



## Strategic Plan OceanLove 2026-2030

### Introduction

The 2023-2026 multi-year plan was drawn up for the first three years of the "OceanLove" project and almost all of the goals are achieved. 2026 is the final year of that multi-year plan and will also be the launch year for the second multi-year plan, towards 2030. This new multi-year plan serves as a guidebook and source of inspiration for everyone involved, from board members and core team to other volunteers, and from donors to other partners.

### Looking back at the 2023-2025 period

The goal for this first period was essentially to ensure that the OceanLove idea developed into a well-known, well-organized, sustainable, and effective new initiative. A major achievement during this period is that we created the OceanLove Innovation Award and, after two editions, developed it into the largest and most inclusive ocean innovation award in the world, with participants from no fewer than 80 countries. Millions of people have been reached, ten successful projects have been (and continue to be) concretely supported, and thousands of active followers are involved. Additionally there is a highly motivated international volunteer organization with diverse teams focused on clear goals. Everything is ready for much greater growth and impact, so we are eager to achieve that. In this overview, we describe the eight concrete goals for 2030 and also the vision that unites and motivates us as a team.

### Vision:

- A. Mobilizing minds, hearts, and hands.
- B. Focus on opportunities, art, and innovation.
- C. Mobilizing talent worldwide.

### Goals for 2030:

1. Ambassadors in almost all countries.
2. More than 1,000 submissions yearly, from almost all countries.
3. More than 100 million people reached worldwide.
4. Dozens of marine conservation projects guided and supported intensively.
5. Own initiative developed to protect dolphins against mass tourism.
6. Publication of the OceanLove book.
7. Broader financial support
8. New foundation with ANBI status

## Vision

### A. Mobilizing minds, hearts, and hands

Seventy percent of the world is ocean. More than fifty percent of our oxygen comes from the ocean. Sixty percent of new, juvenile fish come from rivers and mangroves. Seaweed is a very healthy food and helps combat climate change. Kelp helps protect against tsunamis. One whale indirectly produces as much oxygen per year as three thousand trees. There are hundreds of other positive (and less positive) facts that are unknown to the general public. Unfortunately this is a truth for the ocean as well: what is unknown is unloved. That is why OceanLove wants to continue to actively contribute to 'Ocean Literacy' based on the principles below, through lectures, publications, interviews, and social media activities: understanding our individual and collective impact on the ocean and its impact on our lives and well-being. Innovative, educational ideas and projects are prioritized in the selection process of the OceanLove Innovation Award.

**Figure 1.** The seven Essential Principles of Ocean Sciences.



In our view, simply providing information has only a very limited positive effect. In the mind, you have to "compete" with all the other information people have to process daily, and knowledge alone doesn't lead to behavioral change. Therefore, we try to reach the hearts and get as many people as possible to love the ocean, because what you love, you want to protect. This is reflected in our slogan: "Because you protect what you love". After providing information and nurturing the heart connection, we offer perspectives for action because the magic is in the action. One of these action opportunities is of course the OceanLove Innovation Award.

### B. Focus on opportunities, art, and innovation.

Many organizations focus primarily on reporting on all of the tragedies, which may be effective for generating a quick emotional response or donation, but it can also be counterproductive. Of course, we shouldn't shy away from informing people about overfishing, plastic pollution, coral bleaching, and species extinction but too much bad news can also depress people and foster apathy. If it seems like there's nothing more that can be done, why bother taking action? That's why, with OceanLove, we

want to highlight all the opportunities the ocean offers—for food, employment, spirituality, health, and climate change mitigation. We emphasize the ocean's resilience and projects that demonstrate this, such as the growing number of Marine Parks and the "Hope Spots" of OceanLove partner Mission Blue. We share stories about communities that live in harmony with nature for centuries. We talk about change-makers who develop positive projects and about innovations that clean up the sea or use the tides to generate energy. We talk about animal species that have been saved from extinction through sound legislation and campaigns. We also ask questions; for example, about what people want to do themselves...

