiracism, environmental justice, and developing practical skills to build more equity into the environmental movement. Moderated panel discussion to be followed by breakout sessions exploring specific actions with our panel of experts.

1:00 - 2:00 PM — BREAK

2:00 - 2:55 PM — Policy Action Workshop: Leveraging Your Voice

with Jean Flemma & Sarah Guy, Ocean Defensive Initiative

Jean Flemma and Sarah Guy from the Ocean Defense Initiative will share their top tips for becoming an effective ocean advocate.

3:15 - 4:15 PM — Concurrent Sessions:

- Tech to Protect with Celeste Cooper, Western Digital; Bonnie Lei, Microsoft’s AI for Earth; and Dominica Zhu, Census Open Innovation Labs; moderated by Ela Gokcigdem

Around the world technology is changing how we study, restore, and protect the planet. Through this panel discussion, you’ll learn about the development and importance of emerging technologies in our work to ensure a sustainable future.

- The Power of Business to Build a Better World with Michael Fields, GTI; Stacy Strickland, Starbucks; Emma Housman, Xylem Watermark; Teda Phadounxathan, La Mer; moderated by Victor Ye

Join a panel of corporate social responsibility professionals as they share their work, highlight the critical role businesses can play as sustainability leaders, and explore strategies to engage businesses in youth led conservation efforts.

4:20 - 4:35 PM — Call to Action from Philippe Cousteau
**Team Super Plants** - Proof School (San Francisco, CA)
Creating community gardens filled with plants with "supercharged" roots to help sequester carbon dioxide to combat climate change.

**Team Prairie Protectors** - Bednarcik Junior High School (Aurora, IL)
Developing plans for rain gardens to mitigate flooding problems while creating important habitats for a variety of plant and animal species.

**Team Pollinator Paper** - Bednarcik Junior High School (Aurora, IL)
Creating habitats for pollinators (e.g., bees, butterflies) by planting gardens in their community using specially designed seed paper greeting cards.

**Team Aquabotics** - Bednarcik Junior High School (Aurora, IL)
Designing a robot to locate and collect debris in a local pond, with the ultimate goal of creating a network of autonomous, self-sustaining robots to keep water systems and oceans clean.

**Team Swamp Stompers** - Coventry Middle School (Akron, OH)
Propagating native plant species to replace the invasive species that threaten the native plants within critical bog habitats in Ohio.

**Team International Bird Hotel Developers** - Brooks Middle School (Oak Park, IL)
Creating a variety of innovative habitats to attract native, migratory bird species to their local area.

**Team Invasive Ivy Squad** - Montessori Children's House (Redmond, WA)
Developing an invasive ivy removal plan, which will allow native plant species to thrive.

**Plastic Free NC’s Green Team** - Love A Sea Turtle (Greenville, NC)
Designing "floating islands" to help increase habitats and biodiversity in local ponds, lakes and streams.

**Team Crayfish** - Medea Creek Middle School (Oak Park, CA)
Creating sustainable fishing practices for the removal of an invasive crayfish species.

**Team California Native Bees** - Medea Creek Middle School (Oak Park, CA)
Restoring native bee populations by planting gardens that will attract the bees back to the community.
THANK YOU TO THE OUReCHO CHALLENGE JUDGES

**Shavonti Archer**  
Transmission Line Engineer, Engineered Design Services LLC; CEO and Founder, Systematic Motivation

**Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A.**  
CBK Associates

**Olivia Blondheim**  
Integrative Biology Ph.D. Student, University of South Florida; Youth Leadership Council and Board of Directors Member, EarthEcho International

