



MEMORANDUM

TO: California Ocean Protection Council
FROM: Miho Umezawa, Project Manager, Thank You Ocean Campaign
DATE: November 13, 2014
RE: Update on the Thank You Ocean Campaign

1. Overview of the Thank You Ocean Campaign

The California Thank You Ocean (TYO) campaign is a public outreach and awareness campaign that promotes every day actions to protect the ocean. It is a joint partnership between the State of California and the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, with support from the California Ocean Communicators Alliance¹. This memo provides Council members with a general overview of the campaign to date and future actions.

As a call to action by both the state and federal government based on the 2004 Pew Ocean Commission, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and *Protecting our Ocean: California’s Action Strategy*, the campaign launched at the California and the World Ocean Conference in Long Beach, California in September 2006 with a mission to “unite voices and amplify messages to raise ocean awareness and promote everyday actions that protect the ocean.” Since then, the campaign has cultivated a strong identity through developing twice-monthly podcasts, a robust bi-lingual (English and Spanish) website, social media outlets, print advertisements, public service announcements (PSA), and monthly e-newsletters. Specifically, the “Don’t Trash the Beach” bi-lingual PSA featuring actor and activist, Edward James Olmos, won best PSA at the 2012 Blue Ocean Film Festival. In addition to disseminating messages about the importance of the ocean to sustaining life, the campaign focuses on communicating about four of the most significant threats to the ocean including marine debris, climate change, water pollution, and risks to marine life. Through the broad dissemination of relevant, high quality content and scientific information to the public, TYO serves as a neutral voice garnering the respect of the environmental community and governmental leadership.



Thank You Ocean commissioned over 20 children holding signs stating key messages that the campaign wants to convey to the public. These images have been used for social media outreach and this image in particular has been shared approximately 9,000 times on Facebook.

Image: Kacie Jean Photography

Thank You Ocean completed its three year strategic plan in January 2014 which serves as a roadmap for the future and identifies opportunities for realistic growth. Over the next three years, TYO will work to: 1) broaden campaign reach, 2) secure consistent funding sources, 3) maintain and expand staff capacity, 4) enhance strategic and effective partnerships, and 4) heighten brand awareness, in order to achieve TYO’s mission and goals.

¹ The California Ocean Communicators Alliance is a group of more than 300 professionals in ocean-related organizations, agencies and businesses who, in the course of their work, reach millions of Californians with ocean messages. NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the California Natural Resources Agency and aquarium partners organized and support the California Ocean Communicators Alliance. Ocean Communicators Alliance members collaborate on common ocean messages and promote the Thank You Ocean public awareness campaign.

2. Updates on the Thank You Ocean Campaign

The Thank You Ocean campaign is constantly increasing its presence and gaining traction among not only the environmental community but with the broad constituency of California residents as well. Below are brief updates on critical campaign components including website, podcasts, social media, and partnerships.

Website

Thank You Ocean's bi-lingual website (www.thankyouocean.org) educates the public about the importance of sustaining ocean life and inspires Californians to practice ocean stewardship. The Spanish website serves as a comprehensive resource for the Spanish speaking community. The website's visitation rates have been steady over the past several years with approximately 65,000 webpage views every year. In addition to the homepage, the most popular pages include: [Podcasts](#), [Water Pollution](#), and [Kid Zone](#). This year, the podcast page experienced a 65% increase in visitation rate compared to the previous year which is partially attributed to the targeted Facebook advertising campaign to drive more traffic to the podcast webpage. Recently, TYO also launched a revamped version of the website which is more engaging with larger banners, easier to access podcasts, and includes student and teacher resources.

Thank You Ocean Report Podcasts

The Thank You Ocean Reports focus on interesting and exciting California ocean topics, the latest news on ocean health, and timely ocean issues or events. Stories feature interviews with ocean experts, explorers, scientists, conservationists, government and business leaders. Since the launch of TYO's twice-monthly podcasts in 2008, 150 podcasts have been produced with approximately 300,000 YouTube views and downloads directly from the TYO website. In particular, podcasts with high viewership include topics on the [California drought](#) featuring Secretary for Natural Resources and OPC Chair John Laird, the [Sea Star Wasting Syndrome](#), [Tsunami Debris](#), [the California King Tides Project](#), and the [San Clemente Dam Removal](#), with roughly 190,000 combined views for these podcasts.



