



PRESS RELEASE

12 June 2018

HUGE GHOST NET REMOVED FROM SANTORINI SEABED DURING UNPRECEDENTED LIVE STREAM

To celebrate **World Oceans Day**, on June 8th, an international team of 8 volunteer divers from the Netherlands, France and Greece took part in a highly demanding lost or discarded fishing net (also known as ghost nets) removal dive in Santorini. The mission succeeded in cleaning the sea of a huge ghost net measuring approximately 150 meters that was entangling marine animals and causing their unnecessary torture and eventual death. Furthermore, ghost nets continuously lose tiny pieces called microplastics which pose a serious threat to human health as they end up in our food chain.

The operation was organised by **Healthy Seas** together with **Cousteau Divers**, **Ghost Fishing** and the local Dive Center, **Atlantis Oia**. Italian fabric manufacturer, **Carvico S.p.A.** was the event's exclusive sponsor. The dive was streamed live and broadcasted all over the world for educational purposes. **Pierre-Yves Cousteau**, founder of Cousteau Divers, described the mission from beneath the waves. Such an undertaking is unprecedented.

Pascal van Erp, Founder of Ghost Fishing, spearheaded the removal operation: "Santorini's underwater geomorphology was formed after an enormous volcanic eruption thousands of years ago. The caldera where the fishing nets were found is basically a giant lagoon with very steep drop-offs which rapidly reaches 400m depth. The removal mission needed therefore very strict dive planning and teamwork to get the fishing nets safely out of the water. Carrying out a first of its kind two-way communication underwater live stream was a very complex operation which we were able to complete successfully due to the tremendous efforts a truly amazing team."

After the nets were removed from the seabed, they were securely placed into large bags and will be transported for regeneration. They will travel to a cleaning facility and eventually be delivered to **Aquafil** who will transform and regenerate them into **ECONYL®** yarn to then be used by **Carvico** for the production of fabrics for swimwear.

Pierre-Yves Cousteau is a longtime advocate for the protection of Santorini's marine environment which has led to a campaign for the establishment of a Marine Protected Area: "It was wonderful to work with Healthy Seas, Ghost Fishing and Atlantis Oia in Santorini. Their professionalism and dedication to marine conservation have made it possible to successfully accomplish the abandoned fishing net recovery. We hope this action will help people in Santorini and all over the world realize the critical state of the Ocean and unite to stop its destruction."

The Healthy Seas initiative has been operating for 5 years in the Netherlands, Belgium, UK, Italy and Greece. During this time, volunteer divers and fishermen together have recovered 375 tons of fishing nets from the seas and from land, the equivalent in weight of 2 blue whales.



The event was held under the auspices of the **Municipality of Thira** (Santorini) and the **Goulandris Natural History Museum**.

Healthy Seas and Cousteau Divers would like to thank the sponsor and supporters of the Santorini event: Carvico S.p.A., Aquafil S.p.A., Seascope Subsea Technology B.V., NanoCosmos, Oia Sunset Cruise, Fishermen Association of Santorini, Santorini Marine Protected Area Association, Primary School of Oia, Port Authority of Santorini, Boatmen of Santorini, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

Photos and Press kit available here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/60dht7src4xzo66/AAA-jMeuNnFEq319twDX8bcTa?dl=0>

Video available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glMs0eti5Tw&t=1s>

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Notes to Editors:

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 by Aquafil 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.

Cousteau Divers

Founded in 2009, Cousteau Divers is a non-profit worldwide community of divers and dive centers united to study and protect marine life. By making each diver an agent of the study and conservation of the aquatic realm, Cousteau Divers brings the legacy of Jacques-Yves Cousteau to life.

Carvico

Carvico SpA is an Italian textile company established in 1962, specialized in the production of performance fabrics for beachwear, sportswear and outerwear. Carvico mission is to offer the market a collection of innovative, high end, high performance products which are also eco-friendly. The environmental policies implemented focus on the health and wellbeing of the company staff, of the local communities and of the global ecosystem and have translated into several, concrete sustainability projects.



Ghost Fishing

Ghost Fishing Foundation is an international non-profit organization, executed by volunteer technical divers, which initiates, supports and promotes lost fishing gear removal initiatives in oceans, seas and local waters. Since 2012 they have run lost fishing gear survey and removal projects in the North Sea, Adriatic Sea, Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Pacific Ocean in cooperation with various environmental organizations and with the support of a continuously growing group of volunteer technical divers.

Atlantis Dive Center

Atlantis is member of PADI, SSI and ANDI, the most trusted diving organisations worldwide. Its founder, Apostolos Stylianopoulos, is member of Cousteau Divers and Atlantis is one of the few Cousteau Dive Centres in the world. Their commitment to protecting the environment is proven not only by their accreditation but also from their unyielding support of the Santorini MPA project.

For more information visit:

www.healthyseas.org/save-your-breath-santorini

www.cousteaudivers.org

www.ghostfishing.org

www.atlantisoiia.com

www.carvico.com

www.econyl.com

www.aquafil.com