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## New Year's resolutions for ocean planning and management: Practitioners offer their suggestions for 2015

Each annum as the Earth begins another lap around the Sun, many people use the new year as an opportunity to set resolutions. These commitments - made to meet a goal or reform a habit in the coming year - typically pertain just to the people making them. However, for this issue of MEAM, we invited ocean planners and managers to apply resolutions to their field in general for 2015.

As anyone who has set a personal New Year's resolution can attest, it is not always easy to stick to the plan. With this in mind, we asked for resolutions that could be integrated in practitioners' daily routines and would thus, in theory at least, be more achievable. We phrased our question as follows:

"If you could suggest one simple thing that ocean managers - or planners, or conservationists, or industry - do for 5-10 minutes each day in 2015, what would it be?"

The responses of ten practitioners are below.

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### Consider how to engage the ocean business community

**Paul Holthus**, [paul.holthus@oceancouncil.org](mailto:paul.holthus@oceancouncil.org)

Founding CEO and President of the World Ocean Council, an industry leadership alliance on corporate ocean responsibility ([www.oceancouncil.org](http://www.oceancouncil.org))

"I would suggest that ocean managers, planners, and conservationists consider how to address the need and opportunity to engage the ocean business community - specifically to:

- Realize that those who undertake economic activities to provide us all with ocean-based goods and services (energy, protein, transport, etc.) in response to society's needs are essential allies in maintaining ocean health and productivity.
  - Recognize that there are good people in responsible companies who also care about the ocean for this generation and those to come.
  - Work to proactively engage members of the ocean business community to develop dialogue, trust, understanding and constructive relationships in defining and addressing shared ocean sustainability challenges.
  - Identify the science, data and information needs that ocean stakeholders (government, environment community, industry, science community) can provide as the basis for collaboratively and objectively identifying problems, risks and solutions."
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### Make time to think, including about impacts of your actions

**Meryl Williams**, [meryljwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:meryljwilliams@gmail.com)

Director of AsiaPacific-FishWatch, which delivers essential information on fish harvested or farmed for food in Asia-Pacific ([asiapacfish.org](http://asiapacfish.org))

"Think: 'Let your mind go, let yourself be free.' For 5-10 minutes a day, ocean managers need to trade the restless seas of their daily work for the quiet waters of still reflection. Today's ocean managers are constantly in motion, propelled by urgent conflicts, opportunities, responsibilities and uncertainty. To reach quiet reflection, a necessary measure is to block the daily barrage of electronic and physical information and contacts that interrupts and distracts thinking. In contemplation, managers can take stock of the waypoints reached and new directions to reach desired destinations. And just as in Aretha Franklin's song, managers need to *think* ([bit.ly/ArethaThink](http://bit.ly/ArethaThink)), deeply, about the positive and negative that their actions and campaigns are trying to do to others. In an interconnected world, the good deeds of nature conservation and the striving after profits and control all affect others - often unintentionally."

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### Think about desirable futures for marine regions

**Charles (Bud) Ehler**, [charles.ehler@mac.com](mailto:charles.ehler@mac.com)

Marine planning consultant to UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in Paris, France; co-author of the *Guide to Marine Spatial Planning* (2009); author of a new *Guide to Evaluating Marine Spatial Plans* (2014)

"As I travel around the world to learn about and evaluate marine planning processes and plans, I'm always surprised about how few actually address the future - that's what planning is all about. We can't change the past, only the future.

"I wish marine planners and managers would think and communicate more about desirable futures for marine regions and how these futures can be achieved rather than focusing only on analyzing current conditions - as too many of our current marine plans and processes do. That would include learning to write SMARTer objectives, inventing alternative spatial scenarios and more forward-looking management plans, and monitoring and evaluating appropriate indicators of the performance of those marine plans. The ocean would be in a better place with more strategic, future-oriented plans and planning that considers where we want to be and how to get there, rather than only analyzing where we are today."

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## Share your experiences with colleagues

**Iлона Porsché** (ilona.porsche@giz.de) and **Christian Neumann** (Christian.Neumann@grida.no)

Iлона Porsché is head of project for Blue Solutions, a global platform to share knowledge for sustainable management and equitable governance of oceans ([bluesolutions.info](http://bluesolutions.info)). Christian Neumann is Blue Solutions coordinator at GRID-Arendal.

"When we have finished fixing up our boat, bike or house, or we've been on a long hike or exciting vacation, we happily share our experiences. We share what worked or didn't work so well. We enjoy sharing with our friends, and we enjoy learning from them - it helps us to do the things we care about better.