**Juan Carrascal**  
Retired Middle School Earth & Space and General Science Teacher, Gifted Teacher Endorsement

**Cary Elwes**  
Actor

**Aditi Jayarajan**  
Bat Biologist & PhD Student, University of Florida

**Andres Jimenez**  
Executive Director, Green 2.0

**Dr. Ronald Loughland**  
Environmental Consultant, Environment Protection Department, Saudi Aramco

**Lisa Lutoff-Perlo**  
President & CEO, Celebrity Cruises Inc.

**Deb McMullen**  
Coordinator, K-12 Science & Planetarium, School District U-46

**Brandi Nicholson**  
Curriculum Project Manager, Accelerate Learning

**Janis Searles Jones**  
CEO, Ocean Conservancy

**Julie Vecchio, PhD**  
USF College of Marine Science

**Danni Washington**  
TV Host; Co-founder, The Big Blue & You

**Victor Ye**  
Youth Leadership Council Member, EarthEcho International
EARTHECHO YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Akhila Bandlora†
Apurva Iyengar
Armon Alex*
Demetri Sedita*
Domingo Cortinez
Ela Gokcigdem†
Florence Gonzalez
Greyson Graham
Hayley Charlton-Howard
Isha Sangani*
Julián Álvarez
Laura Hampton
Laura Park†
Lela DeVine*
Lili Zebluim
Madison Toonder*
Maria Torres
Mary Ann Arizaga
Mercedes (Sadie) Thompson
Nicolás Chesta*
Olivia Blondheim†
Princess Powell
Priscila Bonilla
Samhita Gattupalli*
Sergio Alvarez
Summer Snell
Victor Ye†

*Skill Building: Lightning Talks Presenter
† Session Moderator
Shei Ascencio — Creativity/Activity/Service Coordinator, Language Acquisition; Lunda International School

Shei Ascencio, M.Ed. describes herself as an international educator, learner, consultant, workshop leader, online facilitator, and at heart mum, partner, friend, traveler and foodie. Shei hails from Mexico with just under two decades of experience living and working in culturally rich and diverse countries across Africa, Asia and North America. Shei currently lives in Luanda, Angola and teaches at Luanda International School (LIS).

Clara Barth — Strategy & Partnerships Manager, Coral Gardeners

Clara Barth is the Strategy & Partnerships manager at Coral Gardeners, a Tahitian organization dedicated to saving the world’s coral reefs. She holds a Master’s degree in Business management. Since she graduated, she has dedicated herself to change the way people see environmental protection and marine conservation. She is a surfer and a free diver, the ocean is all her life. She started her career with an 8-month field trip in South America where she learned about social entrepreneurship and microfinance. She worked for 2 years on developing global corporations’ sustainability strategies in a French consulting firm. Then she developed a program to improve MPAs financial resilience, specifically through the integration of entrepreneurship and marketing “spirit” into their business models. She roamed the Mediterranean for a year, training several marine conservation projects in different countries. Eventually, she started working with Coral Gardeners, a youth-led organization striving to revolutionize ocean conservation and generate collaborative action.

Celeste Cooper — Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive Officer, Western Digital

Celeste Cooper is Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive Officer of Western Digital. She previously served as Chief of Staff to the Chief Technology Officer at Western Digital. Cooper has more than 20 years of experience working in a broad range of technology-focused businesses ranging in size from early stage startups to Fortune 50 companies. She has held a variety of leadership roles in technical, operational and strategic disciplines. Cooper joined Western Digital in 2017 from Hewlett Packard Enterprise, where she served most recently as Vice President of Global Professional Services for the Communications Solutions Business. Previous roles at HPE included Vice President of Strategy and Operations, and Chief of Staff, Senior Director of Operations and Strategy. Cooper was Chief Operating Officer of RUNA, Inc. (acquired by Staples, Inc.), a startup focused on e-commerce personalization technology. She also served as Vice President of Engineering and Director of Program Management for Tropos Networks (acquired by ABB), a wireless mesh networking company. Cooper held roles earlier in her career at WMG Gaming, Cambia Networks, and the Cellular Infrastructure Group at Motorola. Cooper earned a Master of Science in Telecommunications from DePaul University and a Bachelor of Science in Electronic Engineering from Valparaiso Technical Institute, and a Masters Certificate in Project Management from Purdue University.
Inspired by the legacy of his grandfather Jacques Cousteau, Philippe is an Emmy-Nominated TV host and producer as well as an author, speaker, and social entrepreneur. He and his wife Ashlan are the stars of The Travel Channel’s newest series Caribbean Pirate Treasure. It follows the Cousteaus as they travel around the Caribbean, diving into maritime mysteries, exploring pirate histories and investigating the lore of lost treasures. In addition, Philippe is the host and executive producer of the multi-Emmy nominated series Awesome Planet. His conservation efforts are focused on solving global social and environmental problems. In 2004 he founded EarthEcho International, a leading environmental education organization dedicated to inspiring youth to take action for a sustainable planet. Philippe and his wife, fellow adventurer and TV host Ashlan Gorse-Cousteau, reside in Los Angeles.

