At a time where the ocean needs us more than ever, I am so proud that MMF continues to be a shining beacon for marine conservation. With ground-breaking research to share and a growing network of Ocean Ambassadors around the world, we are working hard to save Our Ocean, Our Future.

As we pause to reflect on our accomplishments of 2017, I feel so proud of how far we have come and how hard we are working towards our vision of a world where marine life and humans thrive together.

This year was a huge year for our scientists. Together we contributed to almost a dozen different scientific studies published on manta rays, whale sharks and sea turtles. Conducting and sharing this research is a vital part of what we do. The more we know, the more chance we have of protecting the future of our ocean.

One of our students matriculated with a PhD for her stellar efforts researching a population of manta rays in Ecuador. She is now publishing some of the first and only papers on the feeding ecology of the giant manta – one of the most elusive animals in the ocean.

We made steady progress toward the description of a third species of manta ray and introduced our preliminary findings at the world’s most prominent elasmobranch conference in the US.

Another highlight was when our collaborative Galapagos Whale Shark Project featured prominently on BBC’s iconic Blue Planet 2 series. The series also focused much-needed public attention on plastic pollution, an issue our team in Indonesia continues to investigate, with their world-first Microplastics and Megafauna project.

Read on to learn more about these projects and other memorable moments for 2017, all made possible by our dedicated teams, volunteers and supporters around the world.

My heartfelt thanks to you all.

Dr. Andrea Marshall
Co-founder and Principal Scientist
Marine Megafauna Foundation
8 TOP TIPS for reducing your environmental footprint

1. carry a reusable water bottle
2. recycle waste and compost food scraps
3. purchase clothing made from natural fibres
4. avoid products containing harmful microbeads
5. participate in a beach or river clean up
6. say no to disposable straws, cutlery and plastic bags
7. slow down and dine in
8. spread the word

The important thing is that we all do something, no matter how small.
Q&A WITH CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

JOSH AXFORD

MMF has made impressive progress since we spoke to Josh for last year’s annual report – from the launch of a new website to an exciting new Research Fellowship program, there are so many good news stories to share!

Looking back over the past year what are three highlights that stick in your mind?
The World Oceans Day celebration in Mozambique is a huge highlight. The community in Tofo, where our flagship conservation program ‘Sustainable Seas’ has been running, saw impressive gains in 2017, with the first community-managed reef closure taking place. World Oceans Day was a massive celebration of the ocean and the footage of the provincial Governor laying a reef in the breaking waves was very moving.

When I joined MMF in 2015, I felt our website needed updating to reflect our brand and vision. Launching the new website in 2017 was the result of a huge amount of hard work from an amazing team. It is really great to see the new website running smoothly and communicating the impact the organization is having so well.

Recruiting and welcoming our new Country Manager in Mozambique, Mariana Coelho, was an exciting moment for the organization. The team in Mozambique has gone from strength to strength and we now have a management structure there that I am really happy with.

What has been the most exciting moment for MMF and why?
Launching our Research Fellowship program has been such an inspiring experience. The program offers promising Mozambican postgraduates training, one-to-one guidance and mentorship from renowned scientific advisors and leading international universities. We are hoping the Fellows will then go on to become renowned marine scientists in their own right.

What progress did MMF make towards achieving its vision (of a world where marine life and humans thrive together)?
In 2017 we made huge progress in our areas of focus in Indonesia and Mozambique by inspiring the next generation and working with coastal communities to achieve our conservation aims. We also deepened our understanding of the endangered species in those areas and designed our conservation solutions to help save them from extinction. There is still so much work to be done though, and the mountain of effort needed looms large. I really hope that in 2018 we can form partnerships that will allow us to achieve even more impact.

What are the main threats facing our ocean today and in the future?
A lot of people have been talking about plastic in the ocean this year and it is great to see this issue being taken seriously. Plastic is a threat but it is not the only threat and it’s not the biggest one either. We need to go beyond plastic and start talking about overfishing, ocean warming and acidification. These are three horsemen of the apocalypse when it comes to the ocean and we need to start addressing them now before it is too late.