#### RESISTANCE DOESN'T START WITH BIG WORDS

*Resistance doesn't start with big words*

*but with small actions*

*Like a storm with a soft rustle in the garden or a cat that goes crazy*

*Like wide rivers with a small source, hidden in the forest*

*Like a sea of fire with the same match lighting a cigarette*

*Like love with a look, a touch, something you notice in a voice*

*Asking yourself a question, that's how resistance begins.*

*And then asking that question to someone else.*

(Remco Campert, Dutch poet)

Besides the conscious focus on opportunities, innovations, and good, inspiring news, we also involve many artists to show people the beauty of the ocean. More than twenty professional photographers are already involved with OceanLove, from countries including Egypt, Jordan, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands, and Bonaire. Many of them have won international awards, such as the internationally acclaimed black-and-white photographer Hengki Koentjoro (Indonesia). Musicians, designers, poets, and storytellers are also increasingly involved.

*"It can't be a coincidence that ART is central to EARTH."*

#### C. Mobilizing talent worldwide

We are convinced that the world possesses all the knowledge, wisdom, and talent needed to better protect the ocean and all that lives in it—and thus the health of future generations—but that talent is not sufficiently mobilized or supported. Also the initiatives that do focus on tapping into new talent and innovation primarily target highly educated individuals in the West, which is nothing less than a missed opportunity. In the global south, problems for the ocean are piling up, meaning that the people who face these problems daily, precisely because of their motivation and

experience, can also become the vanguard of change. That is why OceanLove focuses on inclusion, diversity, and the broadest possible international involvement, both in its organization and in its communication.

Goals towards 2030

### **1. Ambassadors in all countries.**

The Board, Jury, and Core Team consist of scientists and active ocean enthusiasts from four different continents. Everyone works as a volunteer but commits a fixed number of hours per week. To strengthen networking, recruitment, and communication, three categories of ambassadors are active: 'Global Ambassadors,' 'Award Ambassadors,' and 'Country Ambassadors.' We aim to be represented by ambassadors from these three categories in all countries of the world by 2030.

#### *Global Ambassadors*

We are very honored that in 2025 the renowned oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle and the international business leader Mr. Paul Polman have decided to be Global Ambassadors for OceanLove. Here you can watch the video messages that Dr. Sylvia Earle - <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/WYCA5hzCsio> - and Mr. Paul Polman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2GNrAjrjY> - recorded for OceanLove. In the coming years, at least two more internationally renowned people from the Global South will join us as Global Ambassadors.

#### *Award Ambassadors*

The team of 'Award Ambassadors' consists of the Top 5 winners of the first two editions of the OceanLove Innovation Award (2024 and 2025). During interviews they can emphasize that OceanLove is not just about the award, but about the care and coaching before and after winning the award, so that the ideas and young start-ups can really get off the ground. In the coming years, we aim to expand to four different award categories with a Top 3 per category. In addition to the current ten Award Ambassadors, this will eventually increase to 12 Award Ambassadors per year.

#### *Country Ambassadors*

In 2025, we began involving Country Ambassadors in no fewer than 23 African countries, led by a core team member from Sierra Leone. They are all highly dedicated scientists, activists, sustainability experts, and other ocean enthusiasts. Their local commitment and networks proved crucial for achieving broad audience reach in Africa and the significant growth in the number of Award participants. At the end of 2025, the first ambassadors from countries outside Africa, such as Sri Lanka, Armenia, and India, joined. Incidentally, the Indian ambassador is not only a diver but also one of the country's most popular DJs, so that will certainly contribute to audience reach.

### **2. More than 1,000 entries yearly from almost every country.**

After the second edition (in 2025), the OceanLove Innovation Award, with 260 participants from 80 countries, has already become the largest and most inclusive

ocean innovation award project in the world. In the coming years, we aim to grow to at least 1,000 entries yearly by 2030. First and foremost, because we then involve many more people: while an entry sometimes comes from an individual, it often involves large groups, such as an entire community or university. The winner of the fourth prize in 2025 for example involved no fewer than hundreds of people, spread across several coastal towns in Cameroon. More entries also means a wider communication reach, in an increasing number of countries. And above all, more entries increase the likelihood of mobilizing some truly brilliant ideas.



