

## **FACT SHEET**

# **World Oceans Day**

8 JUNE 2010

### **2010 Theme: Oceans of Life**

By Chris Tarbuck, Gecko volunteer

The concept for World Oceans Day was proposed in 1992 by the Government of Canada at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and it had been unofficially celebrated every year since then. Official designation by the U.N. is a significant step in conserving and protecting our world's ocean.

World Oceans Day provides an opportunity each year to celebrate our world ocean and our personal connection to the sea. The Ocean Project, working closely with the World Ocean Network each year, helps to coordinate events and activities with aquariums, zoos, museums, conservation organizations, universities, schools, businesses.

As of 2009 "World Oceans Day" has been officially declared by the United Nations as June 8<sup>th</sup> each year.

The world's ocean:

- Generates most of the oxygen we breathe
- Helps feed us
- Regulates our climate
- Cleans the water we drink
- Offers us a pharmacopoeia of potential medicines
- Provides limitless inspiration!
- Are a biological treasure-house filled with an amazing diversity of life

Yet for too long, human society has taken the world's ocean for granted. Human activities are taking a terrible toll on the world's oceans and seas. Vulnerable marine ecosystems, such as corals, and important fisheries are being damaged by over-exploitation, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, destructive fishing practices, invasive alien species and marine pollution, especially from land-based sources, increased sea temperatures, sea-level rise and ocean acidification caused by climate change pose a further threat to marine life, coastal and island communities and national economies.

An Australian Oceans Policy (March 1998) has been developed to address issues of ecologically sustainable marine resource management and to assist Australia in exercising sovereign rights and responsibilities over the recently declared Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Advisory Group firstly examined principles for the ecologically sustainable use of Australia's oceans, and then discussed approaches to possible new institutional arrangements.

Finally the Advisory Group examined a wide range of issues relevant to development of Australia's Oceans Policy and made a number of recommendations. These include: conservation of marine biological diversity; land-sourced pollution; fisheries; shipping; petroleum and minerals; marine tourism; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' responsibilities and interests; skills development, community participation, marine scientific research, information and education; and surveillance and enforcement.

Gecko is involved in protecting Earth's oceans and its inhabitants in a number of ways. Gecko Ed provides an education program called Catchment to Coast to all schools. Gecko Earth Journeys provides information rambles in the Currumbin Estuary raising awareness of the importance of estuarine environments to the oceans.

Also, Gecko is actively involved in Seagrass Watch on the Gold Coast monitoring the health of seagrasses essential as nurseries to aquatic life.

Gecko Campaigns makes many submissions to all levels of government about marine matters including the protection of Moreton Bay, the cessation of whaling by Japanese whalers, the need for national legislation to protect the oceans surrounding Australia.

Gecko has coordinated Clean Up Australia Day activities for the past 10 years on the Gold Coast where the focus is on cleaning rubbish from our rivers and beaches.

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