

2024



Ocean Program

Transforming our relationship with the Ocean



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Ocean Program: Call to Action

The mission of Earth Law Center (ELC) is to advance ecocentric laws and community-led movements that protect Nature, including the fount of all life: the Ocean.

Despite progress, Ocean health and biodiversity have declined due to pollution, overfishing, habitat degradation, and climate change. The United Nations recognizes that to maintain the quality of life that the Ocean has provided to humankind, a change is required in how we view and manage the seas.

The Ocean Program is evolving, and we are excited to share with you our recent achievements and vision for the future. Many of our most catalyzing projects are ongoing, building on years of research and engagement. Simultaneously, we are exploring new ways to advance Ocean conservation, governance, and justice.

With this concept note, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the Ocean Program. We invite you to join us in our vital mission to protect and restore the Ocean and marine biodiversity. Your support, whether through funding, partnership, or advocacy, is instrumental in advancing the protection of the Ocean and ensuring a sustainable future for our planet.

Together, we can make a real difference. Thank you for being a part of this important journey.



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History and Impact

Movements under the body of Earth law, such as those based upon the “Rights of Nature” or living in “right relationship,” have now emerged in over 40 countries. These movements recognize our inseparability from Nature and seek to protect the environment more holistically within law and policy. Michelle Bender, a visionary Ocean policy and legal expert who founded ELC’s Ocean Program, coined the term “Ocean Rights” in 2017 to spotlight the Ocean’s importance within rights-based movements. Since the program’s inception, Ocean Rights has evolved from a novel concept to a mainstream term, appearing in over 200 features in articles, journals, and podcasts, as well as at the United Nations.

The Ocean Program embraces a holistic and science-based approach to develop innovative and equitable solutions that address the complex international issues facing the Ocean today. Through the support of our partnerships and funders, the program has been at the forefront of drafting, consulting, and advocating for Ocean law and policy.

Recent Success:

- We have been actively involved in the initiative for a Universal Declaration of Ocean Rights (UDOR), culminating in a summit at the UN in September, 2023. The World Bank, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Brazil, Panama, Monaco, Cabo Verde, and others formally voiced their support.
 - Draft principles underpinning Ocean Rights were produced and presented at the UN, signifying our collective understanding of humanity’s inherent relationship with the Ocean and how we envision respecting and protecting that relationship. We envision this document can serve as the foundational text moving forward in the initiative for a UDOR.
 - Green Biz/World Resources Institute named the UDOR as one of five major moments in 2023 that can help make progress in restoring and maintaining Ocean health.
- With our partner, The Leatherback Project, we introduced a national Rights of Nature law in Panama, approved by the President on February 24th, 2022. Together, we then introduced an amendment to recognize the rights of sea turtles through secondary legislation, approved by President on March 1, 2023.
- Five cities and two counties in Washington State passed resolutions in support of state recognition of the rights of the Southern Resident Orcas.
- ELC Ocean Program team members published peer-reviewed papers in PLOS Biology and on shark conservation in Sustainability, and have a pending publication on global fisheries governance.

Program Strategy and Goals

The strategy of the Ocean Program is science-based, holistic, and intersectional, rooted in principles of social and environmental justice. We believe that restoring a positive human-Ocean connection is key to developing innovative solutions that manage all human impacts on the Ocean and marine biodiversity, as well as promoting the well-being of communities, the Ocean, and the planet. We will spotlight a few of our high-impact campaigns, representative of our program goals, in the following pages.

Mission: Transforming our relationship with the Ocean.



GOAL 1: ADVANCE HOLISTIC GLOBAL OCEAN POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Engage with United Nations frameworks, bodies, and treaties to consult, draft, and advocate for global solutions that prioritize the ecological integrity and sustainable use of the Ocean and protect marine biodiversity. Collaborate with international stakeholders to promote comprehensive and equitable Ocean policies to restore Ocean health.



