

WILD WATER PROJECT

SUMMARY WORKING CONCEPT, 25 MAY 2013

INTRODUCTION – The WILD Water Project is establishing a global network facilitated by The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org) that is committed to marine and freshwater conservation and capable of generating international guidelines, replicable models, and practices that protect and restore wild nature while considering how human needs can be met. The **WILD Water™ strategy** prioritizes the protection of wild nature for its fundamental role in aquatic species survival and reproduction, quantity and quality water for drinking, health, and habitat, the productivity of fisheries, agriculture, and forestry, and recreation and cultural use.

NEED FOR WILD WATER – The deterioration of marine and freshwater environments vastly outpaces protection efforts, as evidenced by water quality decline, dead zones, rising temperatures and acidity, coastal wetland and mangrove destruction, species loss, collapsing fisheries, coral reef and living bottom die offs, invasive species takeovers, and degraded human sustenance and recreation. In many near-shore waters and on the high seas, open access prevails or catch limits are ignored as the nets, lines, and trawling of industrial fishing vessels pummel species unabated. Predatory fish mass is reduced to 90% in some places. Whales and many other species die entangled in or having swallowed discarded fishing gear. A third of coral species are going extinct, reefs are dying, and nearly a fifth of mangroves have already vanished. Culturally based, traditional marine ecological knowledge and low-impact fishing practices are disappearing along with local artisanal fishing societies. Less than 2% of the marine environment is protected, and government authorities are challenged to harmonize competing uses and claims. Where marine areas remain in wilderness or are effectively managed to protect wild nature, the diversity, individual size, density, and biomass increases across all functional groups of marine species. Needed are cooperative ethics, reciprocity, social sanctions, and incentives – based on a common understanding of what nature needs in marine and freshwater environments.

CURRENT PROJECT ACTIVITIES – In preparation for the 10th World Wilderness Congress (WILD10, October 2013 in Salamanca, Spain), WILD is facilitating WILD Water as a coalition involving a variety of partners to organize activities resulting in achievable, measurable, and visible outcomes by enabling diverse, equitable and expert participation and generating common guidelines, policies and both visual and narrative outreach messaging (photographer/filmmaker crossover with WildSpeak).

Core topics and activities are:

MARINE WILDERNESS – Expanding the Marine Wilderness Collaborative (MWC) launched at WILD9. Research, catalog, map and define existing and needed legal tools to establish candidate marine wilderness (MW) areas or protected areas zoned for MW management through marine spatial planning. Building professional capacity to apply MW as a conservation mechanism utilizing baseline criteria for ranking priority habitat – mating, spawning, nursery and migration route areas for fish, marine mammals and other species. Identify places where MW can recover fisheries (particularly where trophic downgrading has occurred), coral reefs and other marine life, sometimes



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complementing innovative performance-based systems of fishermen; and understanding what can be done to mitigate external impacts (e.g. climate change, agricultural effluent, trash) using MW areas as sources of refugia and resilience.

CORAL REEFS – Map lost and remaining reefs and associated local human threats to survival and recovery. Causes of coral loss, including acidification, and what mitigation is both necessary and possible; the special role of marine wilderness. Recreation, tourism, fishing and boating guidelines to protect corals.

MIGRATORY MARINE SPECIES – Use cases of sea turtle, anadromous fish, seabird and other species to illustrate the critical connection between conservation on coastal lands, reefs, and open seas. Use cases of migratory animals crossing national borders across “the commons” to build professional capacity with tools illustrating how sources of depletion in one jurisdiction impacts another; specific risks of trophic downgrading.

MARINE DEBRIS – Status, impacts, and what can be done about marine debris (trash pollution from ships, fishing gear, on-land sources, other) and its most harmful effects (such as ingestion and entanglement) and the species/habitats most impacted and how, working with partners on an outreach toolkit and strategy. Featuring rewilding models of plastics retrieval from the ocean (including abandoned fishing nets collected by local communities), and steps toward responsible manufacture, disposal, re-use and recycling.

LAND-TO-SEASCAPE CONSERVATION – Multi-stakeholder strategies to halt/mitigate deforestation at river headwaters. Buffering impacts of agriculture on reefs and upstream freshwater pollution flows into marine environments. Anadromous fish implications. Mangrove and wetland buffers against climate change.

FRESHWATER COMMONS – River flow strategies to benefit water supply, aquatic life, floodplains, wetlands, and recreation; models of dam relicensing/demolition. Watershed protection compensation strategies. Rain-fed versus irrigation agriculture. Solutions to disappearing glaciers now “water towers” for local people.

SPECIAL CASE STUDIES [Proposed to date]

The Mesoamerican Reef – Marine wilderness strategies for fisheries and reef recovery/vitality along with social benefits. Tourism guidelines. “Mesoamerican Reef Tripods in the Blue” visual messaging campaign targeting disenfranchised stakeholders in Honduras to change unsustainable fishery practices. The invasive Lionfish.