"We believe that ocean managers gain experiences in their projects, programs or daily duties that others would love to learn. We suggest that managers spend five minutes every day - or, at the least, a half hour at the end of the week - to reflect upon the key factors that made their recent work successful: the approaches, ideas, or ways to overcome challenges that really worked. And we suggest that they actively share those experiences, be it with a colleague across the room or across the ocean, so we build a learning community, helping each other to manage the things we care about better."

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## Think big

**Ayana Elizabeth Johnson**, [ayana@waittinstitute.org](mailto:ayana@waittinstitute.org)

Executive director of the Waitt Institute ([waittinstitute.org](http://waittinstitute.org)) and coordinator of the Barbuda Blue Halo Initiative ([barbuda.waittinstitute.org](http://barbuda.waittinstitute.org))

"Envision the future and how we can get there. Dream and then plan to make it happen. Remember why people resist change in ocean management, and figure out how to balance the long- and short-term needs of communities. It is so easy to get bogged down in to-do lists, details, and personalities. Keep yourself motivated by thinking big and strategically. And look at those videos of adorable and impressive ocean creatures (trunkfish?! mimic octopus?!) to remember why you fell in love with the ocean in the first place."

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## Take steps to manage and protect the high seas

**Kristina Gjerde**, [kristina.gjerde@eip.com.pl](mailto:kristina.gjerde@eip.com.pl)

High seas policy advisor for the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme

"I would like to give a bit of publicity to the Promise of Sydney [from the 2014 World Parks Congress] and call on my colleagues to support Recommendation 5:

**Recommendation 5** - Take steps to protect and manage biodiversity in the high seas, including the seabed, by developing, adopting and bringing into force an international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and through regional efforts in Antarctica, the Arctic, the Sargasso Sea and elsewhere."

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## Watch the sunset and sunrise

**Wen Bo**, [savechinaseas@163.com](mailto:savechinaseas@163.com)

Policy and Media Advisor, Global Exploration Fund-China of the National Geographic Society, and a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation

"If my office or residence happens to be along the coast, I would watch the sunset every now and then, as well as take photos and put them up on the wall and share via social media. If waking up early enough, I would go to see the sunrise by sea at least once a month. Doing this, I would not be too different from astronauts orbiting around the Earth, who can say, 'I am here, and there are the Earth and the Sun.' The moments of seeing sunrise and sunset are the moments when we can reflect on our planetary dwelling. It helps remind us of the ocean planet and, as conservationists, how vital and unique our efforts have been. It is one of the greatest jobs on Earth to ensure our healthy planet through time and space."

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## Meet with your elected representatives

**Sabine Jessen**, [sabine@cpawsbc.org](mailto:sabine@cpawsbc.org)

National Director, Oceans Program, for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

"Over the years as an ocean advocate in Canada, I have met with many politicians about ocean issues. One of those meetings has stayed with me. It was with a politician from a coastal constituency who had been given some responsibility for ocean issues in Canada. I asked about his familiarity with these issues, and he answered by saying that he had never had a constituent raise ocean issues with him, and as a result had not taken the time to inform himself about them. It seems obvious to say that in order to get traction on ocean issues we need to make them important to politicians, by linking them to their constituency and to their future election. Not only should we be meeting with our elected representatives about our issues, we need to encourage and help others to do the same. Not only will this influence how elected officials think and decide as individuals, but it also creates the political space for key decision makers and Cabinets to make the decisions that are necessary for better ocean management."

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## Remember that ecosystem conservation is the foundation for sustainable management

**Peter Jones**, [p.j.jones@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.jones@ucl.ac.uk)

Senior lecturer in Geography at University College London, and author of *Governing Marine Protected Areas: Resilience Through Diversity* ([www.routledge.com/books/details/9781844076635/](http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781844076635/))

"Remember that the degradation of marine ecosystems must not be what continues to happen while you are busy making other plans. Planners tend to try to deconstruct nature into taxonomies and compartments, to reconstruct nature as an assemblage of ecosystem services, and to plan for the future of these compartments and the services that they deliver in a linear way. Marine conservation thus becomes a sectoral objective, the costs and benefits of which must be traded off against those of other sectoral objectives under different scenarios, as we confidently strive towards an optimal integrated-use model of marine spatial planning.

"However, marine ecosystems are not suited to this way of thinking, due to their particular complexity and unpredictability. Spend a few minutes each day pondering on the mysterious, fascinating and wild nature of marine ecosystems, remembering that their restoration is not a sectoral priority amongst others. Rather, it is the foundation of ecosystem-based marine spatial planning, the only foundation on which a resilient future can be built."

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