GOAL 2: EDUCATE AND EMPOWER POSITIVE HUMAN-OCEAN RELATIONSHIPS

Develop educational initiatives and campaigns to raise awareness, train new activists, and inspire action to promote Ocean stewardship and cultivate a sense of responsibility for Ocean and marine species protection.

Toward a Universal Declaration of Ocean Rights

In partnership with The Ocean Race, Ocean Vision Legal, UNDP, IUCN, Cabo Verde government, and other partners, we are bringing together leaders and change-makers to accelerate solutions to restore Ocean health through the development of a Universal Declaration of Ocean Rights (UDOR) by 2030.

2024 Activities Include:

- Develop and share legal and policy documents to guide dialogues on Ocean Rights within the UN and other international fora and inform the campaign strategy;
- Create and disseminate outreach and educational materials to raise awareness and catalyze action;
- Consult and provide legal support to local, regional, and national governments to advance Ocean commitments and garner support;
- Bring together leaders and change-makers to accelerate solutions to restore Ocean health in global fora.

ELC will offer research, analysis, and communications support to our 2024 goals toward the UDOR to:

1. Draft and publish a multidisciplinary article providing scientific and policy analysis for the purpose, value, and viability of the UDOR.
2. Host 3 innovation workshops and several bilateral meetings with decision makers; help prepare materials and participate in two of The Ocean Race Summits.
3. Build global partnerships to catalyze formal support amongst stakeholders.

In particular, ELC's Ocean Team will:

1. Produce legal and policy documents for foundational campaign and communications support.
2. Participate and co-host side events at global conferences (i.e., the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference and 2024 Our Ocean Conference).



Sylvia Earle at the UN Ocean Race Summit, 2023



Rachel Bustamante, ELC, at The Ocean Race Summit, Newport, RI, 2023



Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, at the UN Ocean Race Summit, 2023

Advancing Ocean Justice in the Global Plastic Treaty

We are actively advocating at the United Nations for a robust and equitable international instrument to end plastic pollution, and are escalating our efforts in 2024. Prior activities include submitting formal recommendations and presenting our submission to the International Negotiating Committee (INC) in a webinar.

2024 Activities Include:

- **Report: *Advancing Ocean Justice in the Global Plastic Treaty*:** This report will address a critical gap within the research, make clear the intersectional nature of Ocean sustainability and human health and well-being, identify policy options for advancing justice for people and the ocean, and support advocacy for a justice-oriented plastics treaty.
 - **Data collection and analysis:** Develop and distribute a poll to 600+ Ocean governance leaders, policy and science experts, and other stakeholders on the elements and approaches necessary for the treaty to advance Ocean justice (Ocean protection, human rights and social equity); gather data on Member States' positioning on human rights; and synthesize the data collected within the report.
 - **Advocacy:** Activate a strategic campaign for the launch of the report within UNEP/INC (e.g., hosting a webinar, social media, blogs, op-eds) and for promoting Ocean justice within future negotiations and side events, as well as through a social media campaign (e.g., toolkit, short-form video production).
- **Policy Recommendations:** Crafting formal policy briefs and recommendations to the INC for future negotiations and INC sessions.
- **Coalition-building:** Engage with and promote Ocean justice within pertinent global coalitions, including supporting the Plastic Pollution Coalition, inviting stakeholder dialogues and bringing together like-minded partners in meetings and webinars. Participate in INC Sessions (i.e., INC-4 in April 2024 and INC-5 October/November 2024) to engage with key decision makers.



Rachel Bustamante, ELC, presenting to the INC, 2023



Reframing the Narrative for Shark Conservation

We aim to reshape public perceptions of sharks by leveraging the science-policy interface and collaborating with key partners. Through compelling storytelling and policy analysis, we seek to instill empathy, challenge misconceptions, and emphasize the crucial ecological role sharks play in oceanic ecosystems for effective conservation.

