

## **Over 2 tonnes of marine litter have been removed in Malta for 'Our Ocean'**

On 5-6 October 2017, global leaders are invited in Malta to commit to new actions to ensure sustainable fisheries, to mitigate climate change impacts, to announce new marine protected areas and to fight marine pollution in the framework of the 'Our Ocean' conference: <http://www.ourocean2017.org>

Healthy Seas and its partners were organizing various side events in Malta, linked to this important global event. The range of unique and exciting activities included (1) Sea clean-up action by volunteer divers at Marine Protected Areas around Malta, (2) "Our Ocean, Our Life" public engagement event and school programme, and (3) Ghost Net Exhibition at the Malta National Aquarium.

After the United States of America and Chile, the European Union is hosting the 4th edition of the 'Our Ocean' conference, at the initiative of High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella.

Healthy Seas and its partners were organizing various side events in Malta, at the heart of the Mediterranean, linked to this important global event.

A group of volunteer divers from Ghost Fishing and Maltaqua Dive Centre departed between 1-3 October every day early in the morning to remove marine litter, more specifically lost fishing gear and ghost nets from ecologically important areas around Malta.

In spite of the rough weather, our divers were determined and collected over 500 kgs of lost fishing gear, thus made the seas around Malta a bit cleaner and safer place for marine animals to live. Lost fishing gear can cause a lot of problems for marine wildlife and marine ecosystems, but also for the maritime industry, navigational safety, beach quality, local communities and fishermen too.

At the same time, a coastal and shore clean-up combined with an educational and information event took place on 1 October in Balluta Bay, targeting the general public and schools. About 50 volunteers were working hard and within a few hours managed to collect 1,5 tonnes of marine litter.

The ghost nets and other marine litter collected from the coastline and seas around Malta have been used for an eye-catching sculpture of Poseidon (King of the Seas) created by a local artist, Jennings Falzon. The Ghost Net Exhibition was opened at the Malta National Aquarium on 4 October, on the World Animal Day. This sculpture is a tribute to all those animals who died and suffered because of lost fishing gear and ghost nets.



The purpose is to raise awareness about the problem of the seas caused by the ghost nets and all the marine litter. Our goal is to show the tragedy, the desperate cry of the sea, a cry with no voice to make people think and become alert.

We were honored to welcome the organizers of the 'Our Ocean' Conference, U.S. Embassy and the delegation of the European Commission (EC) to the opening of the Exhibition. Special thanks to João Aguiar Machado, EC Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries who inaugurated the Exhibition.

The Exhibition will be on display at the Aquarium for 3-4 weeks, afterwards it will travel to other locations in Malta for awareness raising.

According to a recent report, by 2050 there will be more plastic in the seas and oceans than fish. We all have to work hard against it, not to let it happen.

**The events are organized by Healthy Seas in cooperation with Ghost Fishing, Sharklab - Malta and Zibel.**

**We thank to our sponsors and supporters, who made all these activities possible: Aquafil S.p.A., SkyParks Business Centre, European Commission DG MARE - MARITIME AFFAIRS & FISHERIES, Malta National Aquarium, FMAP - Federation Malta Aquaculture Producers, Maltaqua Dive Centre.**

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### About Healthy Seas

The mission of 'Healthy Seas, a Journey from Waste to Wear' initiative is to remove waste, in particular, fishing nets from the seas for the purpose of creating healthier seas and recycling marine litter into textile products. The recovered fishing nets will be transformed and regenerated into ECONYL® yarn, a high-quality raw material used to create new products, such as socks, swimwear or carpets.

The discarded, lost, or abandoned fishing nets are sometimes called "ghost nets", since they continue to catch fish and other marine animals without human involvement. Millions of marine animals, including sharks, dolphins, seals and turtles suffer because of entanglement in these nets which leads to serious



injuries and death eventually. Every year, some 640,000 tonnes of fishing gear is left in our seas and oceans. It's plastic waste which remains in the seas for hundreds of years and doesn't biodegrade.

**For more information visit:**

[www.healthyseas.org](http://www.healthyseas.org)

[www.econyl.com](http://www.econyl.com)

[www.ghostfishing.org](http://www.ghostfishing.org)

[www.sharklab-malta.org](http://www.sharklab-malta.org)

[www.zibel.org](http://www.zibel.org)

[www.ourocean2017.org](http://www.ourocean2017.org)