Solving the ocean is a global problem which requires a global solution. My concern is that the rise of nationalism is not helping us. I really hope that global entities with an interest in a stable environment and therefore a stable economy take an active interest in solving this global problem.

What initiatives is MMF using to engage its supporters?
We have launched a membership program to encourage our supporters to take an active interest in saving the ocean. If we can act together we stand a much better chance of making a global difference.

This year we have also been piloting MMF expeditions around the world. We are keen to launch this officially in 2018 so that we can host our supporters in some of the most amazing locations in the world. For me this is a huge step forward, I really want to go beyond philanthropy and expecting handouts, I want to make supporting MMF a two way interaction where our supporters really get to experience the amazing work we do first hand.

What’s next for MMF?
What’s next for MMF? In 2018 it’s all about next steps. I am really keen for us to grow the Board with some visionary individuals who are passionate about ocean conservation. We will launch our dive expeditions and host supporters in the field, and we will be scaling up our research, education and conservation efforts around the world.

I want to make supporting MMF a two way interaction where our supporters really get to experience the amazing work we do first hand.

Josh Axford
Chief Executive Officer
MMF was founded in 2009 by internationally renowned marine scientists Andrea Marshall and Simon Pierce, to save the world’s ocean giants from extinction.

Since its inception, MMF has made an impressive impact on the global scientific community. Our ground-breaking research resulted in whale sharks and manta rays being listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, we have featured in some of the world’s biggest media outlets such as CNN, BBC, National Geographic and TED, and we even discovered a new species of manta ray.

But there is still so much work to do.

We need to deepen our research to find out why most megafauna, such as turtles, sharks and rays, are in rapid decline worldwide.

We need to continue to partner with coastal communities in our three priority regions across the globe to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

We need to ‘think global and act local’ to create long-lasting sustainable solutions that protect vulnerable megafauna for the future.

And to achieve this, we need your help.
We conduct ground-breaking research on whale sharks in biodiversity hotspots around the world.

**BEST FEATURE**
Our collaborative Galapagos Whale Shark Project featured prominently on BBC's Blue Planet II

**BIGGEST WIN**
Successful nomination for the whale shark to be given the highest level of protection available in the UN Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

**DEEPEST DIVE**
Ever wondered how whale sharks navigate the big, blue, seemingly featureless open ocean? A study we assisted with showed that the sharks were sporadically making extreme deep dives (to 1,285m). It’s plausible that the sharks could be using these dives to improve their orientation with regards to the Earth’s magnetic field, allowing them to determine where they are – like an inbuilt GPS.

**7**
Scientific papers published. Click here to view the list and read any that tickle your fancy

**>50%**
Our work for the IUCN Red List estimated that more than 50% of the global whale shark population has been killed by people, meaning the sharks are now officially an internationally endangered species (most of this decline has occurred since the 1980s).
RESEARCH
We conduct ground-breaking research on manta rays in biodiversity hotspots around the world

MANTA RAY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

BEST FEATURE
We featured in the first ever documentary on manta rays using virtual reality. Click here for a sneak peak

NEW RESEARCH
We developed new collaborative research programs for manta rays in Florida, USA and Sangalaki, Indonesia. Watch this space!

DEEPEST DINING
We helped publish the first PhD on the feeding ecology of the giant manta ray in Ecuador. The study revealed that the giant manta ray does not dine exclusively on surface zooplankton. Instead, the majority of its dietary intake is of mesopelagic origin (that’s a depth of 200 to 1,000 meters)

SEA HERO OF THE YEAR
Andrea Marshall was honoured with the Sea Hero of the Year award by Scuba Diving Magazine

I like to dive to depths of 200 to 1,000 metres while feeding!