Philippe Cousteau — Co-founder, EarthEcho International

Ashlan Cousteau — Journalist & Explorer

Journalist and Explorer Ashlan Gorse Cousteau travels the world in search of stories that captivate and inspire. As a host, speaker and filmmaker, Cousteau uses the power of entertainment to save the world. Most recently, Ashlan was the co-star of Travel Channel’s award-winning series, Caribbean Pirate Treasure for three seasons. Her documentary, Nuclear Sharks, for Discovery Channel’s Shark Week 2016 premiered as the #1 rated show across all cable programming. For over a decade, Ashlan worked as an on-camera correspondent and co-host for Emmy award winning entertainment shows E! News and Entertainment Tonight. Cousteau’s endeavors go beyond the small screen. Ashlan traveled to Antarctica to be a headlining speaker at TedxScottBase. She has served as host for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and was selected by former Vice-President Al Gore to be the opening anchor for 24 Hours of Reality. She is a voice for environmental issues on Capitol Hill through events, and briefings and serves on the advisory board of WWF, Ocean Unite and the Environmental Media Association. Ashlan graduated from the prestigious School of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She, her husband, daughter and rescue dog, Kenai Cousteau, live in Los Angeles.

Dr. Sylvia Earle — President and Chairman, Mission Blue

Dr. Sylvia Earle is the President and Chairman of Mission Blue, an Explorer in Residence at the National Geographic Society, Founder of Deep Ocean Exploration and Research Inc. (DOER), Chair of the Advisory Council for the Harte Research Institute and former Chief Scientist of NOAA. Author of more than 225 publications and leader of more than 100 expeditions with over 7,500 hours underwater, Dr. Earle is a graduate of Florida State University with M.A. and PhD. degrees from Duke University and 32 honorary degrees. Her research concerns the ecology and conservation of marine ecosystems and development of technology for access to the deep sea. She is the subject of the Emmy® Award Winning Netflix documentary, Mission Blue, and the recipient of more than 100 national and international honors and awards including being named Time Magazine’s first Hero for the Planet, a Living Legend by the Library of Congress, 2014 UNEP Champion of the Earth, Glamour Magazine’s 2014 Woman of the Year, member of the Netherlands Order of the Golden Ark, and winner of the 2009 TED Prize, the Walter Cronkite Award, the 1996 Explorers Club Medal, the Royal Geographic Society 2011 Patron’s Medal, and the National Geographic 2013 Hubbard Medal.
Sarah Guy is the Director of Strategy and Outreach for Ocean Defense Initiative. She has worked for land, water, and ocean protection for over ten years. She has advocated for the environment on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch and she has guided advocates from all over the country to share their stories with their elected officials. During the Obama Administration, she worked on conservation issues at the White House Council of Environmental Quality. She has a Masters in Environmental Management from Yale School of the Environment and a BA in English from Washington and Lee University. She lives in Washington, DC. She is pictured here in Alaska, where she worked on the campaign to protect Bristol Bay, the world’s largest salmon fishery.