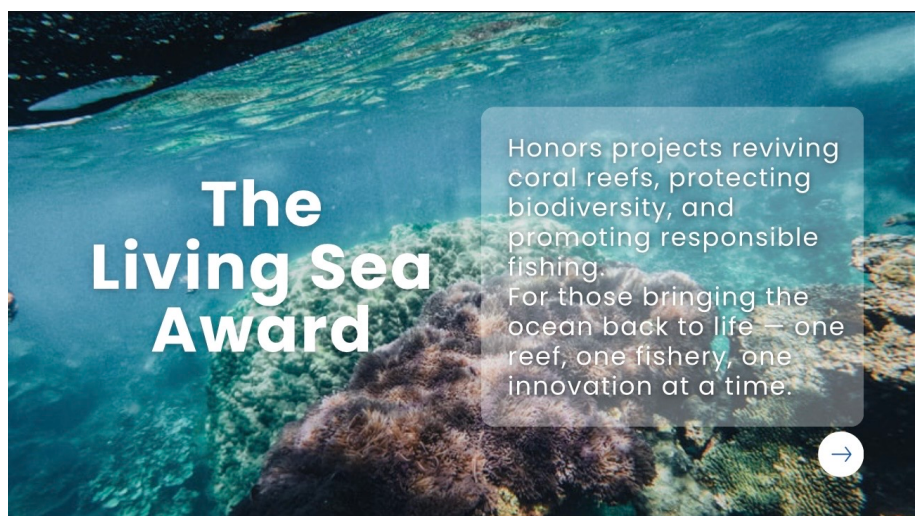
### 3. Reaching over 100 million people worldwide.

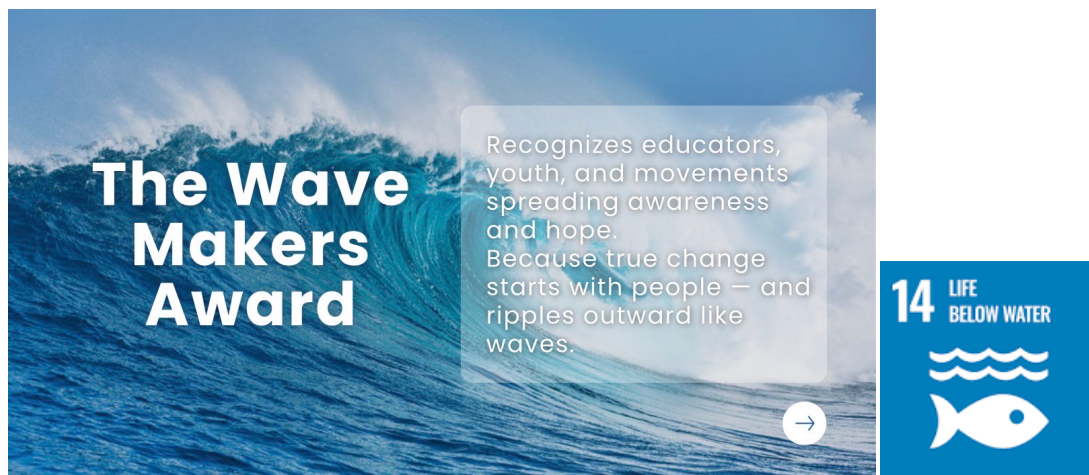
Within four years, we aim to have ambassadors, partners, team members, and participants from almost every country in the world. If we reach 500,000 to 1 million people per country through various media activities, our total reach could eventually exceed 100 million people.