2024 activities include:

- **Determining the True Value of White Sharks in California: A Case Study for New Elasmobranch Management.** Shark Allies and Earth Law Center are partnering to launch a research-based advocacy campaign that raises awareness of the true value of sharks, with an initial focus on the White Shark, a species pivotal to the Pacific Coast, as a high-profile case study. Sharks transcend being mere resources for harvest; their true value must be reflected in our evaluations, considering their intrinsic worth to nature and humanity in the face of climate change. We aim to illustrate the intricate process of valuing a species and ultimately, to help transform the way we approach conservation and management practices for elasmobranchs.
- **“If They Go, We Go:” Empowering a positive relationship with Sharks.** With a coalition of organizations, comprised of Keystone Species Alliance, Saving our Sharks Foundation, BODAI Org, Oceans Week Mexico, and ELC, we will launch a dynamic public awareness campaign to inspire a shift in public perceptions and attitudes toward sharks. Through the power of storytelling, our campaign aims to convey the untold narratives of sharks, unveiling their unique personalities, highlighting their vital roles in marine ecosystems, and ultimately inspiring a profound emotional connection that compels individuals to take action.



Rachel Bustamante, ELC, Marine Species Panel, Climate Week 2023



Rachel Bustamante, ELC, [The Weather Channel en Español](#)



Budget:

CATEGORY/DESCRIPTION	MINIMAL NEEDS	GROWTH
<p>PERSONNEL</p> <p>Only our Interim Ocean Director spends 100% of time on the Ocean Program, with team members of the Latin American Legal Program spending 25%. We aspire to expand the team to meet the increasing demand for our Ocean Program and support the growing LATAM team.</p>	\$150,000	\$230,000
<p>TRAVEL/WORKSHOPS/ EVENTS</p> <p>Minimal budget includes the participation of 1 or 2 staff at Ocean-themed events. Growth will enable more staff to engage in key advocacy events and ensure unanticipated events can be considered. i.e. In 2024, we aim to participate in the UN Ocean Decade Conference, INC-4 Session, and Climate Week.</p>	\$20,000	\$30,000
<p>COMMUNICATIONS/RESEARCH</p> <p>Publications of peer-reviewed research in academic journals, disseminating research-informed materials to scientists, Ocean activists, students, lawmakers, and other stakeholders, including contracting designers, marketers, and artists to improve these materials' appeal and accessibility.</p>	\$5,000	\$7,000
<p>INDIRECT COSTS</p> <p>ELC would like to build toward an approximate 15% indirect cost budget line to support administration and other critical needs (email, reporting, translation and organizational software, retirement funds, accounting, etc.)</p>	\$26,250	\$40,050
TOTAL	\$201,250	\$307,050

This budget differentiates between the minimal needs essential for the Program's basic functionality and the growth needs required to expand its impact and outreach

Funding Secured:

Marisla Foundation \$30,000.00

Kalliopeia Fund \$20,000.00

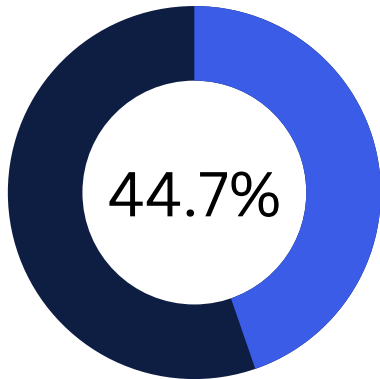
Adiran Dominican Sisters \$10,000.00

Other Foundations (Becht Foundation, Blue Action Fund, Ethique, etc.) \$10,000.00

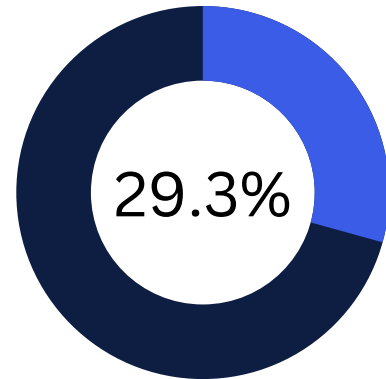
Individual Donors \$20,000.00

TOTAL INCOME: \$90,000.00

Funding needed for minimal budget: \$111,250
Percent % Acquired



Funding needed for growth budget: \$217,050
Percent % Acquired



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