Michael Fields — Director of CSR, GTI

Michael Fields, is a Corporate Citizenship and Philanthropy executive with 20+ years’ experience leading global social responsibility efforts and expertise in developing program strategy, driving employee engagement, and executing large-scale social change initiatives for companies committed to driving change in communities across the U.S. and abroad. Michael is currently the Director of CSR at GTI, based out of Chicago. Prior to joining GTI in July of 2020, Michael spent nine years as the Director of Corporate Citizenship at Xylem (a leading global provider of efficient and sustainable water technologies and applications) Michael was responsible for the development and implementation of Xylem Watermark, a global initiative focused on providing and protecting safe water resources for communities in need around the world. by collaborating with international non-profit organizations and community groups to implement efficient, cost effective and sustainable water and sanitation solutions. He was also instrumental in the development and implementation of Xylem’s employee engagement program which engaged employees across the globe who logged more than 100,000 hours of volunteer over a three-year period. Before joining Xylem, Michael worked as a Senior Manager at Booz Allen Hamilton. During his 10 years at the consulting company, he helped to launch and direct the company’s pro bono program, spearheaded all of the company’s philanthropic contributions, cultivated strategic relationships with non-profit organizations and NGOs, and had oversight of community involvement and high-profile volunteer events for more than 35 regional offices.

Jean Flemma — Director, Ocean Defense Initiative; Co-founder, Urban Ocean Lab, and Ocean Collectiv

Jean Flemma is a consultant for non-profits and foundations, the Director of the Ocean Defense Initiative, a co-founder of Urban Ocean Lab, and Ocean Collectiv. She worked for the United States House of Representatives for more than two decades, focusing on the sustainable management and conservation of our nation’s oceans, fisheries, land, wildlife, and water resources. In addition to her congressional work, Jean also served as the Executive Director of Prairie Rivers Network, a statewide non-profit focused on protecting clean water and wildlife habitat. She started her career in public policy on Capitol Hill as a Sea Grant Fellow from the University of Washington where she got her Master’s degree in Marine Policy. She has an undergraduate degree in economics from Middlebury College.

Sarah Guy — Director of Strategy and Outreach, Ocean Defense Initiative

Sarah Guy is the Director of Strategy and Outreach for Ocean Defense Initiative. She has worked for land, water, and ocean protection for over ten years. She has advocated for the environment on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch and she has guided advocates from all over the country to share their stories with their elected officials. During the Obama Administration, she worked on conservation issues at the White House Council of Environmental Quality. She has a Masters in Environmental Management from Yale School of the Environment and a BA in English from Washington and Lee University. She lives in Washington, DC. She is pictured here in Alaska, where she worked on the campaign to protect Bristol Bay, the world’s largest salmon fishery.
Ivanya Johnson — EarthEcho Water Challenge Ambassador

Ivanya Johnson is an aspiring Marine Biologist and Shark Conservationist and an upcoming Junior at Hawai‘i Pacific University. She is a certified Rescue Diver and has been volunteering at Fort Fisher Aquarium for five years. She is also a certified Water Safety and Swim Instructor through the American Red Cross and a volunteer with Love A Sea Turtle. Ivanya created an organization called 'Minority Matters Scuba' where she educates minority youth and their parents about the ocean, sharks, marine sciences, and so much more.

Emma Housman — Program Manager, Xylem Watermark

Emma currently manages Xylem Watermark, the corporate social responsibility program at Xylem, a leading global provider of water technologies. The mission of Xylem Watermark is to provide education and access to safe water to ensure healthy lives, gender equality, and resilient communities. In her role, Emma oversees Xylem Watermark’s global employee and stakeholder engagement program, and manages partnerships with nonprofit organizations such as EarthEcho International. Prior to her work at Xylem, Emma worked in Gaborone, Botswana for a pediatric HIV/AIDS organization through the Princeton in Africa program. She was also a research intern in Tanzania for the National Institute of Medical Research in Dar es Salaam, where she conducted research on hospital-acquired neonatal sepsis by observing WASH practices of health workers in the nation’s largest urban hospital. Emma graduated from Georgetown University with a Bachelor of Science in Global Health, and during her time in Washington, DC, she interned at The World Bank, assisting on the implementation of health system development projects in fragile countries. Her passion has always been at the intersection of health and the environment, and her work has been focused on improving health outcomes through addressing environmental and social factors.