The Gulf of California – Threats of development projects, industrial fishing, climatic variations and other factors on: seamounts and coastal reefs, lagoons, estuaries and mangrove forests playing a fundamental role in open-sea fisheries, midriff islands where sardine and anchovy schools sustain seabirds, squid, large fish and whales, and the Upper Gulf with shallow water tidal habitats sustaining shrimp fisheries and vaquita porpoise.

The Gulf of Mexico – Hypoxia and algal blooms from polluted river water flowing from agriculture, traversing ships dumping invasive species in ballast water, oil and gas development and accidents, overfishing and irrecoverable harm to coral reefs, coastal development, and engineered changes to inland natural structures.



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The Amazon – Indigenous leadership and multi-stakeholder partnerships protecting the river headwaters by preventing deforestation while allowing traditional pursuit of livelihoods by local people.

The Mediterranean – Results of the MedPAN multi-national commitment to an ecosystematic approach to marine and coastal management and reaching Convention on Biological Diversity goals of protecting at least 10%. Building upon existing MPAs to create a coherent network. Preventing collapse of the giant Bluefin tuna population – the overwhelming fishing technology, juveniles harvesting, ranching and insatiable demand.

The Western Pacific – High-biodiversity coastal marine areas and balancing human livelihoods, health and culture with retaining coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses, fish populations and other marine species. Warming, sea-rising, and storm effects of climate change. Agriculture and aquaculture impacts on water quality.

The African Coasts – The battering of marine species by foreign (often illegal) takes. The decline of poor coastal communities dependent on local fish. Sovereignty violations, governance implications, and the connection between poaching and other crime. Distinct threats to coral reefs and mangroves.

The Polar Regions – Special conservation issues of the Arctic and Antarctic: melting ice, trash drift, industrial extraction, and elimination of top predators (e.g. polar bears; toothfish/“Chilean Sea Bass” in the Ross Sea).

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Citizen Activism for Nature Conservation – How to build local constituencies around a policy to protect or restore a particular wild nature area or species. Activating and utilizing volunteer corps and citizen monitoring, including by fishermen. CoalitionWILD youth and young professionals in field work and outreach.

Market-Based Approaches to Nature Conservation – Mapping areas most in need of fish stocks intervention and recovery. Using market participants to achieve sustainable fish yields, leaving critical mating, spawning and juvenile habitat intact to prevent a crash. Implications of IUU illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing. Value and limitations of eco-labeling.

“WILD Ocean” Communications Strategy – Catalog strategies and tools (including photography, film and journalism) of partners to communicate the severity of ocean degradation and what needs to be done, and use it as an adaptable toolkit for reaching primary targets for activism: local communities; policy-makers/influencers; educators; extractive industries; tourism sector; and recreationists, including sportfishermen.

ABOUT WILD10 –The World Wilderness Congress (WWC), the longest-running international, public environmental program (since 1977), takes a strategic, multi-faceted approach to nature conservation, as organized by WILD with partners around the world. A collaborative process evolves projects that form the WWC core, complimented by events, extensive media coverage, launch of public and private sector initiatives, and the gathering at the WWC convention itself. WILD10 (www.wild10.org; <http://vimeo.com/44409177>) will culminate in Salamanca, Spain, October 4-10, 2013, hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Environment, with WILD10 Honorary President, Her Majesty Queen Sofia of Spain. *WILD Water™* results will reach a global delegate (1,200+ in person and 50,000 on-line), media, and public audience – shared by leaders of nations, indigenous peoples,



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NGOs and business, renowned scientists and photographers, musicians and others on the plenary platform and through a participatory training and dialogue in the Global Forum.

WILD10 will foster collaboration to recognize and act upon the complexity of water as the commons. The neutral ground of the WWC offers practical mechanisms for resolving differing views and the adoption of common policies and practices through strategically organized dialogue. Developing country and indigenous representatives, women, indigenous, and youth will have special opportunities to present their positions, learn and advance strategies. Recreation, exploration, and cultural values are expressed through art, dance and music.

WILD Water will evolve as an international professional network and implement a set of capacity-building workshops and facilitated policy and outreach strategy dialogue over the three days of the Global Forum. It will use WILD10 to derive a visible and enduring commitment to the evolution and application of MW conservation mechanisms. As a forum, it will analyze water quality, fisheries, coral reef, and other freshwater and marine decline from whole ecosystem perspective and generate collaborative solutions with stakeholder involvement and public visibility. It is a launch pad for new initiatives and may create a standard related to MW “core” critical habitats for policy inclusion. Photography and film in a Global Forum cross-over day will deepen impact as WILD Water educates and broadens the constituency for marine conservation globally.



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