

PRESS RELEASE

DIVERS REMOVE MONSTER GHOST FISHING NETS FROM ITALIAN WATERS

Global Textile Company Transforms Fishing Nets into Catwalk Collections



- 4000kg of discarded fishing nets recovered from Italian waters by Healthy Seas initiative with Ghost Fishing volunteer divers
- Ghost fishing nets account for 10% of the total plastic waste in our seas¹
- Textile manufacturer Aquafil transforms collected oceanic and landfill waste into sustainable textiles
- Gucci, Richard Malone and Adidas among hundreds of other brands who use the fabric

AEOLIAN ISLANDS, ITALY - 9 October 2018 – Between 6-8th October in deep waters off the coast of the Aeolian Islands, volunteer technical divers rescued more than 4 tons (4,000 kg) of ghost fishing gear, which will be sent to a recycling facility in Slovenia and transformed into sustainable textiles for fashion houses across the globe. During the mission, Ghost Fishing divers recovered their largest ever net and its removal took days of preparational dives to ensure its careful removal from a seabed, after being lost in a storm 10 years ago.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/fishery-information/resource-detail/en/c/388082/>



The fishing nets will be cleaned and combined with other nylon waste materials, by Aquafil before being transformed into ECONYL® regenerated nylon, the infinitely recyclable material featured within collections by Richard Malone, Gucci and more.

Healthy Seas, the initiative behind the ghost fishing gear recovery mission in collaboration with the Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund, Blue Marine Foundation and the Ghost Fishing Foundation, brought together Lipari Diving and La Gorgonia Diving Centre, local fishermen and authorities with Aquafil's president Giulio Bonazzi, on boats to remove ghost fishing gear from various locations, home to some of Europe's endangered marine species. It was a true cooperation between divers and the fishermen who provided their boat for the net recovery and helped safely pull the enormous nets to the surface. The fishermen hoped their involvement would help raise awareness within the fishing community about the problem of ghost nets.

At the harbour, students from the local primary school IC Lipari 1 and secondary school IC Santa Lucia had the opportunity to meet the divers and learn more about marine litter and the circular economy. Aquafil exclusively sponsored the event.

According to a UNEP and FAO report, 640,000 tonnes of fishing nets are left in the seas and oceans each year². Endangered bottlenose dolphins, loggerhead sea turtles, sperm whales, and dusky groupers, have been found entangled in nets near the Aeolian Islands and in the Tyrrhenian Sea, suffering unnecessarily and in many cases eventually dying.

Giulio Bonazzi, President and CEO, Aquafil: *"The Healthy Seas initiative promotes marine protection and reduces ocean debris, while procuring the materials needed to create ECONYL® regenerated nylon for more responsible textiles for the fashion and carpet industry. And yet, this is a scheme that looks beyond 'cleaning up' and recycling; it moves towards a closed loop design and a new, more sustainable system"*.

The ghost net removal mission, organised by Healthy Seas in cooperation with the Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund, Blue Marine Foundation and Ghost Fishing Foundation, aims to contribute to raise awareness and responsibility to the local community towards the protection of the marine environment in the long term.

Veronika Mikos, Project Coordinator, Healthy Seas explains, *"Our team is passionate about marine conservation and thanks to their hard work, and the support of our partners, we have been able to make significant strides towards marine conservation within European waters. Our ultimate goal is to stop fishing nets from ending up in these marine ecosystems in the first place. By engaging with local coastal communities, and stakeholders within the fishing industry, we hope to prevent marine littering and raise awareness of this global problem. If we do not take urgent action now, we risk losing biodiverse marine environments and the future of our oceans"*.

² <http://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/fishery-information/resource-detail/en/c/388082/>



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

Photos available here: <https://we.tl/t-l5hQjB01ai>

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Notes to Editors:

Aquafil

Founded in 1965, Aquafil is one of the main producers of nylon 6 in Italy and in the world.

Aquafil Group is established in 8 countries and in 3 different continents, it employs more than 2.800 people working in 16 producing plants located in Italy, Germany, Scotland, Slovenia, Croatia, United States, Thailand and China. In 2011 Aquafil implemented ECONYL® Regeneration System, an innovative system that produces nylon 6 from pre and post-consumer waste.

www.aquafil.com

ECONYL®

ECONYL® is a nylon fiber produced by Aquafil using items otherwise destined to landfill such as old carpets and plastic products left in the sea such as fishing nets. ECONYL® is a recycled nylon with exactly the same properties of those produced by raw material. What makes it unique is that it can be recycled, recreated and remoulded again and again

www.econyl.com

Healthy Seas

The mission of 'Healthy Seas, a Journey from Waste to Wear' initiative, is to remove waste from the seas, in particular fishing nets, for the purpose of creating healthier seas and recycling marine litter into textile products. The recovered nylon 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” because they appear invisible underwater and continue to catch fish and other marine animals without human involvement. They are plastic waste which remains in the seas for hundreds of years and does not biodegrade. Millions of marine animals, including sharks, dolphins, seals and turtles get entangled in these nets leading to suffering and eventual death. Every year, some 640,000 tonnes of fishing gear is lost in our seas and oceans.

www.healthyseas.org

Ghost Fishing Foundation

Ghost Fishing 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.

www.ghostfishing.org

Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund

The Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund is dedicated to the preserve the natural beauty of the Aeolian Islands by promoting sustainable tourism. The fund finances and supports projects to preserve the environment and the sea of the islands.

<https://www.aeolianpreservationfund.org/>

Blue Marine Foundation

Known as BLUE, this UK registered charity was set up in 2010 by some of the team behind the award-winning documentary film ‘The End of the Line’. BLUE exists to fix the largest solvable problem on the planet – the crisis in the oceans. The charity is dedicated to combatting over-fishing and the destruction of biodiversity by creating marine reserves and establishing sustainable models of fishing. Its mission is the active and effective protection of 10% of the world’s oceans by 2020 and 30% by 2030.

<http://www.bluemarinefoundation.com/>