OCEANS
CAUCUS FOUNDATION

ADVANCING U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE RESPONSIBLE UTILIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES THROUGH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.

OCFOUNDATION.US
ABOUT THE CAUCUS

The bipartisan U.S. Congressional Oceans Caucus was established to increase awareness, promote dialogue, and find common ground in responding to issues facing the oceans and coasts. OCF supports the leadership of the U.S. Congressional Oceans Caucus, educating members about the importance of oceans issues and solutions that protect oceans resources and the livelihoods that depend upon them.

OCEANS CAUCUS

CO-CHAIRS - 116TH CONGRESS

SEN. TAMMY BALDWIN (D-WI) | SEN. LISA MURKOWSKI (R-AK)

SEN. DAN SULLIVAN (R-AK) | SEN. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE (D-RI)

REP. SUZANNE BONAMICI (D-OR) | REP. DON YOUNG (R-AK)

WHAT WE DO

OCF directly supports the leadership of the bipartisan U.S. Oceans Caucus in the Senate & House, and The ICCF Group’s conservation caucuses globally, who share an understanding of the global dependence on healthy marine ecosystems.

OCF unites leaders in government, corporations, NGOs, & the scientific community to provide policymakers with the tools they need to create policies that promote economic growth, resource security, and a healthy marine environment.

OCF works at the highest levels of governments, and in national parks & protected areas in developed & developing countries around the globe. We bring together leaders from communities that depend on ocean resources.

BUILDING POLITICAL WILL

UNITING SECTORS

ENGAGING GLOBALLY

OUR PARTNERS

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The ocean is a vast and harsh environment, making it difficult to monitor. Developing coastal countries lack the capacity to effectively enforce their maritime territories, and developed countries may fail to adequately prioritize this issue. The lack of prioritization and funding for management and enforcement has allowed for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing to become a multi-billion-dollar global industry that fuels transnational criminal organizations, corruption and other illegal activity, and geopolitical tensions. Strengthening marine management and enforcement through prioritization and partnerships will not only benefit the environment, but will generate revenue for the seafood industry and governments, and promote global security by undermining the criminal networks and activity involved with illegal fishing.
IUU fishing and transnational organized crime are the results of a lack of enforcement capacity in developing countries’ maritime territories and the high seas and overfishing in coastal communities, which has forced fishermen to look to alternative livelihoods. Because IUU fishing often crosses international borders, it can also lead to escalating geopolitical tensions, as in the highly-contested South China Sea, where heated international affairs sometimes play out through fishing disputes. Unresolved maritime security challenges endanger U.S. national security objectives directly and indirectly through the maturation of networks involved in terrorism, piracy, and trafficking of all types.

From a security perspective, IUU fishing is not a standalone issue, but rather one piece of an elaborate network of illicit activity...

In developing countries, illegal fishing denies local economies a major source of taxable revenue and jobs. Illegal fishing depletes stocks that are vital to local economies, forcing fishermen out of jobs. In developed markets, illegal, imported fish product can sell at a lower price than product adhering to regulations. Efforts to prevent IUU fishing can stimulate local economies by bringing regulated jobs and revenues into the market and facilitating long-term economic growth for the world’s most vulnerable communities – while stabilizing the fish stocks they depend on.

Left: Economic Security. Admiral Charles Ray, Vice Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, speaking at an OCF Congressional Staff Luncheon on the Coast Guard’s role in enforcing U.S. maritime law and how IUU fishing threatens U.S. national security.

The global legal seafood market is estimated to lose up to $23.5 billion annually to IUU fishing.

...that includes piracy & terrorism, corruption, human rights & labor abuses, and the trafficking of narcotics, weapons, wildlife, & people. These challenges also undermine partner nations’ rule of law and degrade regional food and environmental security. OCF recognizes the dangerous linkages between these issues and the fact that combating IUU fishing will serve the multifaceted purpose of undermining transnational criminal networks, promoting international cooperation, and protecting national security across the globe.

Left: National Security. Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) speaking at an OCF Congressional Staff Briefing highlighting the security impacts of IUU fishing. Senator Coons sponsored the bipartisan Maritime SAFE Act, along with Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), which was reintroduced May 1, 2019. The Maritime SAFE Act promotes a whole-of-government approach to combat IUU fishing.

