

**For Immediate Release**



## **Beneath the Waves with Project AWARE**

### **Divers urge for Measurable Solutions to the Global Issue of Marine Debris at Our Ocean 2015 Conference**

**Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., September 8, 2015** – Project AWARE has launched its *Beneath the Waves* campaign, calling on the scuba diving community to share personal photographs of underwater trash in order to highlight the devastating impacts of marine debris underwater. Photographs shared via Twitter and Instagram will be displayed in a global photo collage now through October 5, 2015 on [projectaware.org](http://projectaware.org) and across all social media sites.

Project AWARE, the global nonprofit organization focused on the critical issues of sharks in peril and marine debris, will utilize the photo campaign to rally around the international *Our Ocean 2015* conference in Chile on October 5-6, 2015, urging leaders in marine conservation to support solutions leading to a measureable reduction in marine debris. *Our Ocean 2015* aims to promote voluntary governmental and institutional commitments to care for the ocean. Over 400 political, academic and civil society figures as well as industry, philanthropy and nonprofit leaders will meet to discuss solutions to many of the most critical challenges faced by marine environments around the world.

“Every day, the scuba community sees firsthand the devastating impact of our trash underwater. And, we’re taking action,” says Project AWARE’s Associate Director of Programs, Ania Budziak. “From reporting marine debris data to protecting vulnerable marine species, scuba divers everywhere are joining forces to protect the ocean. We urge decision-makers at *Our Ocean 2015* to do the same.”

Marine debris – including trash and other solid materials entering the ocean – damages marine habitats, threatens wildlife, and presents health and safety concerns for humans. More than 1 in 10 species ingesting or becoming entangled in marine debris are threatened with extinction. And, trash continues to enter the ocean at an alarming rate – by 2025, as much as 250 million metric tons of plastic could make its way into marine environments.

Through its flagship citizen-science program, Dive Against Debris, Project AWARE empowers scuba divers to remove marine debris from the ocean and report data on the types, quantities and locations of materials collected. Since the program’s launch in 2011, more than 25,000 divers have participated in Dive Against Debris in more than 50 countries around the world, reporting over 500,000 pieces of trash. As the only underwater debris data collection program of its kind, Dive Against Debris both improves the health of ocean ecosystems through localized volunteer efforts and provides valuable information about underwater debris to help inform policy change.

The *Beneath the Waves* photo campaign will show how divers are working year-round to fight for the prevention and reduction of trash in ocean ecosystems and provide a visual representation of the negative effects of marine debris on underwater environments around the world. *Beneath the Waves* will be used as a tool to urge leaders to make a commitment to finding long-term, meaningful solutions that address the issue of marine debris.

To learn more, visit [www.projectaware.org/BeneathTheWaves](http://www.projectaware.org/BeneathTheWaves).

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**Notes to Editors:**

**Project AWARE** is a global movement of scuba divers protecting our ocean planet - one dive at a time. Focused on the critical issues of Sharks in Peril and Marine Debris, Project AWARE empowers thousands of divers in more than 180 countries to work together for a clean, healthy and abundant ocean planet. Project AWARE Foundation is a registered non-profit organization. For more information, visit [projectaware.org](http://projectaware.org).

For the latest news, updates, photos and videos, follow @projectaware on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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