René LaPointe Jameson

René LaPointe Jameson is a Balfour Scholar and Tisch Scholar at Tufts University studying environmental engineering with a focus on race and justice. As an ambassador of The Jane Goodall Institute on the Roots & Shoots National Youth Leadership Council for six years, René collaborates on and directs local and global environmental education and conservation initiatives. René is passionate about addressing health disparities caused by environmental racism, the intersection between environmental injustice and racial injustice. Her efforts in activism vary from building a community garden to aiding in banning single-use plastic bags in her hometown. René also works as a racial equity media and programming consultant. René is a 2016 HerLead Fellow, 2020 Hesselbein Global Academy Fellow, has received the Town of Greenwich Community Service Award three times, and the President of the United States Community Service Award.
Cathryn Berger Kaye — CBK Associates

Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A. travels the globe to promote youth advocacy on issues that matter for the common good. With Philippe Cousteau and EarthEcho International, Cathy co-authored two books – Going Blue for teens, and Make a Splash for kids – to save our oceans, lakes, rivers, and wetlands. She is a writer, reader, dancer, thinker, friend, mother, partner, and grandmother. She lives in Los Angeles where on a clear day, she can see the ocean.

Masha Kalinina — Senior Officer, International Conservation Unit, The Pew Charitable Trusts


Bonnie Lei — Head of Global Strategic Partnerships, Microsoft’s AI for Earth

Bonnie Lei is a founding member and Head of Global Strategic Partnerships for Microsoft’s AI for Earth program, a five-year, $50 million cross-company effort dedicated to delivering technology-enabled solutions to global environmental challenges. In this role, she has awarded 600+ grants in 90+ countries, spearheaded strategic partnerships with leading organizations, and directed investments in promising environmental technology start-ups. She has been recognized as a National Geographic Explorer for her work in environmental education. Leveraging her experience as a conservation biologist, Bonnie identifies and fosters technology innovations with maximum potential for positive environmental impact and feasible implementation. Previously, in the field, she helped initiate the marine program for Wildlife Conservation Society in Myanmar, discovered a new sea slug species in the Caribbean, and researched climate adaptation of endangered penguins in South Africa. She received her degree in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University, and was an inaugural Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University.
Melissa Cristina Márquez — Founder, The Fins United Initiative

Pronouns: she/her. Known as the "Mother of Sharks," Melissa Cristina Márquez is a Latina marine biologist and conservationist who studies sharks and their relatives (the skates, rays, and chimaeras—collectively, this group of animals are known as 'Chondrichthyans'). Márquez specifically studies their habitat use (why they are where they are) and how their portrayal in the media influences attitudes towards marine predators and conservation initiatives. She founded The Fins United Initiative (TFUI; www.finsunited.co.nz) a program that introduces audiences worldwide to the diverse sharks and scientists who study them. You may have seen her on Shark Week or watched her TEDx talk on Youtube, "Sharks & Female Scientists: More Alike Than You Think." She is also a freelance wildlife writer and regularly covers marine science in regards to sharks as a Forbes contributor. You can follow Melissa's worldwide science communication efforts on her Twitter (@mcmsharksxxx) or Instagram (@melissacristinamarquez) and learn more about her research and outreach there.

Dr. Mikki McComb-Kobza — Executive Director, Ocean First Institute

Mikki has been working in the field of marine conservation for over 35 years. She has participated in or led over 30 under-sea expeditions, spanning the globe from Darwin, to Cape Town, to Manaus, to Hong Kong, and along the east coast of North America from Nova Scotia to Belize. Further, she has published peer-reviewed academic papers in high quality journals and four book chapters, primarily focusing on the biology and behavior of sharks. She blends pure academic research, conservation, and compelling public outreach. She is the Executive Director of Ocean First Institute, a non-profit dedicated to marine research, conservation, and education. Based in Colorado, the Institute has reached 6,700 students in local schools, and over 140,000 students in 35 countries and 44 US states. Additionally, she frequently appears in the media in outlets such as NPR, National Geographic, and the Discovery Channel, where she brings the awe and wonder of the undersea world to a new generation of future explorers.