Social Media

Thank You Ocean implemented a social media campaign from November 2013 until June 2014 with two main objectives: 1) to increase the number of "likes" on the TYO Facebook community page, and 2) increase the number of podcast viewers. The campaign strategy involved developing and purchasing Facebook advertisements. TYO's community page experienced a tremendous increase in "likes" from 17,542 at the start of the campaign to 46,705 at the end. In order to increase podcast viewership, TYO executed a two pronged approach which included developing advertisements to increase the number of YouTube subscribers and circulating advertisements for specific Thank You Ocean Reports.



In addition, Thank You Ocean unveiled a sustainable seafood social media campaign in June 2014 that included celebrity chef Cat Cora promoting sustainable seafood choices. The campaign encouraged the public to join Cat Cora in helping to protect fish populations and marine habitat by choosing only sustainably caught seafood. Purchasing Facebook advertisements to promote Cat Cora's visuals helped further educate the public about sustainable seafood, drive people to the TYO risks to marine life webpage, and increase viewership on the sustainable seafood podcast. This advertisement was seen by 67,877 people and converted to 344 views to the [sustainable seafood podcast](#).

Partnerships

Partnerships are critical in making Thank You Ocean a success. Below are a few examples of partnerships and collaborations that have formed through the years:



Sacramento Regional Corps member educating visitors about ocean acidification
Image: Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps

Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps

Over the summer of 2014, TYO partnered with the California State Fair and [Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps](#) (SRCC) to conduct public outreach to approximately 13,500 visitors who came through the Beach Buddy Adventure exhibit at the State Fair from July 11th through the 27th. There were four education stations that were led by the corps members which focused on topics such as marine debris, ocean acidification, aquatic invasive species, and oil pollution. TYO staff not only participated at the State Fair, but also went to the SRCC prior to the start of the fair to educate the corps members on each of the ocean issues. During the presentation, many corps members voiced that they had never been to the ocean, so in October 2014, TYO and CCC staff organized a fieldtrip to the

Marin Headlands where corps members went on a naturalist led walk to the beach, visited the Marine Mammal Center, and learned about marine debris.

California Ocean and Coastal Amateur Photo Contest

In 2011, Thank You Ocean partnered with the California Coastal Commission (CCC) on the [California Ocean and Coastal Amateur Photography Contest](#). The contest features photographs that reflect the importance that the coast and ocean has for California residents and the role that the CCC, Natural Resources Agency and Ocean Protection Council have played in preserving coastal and marine resources. The CCC has held an amateur photo contest for several years but it was through the partnership with TYO that the contest was able to engage the public in a much more meaningful way. TYO and CCC developed the contest's website which allows entrants to upload their photos online, view other submissions, vote for their favorite photos, and sign up for TYO and/or CCC newsletters. This year, we experienced a record number of photo submissions with over 1,200 entries which exceeded the previous year by roughly 250 submissions.

California King Tides Project

Thank You Ocean has been a project partner since 2011 and assists in the coordination and implementation of the campaign. The California King Tides Project is an international citizen science initiative that visualizes how sea level rise will impact our lives. Participants are invited to document and share "King Tides" images – the highest high tides of today, which will be the average water levels of the future. The pictures help scientists and managers better plan for future flood risks, and give citizens a way to participate directly in the science that will drive decisions in your community



View from Pacifica Pier during a king tide event
Image: Jack Sutton

The Thank You Ocean campaign has proven itself to be a leader in raising awareness about ocean issues and encouraging Californians to take everyday actions that help protect the ocean. Although there are many ocean education resources in California, TYO distinguishes itself by providing authoritative and politically neutral information. Over the next years, TYO staff will continue to strategically grow the campaign and cultivate an ocean-literate California public that will be able to make informed environmental decisions.