### 4. Strengthening dozens of nascent marine conservation projects.

We are happy to support like-minded projects with exposure on our social media channels, helping them attract new volunteers, donations, or signatures. This way, our growing movement can be the wind beneath the wings of others. But to truly strengthen nascent marine conservation projects, more care and attention is needed, and we provide this with seed money and coaching for the winners of the OceanLove Innovation Award. With the Award, we focus primarily on finding and supporting new initiatives—the diamonds in the rough—that are not yet attractive enough for funders. We help them develop business plans, pilot projects, and scale up, ultimately preparing them for (larger) investments, donations, partnerships, and impact. In the coming years, we aim to gradually expand to four different Awards, with a Top 3 winner for each Award. This will allow us to support 12 new, emerging marine conservation projects annually. We expect to have supported approximately 60 to 70 projects in their first steps toward realization and (larger) impact by 2030. For

each award, with a different, urgent focus for the ocean, we involve a different network of scientists, donors, and coaches.





While the focus of our work is on further expanding the OceanLove Innovation Award, with four different award categories, this project is never an end goal in itself, but a means to mobilize new support for improved ocean protection.

The Awards have proven to be an excellent tool through which we can annually:

- ⇒ invite people worldwide to think and work on solutions;
- ⇒ involve the global media in a topic that often remains underexposed, thus helping us inform millions of people;
- ⇒ bring like-minded partners together to support the winners;
- ⇒ initiate dozens of new ideas, plans and projects, twelve of which we intensively support to achieve (greater) impact;
- ⇒ put dozens of new ideas, plans and projects in the spotlight, allowing them to acquire partners and funding.

### **Water Guardians in the Amazon Rainforest**

A prime example of the added value of the OceanLove Innovation Award is the Water Guardians project in the Brazilian Amazon. The rivers in the Amazon rainforest are a nursery for the ocean and provide food for the local population. Illegal overfishing is putting increasing pressure on this function of the rivers. The local population devised a system in which they conduct patrols as volunteer Water Guardians. These patrols required modern communication equipment, a boat, and dialogue training. The plan, submitted by tribal leader Dada Borari (photo below), won the fifth place in the 2024 OceanLove Innovation Award. While that award only awarded the winners one thousand Euro, the support and visibility of the idea led to spectacular change. The plan was first developed further in collaboration with the organization Treesistance, and then OceanLove presented it to one of its regular donors (the OOF Foundation), who made its realization possible. Since 2025, less than a year after winning the OceanLove Award, the Water Guardians have been patrolling dozens of kilometers of river with their boats, successfully halting much illegal overfishing and involving thousands of people from various tribes.

*"Water is the first spirit of the territory. When it is well, the people are well."* —  
Abimael Munduruku (Leader of the Takuara Indigenous Tribe)



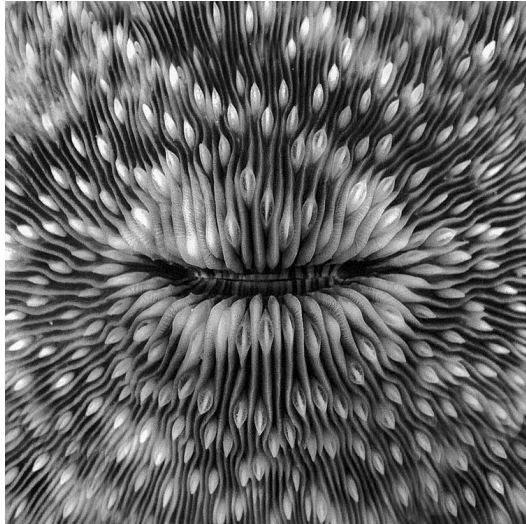
#### **5. Own initiative to protect dolphins and whale sharks from mass tourism.**

Swimming with dolphins and whale sharks is very popular, but in most countries (such as Indonesia, Egypt, and Mexico), this rarely happens responsibly. Thousands of boats and tourists often get too close, blocking the animals' swimming path and making a lot of noise. Tourists often even want to touch the animals, which is life-threatening due to the transmission of bacteria. There are rarely (strict) regulations and if they are in place they are not enforced. There is rarely good information, and if there is it is ignored. That's why OceanLove wants to develop a pilot project, possibly with its own quality mark, specifically focused on training and rewarding skippers, hotels, and tour operators. After dozens of conversations with skippers and tourists, we believe the approach of rewarding and inspiring, instead of punishing and patronizing, can be successful. The pilot project will be prepared in 2026 and 2027, and it will be implemented in 2028 with an initial pilot project in the Red Sea (Egypt). If this pilot proves successful, it can be further expanded, perhaps with a donor of its own. Responsible interaction with dolphins and whale sharks provides enjoyment and employment. It can even be a healing, spiritual experience, but the well-being of the animals must be paramount.