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EDUCATE

We work with young people to inspire future generations of Ocean Guardians

EDUCATION TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

710 CHILDREN
We taught 710 children how to swim and be safe in the sea

3 LIVES SAVED
Our swimming and water safety program saved at least 3 children from drowning in 2017*

6 SCHOOLS
Across Inhambane Province have adopted our curriculum

4 YEARS
We are now into our fourth year of teaching the 20-week curriculum in primary schools across Inhambane Province, Mozambique

3 CHILDREN
We taught 310 children how to swim and be safe in the sea

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3 LIVES SAVED
Our swimming and water safety program saved at least 3 children from drowning in 2017*

at an overall cost of
US $1,883
per life saved
(*see notes on inside front cover for more information)

"I really loved the swimming lessons, because it changed my life from the day I started. First I was afraid of the water and now I really enjoy it. I feel so much more comfortable and safe in and around the water than before. I feel like a little happy fish in the water."
Géricia Manuel, age 12, Pambhane School, Mozambique

Want to learn more about our education program? Click here to follow us on Facebook and see updates from the team on the ground in Mozambique
INSPIRE
We aim to inspire audiences around the world to save Our Ocean, Our Future

Our research into the impact of microplastics on marine life is inspiring the next generation to take action against plastic pollution.

Appearing on Mozambique’s national television to raise awareness of MMF’s Sustainable Seas program.

Owen, one of our whale shark ambassadors, with his lemonade stand to raise money for whale sharks.

Andrea Marshall addressing environmental ministers from countries around the Caribbean at a conference in the Dominican Republic.

Ezra Cole Warren Steinberg, dressed as his favourite ocean animal, the manta ray, inspired by Andrea Marshall.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
Click on the images to view and post a comment.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS 2017

REACHED 20,000 FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

BEST POST IN FACEBOOK: 3,469 LIKES

JUST SAY NO TO PLASTIC STRAWS!

PEOPLE REACHED: 170,000

WE RESEARCH
WE LAUNCHED OUR STRATEGIC MANIFESTO

BEST VIDEO ON SOCIAL MEDIA

PEOPLE REACHED: 33,000

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
CONSERVATION TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

180 DAYS

We worked with local fishermen, government representatives and dive centres to secure a six-month reef closure in Tofo, Mozambique – the first ever in the region. Click here to watch our six-month celebration video in virtual reality!

7KM² PROTECTED

The reef closure covered an area of 7km². This meant no fishing or diving – giving fish stocks a chance to replenish and the marine ecosystem time to regenerate.

12 OCEAN AMBASSADORS

We supported 12 local Mozambicans with training to become Ocean Ambassadors, as part of our Sustainable Seas Program – enabling them to enforce and monitor the reef closure.

PROTECT

We engage with governments and decision-makers to devise conservation strategies.

“Before, we did not know how to manage our resources, we knew we had some impact on the ocean, but we did not know how to control it. We now have the information we need to be more sustainable and manage it ourselves. This is the information that I want to teach to my children, family, neighbors and friends.”

Papa Manuel, Local Gillnet Fisherman in Tofo, and participant in our Sustainable Seas Program.

US $75.61 per km² per week

this was achieved for a cost of
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

REVENUE
How you helped us

- Institutional grants $42,091 | 12.8%
- Corporate donations $7,770 | 2.13%
- Grants from governmental bodies $77,440 | 23.48%
- Private contributions $201,330 | 61.28%

Total: $328,631

EXPENDITURE
For every dollar raised

- Governance, management and overheads $93,146 | 21.99%
- Fundraising and communications $20,299 | 4.73%
- Research, education and conservation activities $310,450 | 73.29%

Total: $423,895
Thank you from the bottom of the ocean

With your generous help and support, we were able to take significant steps towards achieving our vision of a world where marine life and humans thrive together. Our work would simply not be possible without you.

A big thank you to our volunteers


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Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to climate change.

We are working to protect and preserve healthy ecosystems. This is the best way to reverse the decline of threatened species in the face of mounting pressures from unsustainable fishing and climate change.