Elsa Mengistu — Green Generation

Elsa Mengistu is a climate justice advocate, international speaker, consultant, and student whose work focuses on youth empowerment and intersectionality. She is a freshman at Howard University and native of Ethiopia. Mengistu is an avid organizer and activist who started her work in middle school and high school. She has advocated for changes on various issues, including electoral politics, racial justice, LGBTQ+ equality, and women’s rights, through local organizations and school clubs. She has also worked on gun violence prevention and was one of the lead youth organizers for her local March For Our Lives chapter. Mengistu is also a founding member of Generation Green, a youth-led, intergenerational Black environmental justice organization. With Generation Green she works to connect Black environmentalists and youth around the world, move funding and support to Black environmentalists and movements, while also working towards changing the narrative between Black and environmental issues. Currently, Elsa is serving on the Steering Committee for Power Shift 2020, which is planning 4,000 person convening to mobilize for climate action in 2021. She is the former director of operations and logistics at Zero Hour, a grassroots climate organization intent on gaining support for the Youth Climate Movement. In her role with Zero Hour, she advocated for climate justice through the organization of the Global Youth Climate March, Summit, and through various campaigns. She is also a youth ambassador for Youth Mundous, a four-day social justice festival held in Rome, Italy. In 2019, she was named as one of Grist's 50 Fixers, a group of up-and-coming individuals working on innovative solutions to fix the biggest challenges that face our globe. Elsa’s work for the majority of 2020 is focused on expanding industries and movement spaces to make space for underrepresented voices and perspectives.
Robert Nixon — Filmmaker

Academy Award nominee Robert Nixon leads film crews to the Earth’s furthest corners to capture compelling stories of tribal peoples, threatened habitats and endangered species. His captivating films illustrate humankind’s connection to our environment and highlight the urgency of making peace with nature. His powerful stories have touched and inspired millions and brought crucial worldwide attention and resources to scientists and species in dire need. Notable productions include, Amazon Diary, On The Trail of the Giant Panda, The Last Bushmen, Real Jaws, Ancient Nomads, The End of the Game, Elephant Diary, If I Can Do This… I Can Do Anything, Last Word From Paradise, Gorillas In The Mist, America the Beautiful, Endangered Species, The Last Rivermen, The Lord God Bird, Great White Highway, American Heroes, Mission Blue and Sea of Hope. Nixon’s cutting edge contributions in film and conservation have been widely recognized including an Academy Award Nomination, five Emmy Awards, the President’s Service Medal by President Bill Clinton, “Hero of the Planet” by the National Geographic Society, “Educator of the Year” by Chesapeake Bay Foundation, by the Walter Cronkite Award and as a Hometown Hero by WETA. Mr. Nixon’s work has been profiled on “Now with Bill Moyers”, “60 Minutes”, People Magazine, The Washington Post, The New York Times, ABC World News Tonight, PBS, NPR’s All Things Considered, CBS Morning News, National Geographic Channel and media outlets around the world.

Sarah Nixon — Filmmaker

From a young age, Sarah has been creating change. Growing up with social activist parents in a homeless shelter where feeding 700 people was just another day, Sarah learned the importance of giving early. So when a teenage Sarah landed a gig in the music industry with the legendary Cellar Door Productions she found calm in the rock world storm. There seemed to be no crisis she couldn't solve or any area not to be enhanced by her creative touch. Sarah’s career focused on music and event production until marriage to filmmaker Bob Nixon prompted a natural transition to producing award winning impact documentaries and effective social media campaigns. Sarah seems able to do the work of a small platoon. A recent example - after two years of working with the White House on strategies to promote ocean conservation, Nixon’s work culminated with the historic Midway Atoll rendezvous between President Barack Obama and Dr. Sylvia Earle featured in the global press as well as her documentaries Sea of Hope and World at War. This effort has influenced the adoption of a High Seas initiative by the Aspen Institute. Other recent credits include, Academy Award short-listed documentary Endangered Species, a Netflix Original documentary Mission Blue, two epic Shark Week specials Great White Highway and Blue Serengeti and American Heroes Saltwater Challenge for the National Geographic Channel. Sarah has been a creative force and strategic planner who connects people and resources for organizations and causes that empower vulnerable youth, families, veterans, victims of domestic violence, artists, endangered species & ecosystems. Sarah gets the job done all while making time for family and friends, saying she gets the most joy from the daily reality show she produces with Bob starring their three children, Bobby, Maggie and Jack. For Sarah Guinan Nixon, creativity and compassion are the go-to, and life is always an adventure.
Karen Sack — President and CEO, Ocean Unite