FROM A SECURITY PERSPECTIVE, IUU FISHING IS NOT A STANDALONE ISSUE, BUT RATHER ONE PIECE OF AN ELABORATE NETWORK OF ILLICIT ACTIVITY...
In order to meet the rising nutritional demands of a growing population by implementing and enforcing sustainable fisheries management schemes, investments in fisheries management and enforcement need to be prioritized. Well managed fisheries will provide communities the benefit of a reliable food source through healthy fish stocks over the long term. These efforts can be complemented by advances in aquaculture, which can support the management and availability of marine resources.

Over 50% of protein consumed in developing countries comes from fish.

Mismanaged fisheries and IUU fishing deplete vital fish populations and utilize destructive practices like bottom trawling, cyanide fishing, and dynamite fishing that directly harm ecosystems by tearing up habitat and producing bycatch. Unsustainable fishing has been identified as the greatest threat to coral reefs: IUU operations disrupt reef ecology by depleting the fisheries that corals depend on for survival; directly destroy coral; and reduce reef productivity, which affects coastal communities that depend on healthy reefs for tourism, food, and storm protection.

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STOPPING MARINE DEBRIS AT THE SOURCE

PLASTICS AND OTHER WASTE MATERIALS DO NOT BELONG IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT 80% OF MARINE DEBRIS COMES FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES.

Marine debris takes many forms, comes from many sources, and is often the result of litter or poorly managed municipal solid waste. In developing and newly developed countries, waste management infrastructure has not kept pace with the consumption rates of growing populations, leading to inadequate trash/recycling pick-up services and facilities. The Asia Foundation reported in 2017 that the world’s top six plastic polluting nations are located in Asia. U.S. government and consumers also play a role, ranking 20th in terms of leakage of plastic in the ocean; the U.S. alone produces about 14.7 million tons of plastic waste annually, and only about 2.15 million tons are recycled with the rest going to landfills. To address the challenge of marine debris, generating political will and creating an environment in which practical solutions can be implemented is the first step. OCF’s marine debris initiative will create an increased understanding about materials management challenges and opportunities at the policy and consumer levels to create a strong plastics recycling industry and a healthy marine environment.

IMPROVING WASTE MANAGEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Top: Senator Whitehouse speaking with Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK), a Senate Oceans Caucus Co-Chair, at an OCF Congressional Member Dinner. Senator Whitehouse and Senator Sullivan were original co-sponsors of the Save Our Seas Act of 2018 (SOS) to address the marine debris epidemic affecting America’s oceans, shorelines, and inland waterways, as well as other coasts across the globe. These Senators are teaming up again in the 116th Congress on S.O.S. 2.0, which will focus on the need for improved waste management and recycling infrastructure in the U.S. and around the world.

Right: Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Senate Oceans Caucus Co-Chair, speaking at an OCF Congressional Member Dinner.
On one hand, OCF helps facilitate public conservation learning through its partnerships with organizations like SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, which helps people connect with nature, establish scientific literacy, and engage in stewardship toward conservation. On the other hand, OCF provides conservation education directly to national decision makers through a U.S. Congressional briefing series.

WITH THE HELP OF ITS BRAIN TRUST OF CORPORATE PARTNERS AND NGO EXPERTS, OCF HOSTS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR OCEANS CAUCUS MEMBERS, WHERE TOPICS ARE IDENTIFIED IN RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS FROM OUR ADVISORY BOARD AND NETWORK OF OCEANS EXPERTS AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, OUR CAUCUS LEADERSHIP.

OCF PROMOTES EFFORTS TO BUILD AWARENESS AROUND OCEAN CONSERVATION BECAUSE IT BELIEVES A STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES IS CRITICAL IN MOBILIZING SUPPORT.

Left: Dr. Enric Sala at an OCF Congressional Staff Luncheon. Dr. Sala is a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence who runs National Geographic’s Pristine Seas Campaign which has helped to create 15 of the largest marine reserves on the planet, covering an area of over 4.5 million square kilometers.
GET IN TOUCH

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THE WORK OF THE ICCF GROUP IS ONLY MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS