



For immediate release

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The Census of Marine Life AAAS press briefing takes place at 2:00 p.m. PST Thurs. Feb. 18; the scientific session, “One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, New Fish: Society Needs Marine Biodiversity Research” takes place at 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. PST Fri. Feb. 19.

**Census of Marine Life: “Decade of Discovery” to End Oct. 4 - 6, 2010;
Researchers Preview Concluding Reports at AAAS Meeting**

Scientists describe how marine research, technology and discoveries benefit society

The Census of Marine Life, an unprecedented 10-year, \$650 million collaboration involving thousands of marine scientists in more than 80 countries, will conclude Oct. 4 - 6, 2010 in London, UK, leaving a legacy of discovery of historic proportions and importance.

On Feb. 18 and 19, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in San Diego, California, top Census researchers will describe the release of the project’s culminating findings and their practical application, specifically, how Census research extends beyond the discovery of individual species.

Eight scientists will elaborate how universal open access to marine biodiversity research and data supports development of sustainable fisheries and marine protected areas, the monitoring of endangered species and greater understanding of climate change impacts.

Says Census co-Chief Scientist Ron O’Dor: “We look forward to describing some of the topics the final Census reports will cover next fall, most especially how the technologies and collaborations stimulated by the Census have started to make the oceans transparent.”

Press briefing speakers and topics

1. **Shirley Pomponi**, executive director for science, technology and development at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University in Fort Pierce, Florida, will talk about the potential of marine bioprospecting, including the search for new pharmaceutical candidates in marine species. Her speech,

titled *Marine Bioprospecting: New Drugs from Unlikely Sources*, will also cover how to balance this field with sustainable use and conservation.

2. **Huw Griffiths**, marine biogeographer with the British Atlantic Survey in Cambridge, UK, will present *Understanding Global Climate Change Through Breakthroughs in Polar Research*. Since 2005, Census has been conducting the most comprehensive study of the distribution and abundance of the unique animals that reside on the bottom of Antarctica's frozen sea. This new research has found that there are 8,000 different species of marine life in this area — with approximately 6,000 living on the seafloor. Many experts believe that an equal number of species may still be waiting to be discovered on the seafloor around Antarctica. However, in the face of long-term global climate change, this region may be facing a loss of biodiversity, which could precipitate a loss of biodiversity on a global scale.
3. **Jason Hall-Spencer**, marine biology lecturer with Marine Institute, University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom, will share *CenSeam: Identifying Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and Protecting the Biodiversity Hotspot*. This speech will focus on the Census Seamounts (CenSeam) program, a 10-year study of the ecology of underwater mountains. Using submersibles, ice breaker ships, deep sea robots and satellite technology, CenSeam has advanced biodiversity research in areas of the ocean that have not previously been explored. There are more than 50,000 seamounts in the ocean; each has an expansive marine habitat composed of volcanic rock over one kilometer high. However, only one percent of seamounts have been investigated. Through the results of CenSeam work, Census has been able to provide society with practical solutions for the protection of these newly discovered habitats and the species that live in them.
4. **Ron O'Dor**, professor with Dalhousie University in Canada and senior scientist for the CoML in Washington, D.C., will address the new methods of tracking marine life in *How New Tracking Technologies Can Help Manage Sustainable Fisheries*. Specifically, this includes two Census tracking projects, one using satellite tags to track large animals and one using acoustic tags to track small animals, which allow scientists to report in real-time on the places, habitats and conditions that these animals need to survive. This Ocean Tracking Network (OTN) aims to link these technologies to understand the interactions across whole ocean ecosystems, which is crucial information for Ecosystem Based Management, now recognized in most countries as a requirement for sustainable fisheries.
5. **Kristina Gjerde**, high seas policy advisor with the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Konstancin-Chylice, Poland, will discuss the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative and the future of high seas and seabed protection in *How Census of Marine Life Science Helps Establish Marine Protected Areas*. She will cite examples of how new research on key habitats, migratory corridors and productivity hotspots have led to the protection of diverse marine habitats and

how these new discoveries are enabling managers to take rational measures to reduce the footprint of human activities on marine wildlife and ecosystems.

Conclusion of the Census of Marine Life, 2010

The Economist magazine and other observers have marked the conclusion of the Census as one of the world's foremost upcoming science milestones.

In San Diego, the Census will distribute a calendar of culminating information products for release prior to Oct. 4, including hundreds of papers to be published in peer reviewed journals and two interim news releases.

Also, on offer at the London news conference on Oct. 4 at the Royal Institution of Great Britain and concluding symposia Oct. 4-6: a comprehensive scientific summary, "*Census of Marine Life 2010: A Decade of Discovery*" (Cambridge University Press), and two complementary books, published by Wiley Blackwell and National Geographic, each designed for either a general public or scientific audience.

For more information: www.coml.org.

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About Census of Marine Life

The Census of Marine Life is a global network of researchers in more than 80 nations engaged in a 10-year scientific initiative to assess and explain the diversity, distribution and abundance of life in the ocean. Undertaking field research, historical data and models of trends and projections their work helps understand and forecast marine biodiversity. The goal of the first Census: a comprehensive baseline report on what is known, unknown and unknowable about ocean biodiversity.

About Consortium for Ocean Leadership

Ocean Leadership is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization that represents 95 of the leading public and private ocean research education institutions, aquaria and industry with the mission to advance research, education and sound ocean policy. The organization also manages ocean research and education programs in areas of scientific ocean drilling, ocean observing, ocean exploration and ocean partnerships.