Karen is President and CEO of Ocean Unite, a non-profit co-founded in 2015 by Sir Richard Branson and former Costa Rican President José María Figueres which catalyses ocean regeneration by engaging and activating audiences on the importance of the ocean, as well as accelerating investment into building ocean health and resilience. This includes Ocean Unite’s leading work to strongly protect at least 30 percent of the Ocean by 2030, coordinating the Antarctica2020 champions, initiating and co-hosting the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance with AXA and the Global Resilience Partnership; and Rise Up – A Blue Call to action, with the Oceano Azul and Oak Foundations. Karen brings over 25 years of experience working for international non-governmental organizations on environmental issues. She was formerly the Senior Director for International Oceans at The Pew Charitable Trusts where she initiated the Global Ocean Commission. Before that, she was the Head of Greenpeace International’s Political & Business Unit and the Head of their international oceans campaign.

Owen Pyle

Born and raised on O‘ahu, Owen Pyle is a fifth-generation resident of Hawai‘i. His passion for the ocean was forged during his early life on Coconut Island in Kāne‘ohe Bay. A student at Cal Poly, he is currently studying mechanical engineering with the intent of using his education for environmental protection and scientific discovery. He has explored the natural world as a member of the “Wild Kids” community for nearly a decade and now serves on the program’s board of directors. As part of the National Geographic documentary Sea of Hope, he sailed aboard the Makani Olu and visited the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument with a team of scientists and filmmakers, including Dr. Sylvia Earle.

Paul Rose — Expedition Leader - National Geographic Pristine Seas Expeditions

A man at the front line of exploration and one of the world’s most experienced science expedition leaders, Paul Rose helps scientists unlock and communicate global mysteries in the most remote and challenging regions of the planet. Former Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society – representing Fieldwork and Expeditions, Paul is Expedition Leader for the National Geographic Pristine Seas Expeditions. In his work for BBC Paul presents television programmes focused on science and the environment. As a Polar Guide, Paul has led Greenland Ice Cap crossings, first ascents of previously unclimbed Arctic mountains and new ski-mountaineering routes. He was the Base Commander of Rothera Research Station, Antarctica, for the British Antarctic Survey for 10 years and was awarded HM The Queen’s Polar Medal. For his work with NASA and the Mars Lander project on Mt Erebus, Antarctica, he was awarded the US Polar Medal. A mountain in Antarctica is named after him.

Karen Sack — President and CEO, Ocean Unite

Karen is President and CEO of Ocean Unite, a non-profit co-founded in 2015 by Sir Richard Branson and former Costa Rican President José María Figueres which catalyses ocean regeneration by engaging and activating audiences on the importance of the ocean, as well as accelerating investment into building ocean health and resilience. This includes Ocean Unite’s leading work to strongly protect at least 30 percent of the Ocean by 2030, coordinating the Antarctica2020 champions, initiating and co-hosting the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance with AXA and the Global Resilience Partnership; and Rise Up – A Blue Call to action, with the Oceano Azul and Oak Foundations. Karen brings over 25 years of experience working for international non-governmental organizations on environmental issues. She was formerly the Senior Director for International Oceans at The Pew Charitable Trusts where she initiated the Global Ocean Commission. Before that, she was the Head of Greenpeace International’s Political & Business Unit and the Head of their international oceans campaign.

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**Hans Schippers — Parley**

Hans Schippers is a lifelong surfer and is compelled to stand up for the most incredible place in the world, our oceans. Hans and his brother Nick converted an old school bus and set out to educate generations about the impacts of plastic pollution on the marine environment. To date they have educated over 18,000 students and are focused on giving them the power to change the status quo in their schools and communities.