#### **6. Publication of the OceanLove book.**

In 2027, we aim to publish a beautiful, inspiring coffee table book featuring work by the many photographers who volunteer for OceanLove. The book will largely be dedicated to enchanting the reader with beauty. The text consists partly of the bimonthly columns that OceanLove founder Ilco van der Linde writes for The Optimist magazine, but also of interviews with inspiring ocean lovers, including, of course, several winners of the OceanLove Innovation Award. With renowned Dutch photographer Floris Leeuwenberg (a winner of World Press Photo awards, among

others) and Italian author Rose Casella—who have created more than ten photo books together—this coffee table book has been quietly in development since 2024. The dummy will be ready in early 2026, and then we will be holding discussions with various interested publishers. Our Global Ambassador, Dr. Sylvia Earle, has already written the foreword!



## **7. Broader financial support.**

All of these goals in the Strategic Plan OceanLove 2026-2030 naturally require additional funding. Donors, philanthropists, and other investors are being approached so we can gradually increase the budget from €100,000 per year to €485,000. While this is still very limited for the major goals we're pursuing, it will be possible because we're asking many companies and experts to volunteer, and the organization itself will remain entirely based on volunteer professionals. This way, the majority of our budget (at least 60%) can go to the OceanLove Innovation Award, and especially to the prize money, which can be used as a start-up and growth budget for the winning marine conservation projects, increasing their quality and impact. Almost all donors from recent years will remain involved until 2026. This year, we will discuss with them whether they wish to remain our founding partners, with a limited increase in their contributions through 2030. By doing so these partners will continue to be the foundation upon which we build everything. In addition, four new partners are needed, preferably with even larger contributions through 2030. The attached multi-year budget provides a more detailed breakdown of our funding needs and their structure.

## **8. New foundation with ANBI status.**

The board of the Dutch Mandela House Foundation has been responsible for OceanLove since its inception. This was a good fit, as the Mandela House served as a breeding ground for new, social, and collaborative initiatives. After eleven successful years, the Mandela House closed in early 2026, in accordance with agreements made with the Municipality of Amsterdam. This, combined with OceanLove's rapid international growth, made it the right time to establish the OceanLove Foundation,

with the same experienced, unpaid board members as the Mandela House Foundation. In 2026 we aim to add two young marine scientists to the board. With this new foundation we aim to apply for the 'ANBI status' in 2026, so that donations by Dutch donors will be tax-deductible in the future.



In January 2026, the board approved the 2025 annual financial report. There was great appreciation for the Core Team and all other experts involved, who had neatly managed the growth within all existing financial frameworks. This annual financial report 2025 can be shared upon request.

There was also appreciation for the fact that all donors and partners from 2024 remained involved in 2025 and even new partners and ambassadors came on board. The OceanLove Innovation Award was also approved as an official activity of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science in 2025. We aim to continue this collaboration with the UN up until at least 2030.





Quote for OceanLove by Peter Thomson  
- the United Nations Special Envoy for the ocean

*"Our ocean action work is becoming ever more urgent. Ocean temperatures and rates of ocean acidification are continuing their alarming rise, causing sea levels to rise and the widespread death of coral. Responsible ocean action means curbing greenhouse gas emissions, stopping plastic and chemical pollution, ceasing harmful fisheries practices, and protecting marine biodiversity. Essentially we have to stop burning fossil fuels and be positive players in the transition to renewable energy. I urge everyone involved with the OceanLove Innovation Award to double down on their commitments to halting the decline in the ocean's health."*

#### **Powerpoint presentation OceanLove 2026 - 2030**

Here is the link to the Canva PowerPoint presentation, which gives you a more visual representation of this Strategic Plan OceanLove 2026-2030:

<https://shorturl.at/Wv5QZ>