**Nick Schippers — Parley**

Also a lifelong surfer and Hans’s older brother, Nick is driven to take action on plastic because it seems one of the most tangible environmental issues of our time. Educating over 18,000 youth is just the beginning. The Schippers aim to shed far more light on all environmental issues and injustices that are currently not discussed in our educational systems.

**Vasser Seydel — Campaign Director, Oxygen Project**

Vasser Seydel graduated with cum laude honors from the University of Georgia, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications. During her time in Athens, Vasser worked for UGA’S Office of Sustainability as the Grants and Engagement Director, represented the university as the UGA Student Sustainability Ambassador, and pursued an education outside the classroom as an intern at the United Nations Foundation and TEDWomen. After graduation, she began consulting with non-profit, business, and individual clients, specializing in communications, digital media, and strategic development, to enhance brands that create positive impacts on society. Vasser continues to promote and support her family’s legacy and commitment to environmental responsibility through her family’s foundation, the Turner Foundation, as a board member and the first Chairperson of the Turner 3rd Generation board. Additionally, she serves on the board of directors for the National Center of Family Philanthropy and is a Global Ambassador for Julian Lennon’s, White Feather Foundation. Vasser has taken on the Deep Seabed Mining issue as the Campaign Director at The Oxygen Project and has the honor of representing the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as the IUCN’s Marine Youth Ambassador.

**Stacy Strickland — Starbucks**

Stacy Strickland is a Pacific Northwest native, a co-founder of the Seattle Zero Waste group, an active member of Zero Waste Washington and a 2020 graduate of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps Global Training. Seattle. She creates leadership development training at Starbucks where she also co-chairs the employee group Partners for Sustainability (PFS). Working closely with the sustainability team, PFS educates, engages and empowers Starbucks employees to drive sustainable change both at work and in their personal lives.
Danni Washington — TV Host & Co-founder, The Big Blue & You

Danni Washington is a TV host and science communicator who is also the first African-American woman to host her own science television series. Currently, Danni is featured as a correspondent on a weekly nationally syndicated CBS series called Mission Unstoppable with host Miranda Cosgrove who is also co-Executive Producer alongside fellow actor Geena Davis. Danni has also hosted other STEM shows including Science the $#!* Out Of It on Facebook Watch, Xploration Nature Knows Best on FOX, Untamed Science for Pearson Publishing and Ocean GEMS. She has been a featured guest on the Science Channel and Discovery Channel. In 2017, Danni was selected as one of the 10 young rising innovators who was profiled in CA Technologies #STEM10 initiative alongside artist Jaden Smith and other rising stars in the field. Danni also served as the 2018 spokesperson of the nation’s largest celebration of STEM at the USA Science & Engineering Festival in Washington D.C. She is a graduate of the University of Miami with a B.S. degree in Marine Science & Biology. She is also the co-founder of Big Blue & You, scuba diver, co-creator of Sea Youth Rise Up, inspirational speaker, and a passionate advocate for ocean conservation.

Dominica Zhu — Lead Program Coordinator and Social Impact Strategist, Census Open Innovation Labs

Dominica Zhu is a multidimensional professional with a uniquely diverse and culturally dynamic background. She is currently the lead Program Coordinator and Social Impact Strategist for Census Open Innovation Labs (COIL), a small and nimble team within the U.S. Census Bureau; a team that is pioneering innovation in civic technology and partnerships. She is the User Advocate Coordinator for The Opportunity Project (a program within COIL), supporting community organizations in engaging with tech and government to create impactful digital products for the public. Prior to this role, Dominica has worked as a global development professional for over seven years. She focuses in the fields of health, human rights, social entrepreneurship, and protecting indigenous wisdom. Her most recent projects include countering human trafficking with technology in Southeast Asia in partnership with USAID, driving and supporting multinational technology companies to enter frontier markets, and developing models to preserve ancient knowledge in Sri Lanka and Africa.

*Speakers and times are subject to change — the program will updated accordingly and shared with all registered attendees.*