

News Release

For Immediate Release: Aug.25, 2009

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Kaisei Releases Initial Findings of North Pacific Gyre Discovery Expedition

Startling Confirmation of Plastic Debris of All Sizes found in the Gyre

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Aug. 25, 2009) - After 22 days of intensive research, testing and collection in the North Pacific Ocean, the tall ship *Kaisei* has completed the discovery portion of its expedition, confirming fears that the presence of plastic debris in the Pacific Ocean is pervasive.

Project Kaisei set off to the August expedition with a three-pronged mission: to develop a sound scientific sampling of the Marine Debris in the North Pacific Gyre, to test and assess various Marine Debris prototype harvesting/reclamation technologies, and to gathering insight on solutions to a possible cleanup in future expeditions. Project Kaisei aims to use scientific data and results for education and public awareness aimed at bringing about real social change to halt the flow of Marine Debris into the world's oceans.

Initial Findings:

The scientific team on board *Kaisei* conducted research in a grid of 17 sampling sites, studying and detailing debris and invasive species and conducting more than 50 surface debris sampling trawls, each one to two hours in length; 15-minute trawls were conducted four times per night during the second phase of the expedition.

While debris was recorded at every stage of the expedition, since day one, a steady increase of debris was recorded in trawl samples as the ship moved deeper into the North Pacific Gyre. Every sample taken within the Gyre contained plastic debris, from ultra-fine to very large.

"More than 30 years ago, on my first trip to the North Pacific Gyre, I found a few glass ball fishing floats, one net and there were, in four days, perhaps two pieces of floating plastic," said Mary T. Crowley, Project Kaisei co-founder & Ocean Voyages Institute executive director. "Returning now with Project Kaisei and researching the marine debris situation shows a startling change in this same area. In 30 minutes one easily can count up to 400 pieces of plastic on the sea's surface."

The Kasei scientific crew also recorded finding a variety of invertebrates living on the debris, including swimming crabs, sea anemones, barnacles, sponges, algae, which may be problematic both for invasive species proliferation and the effect from possible toxins on the debris. Sea life was also noticed in ghost nets (derelict fishing gear) that had perished due to entanglement.

Next Steps:

Upon the ship's return, the materials sampled and collected during the expedition will undergo extensive laboratory testing and scientific analysis on shore. Laboratories will be looking for toxins such as DDT, PCB, BFR and, PAH in addition to conducting other tests. The results of these tests will provide Project Kaisei with many answers to the extent marine debris are impacting the ocean environment and sea life as well as lead us to new questions and the direction of mission's and future research.

Working in collaboration and with support from Project Kaisei, the research vessel New Horizon

operated by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography departed San Diego on Aug. 2, with Project Kaisei co-Founder and Project Director Doug Woodring aboard.

“One thousand miles from shore, with no sign of human life for days, our human "footprint" is now apparent in even one of the most remote places on the planet,” Woodring said. “It was sad to see the amount of small pieces of plastic, continuously, in all of our sample nets within the gyre area, in more than 1,200 miles of sampling. This should be a message to everyone that our consumption patterns, and ways we dispose of products, have failed us for this to have occurred.”

Scripps scientist's research focused on surveying plastic distribution and abundance, collecting samples for analysis on land, and assessing the impacts of debris on marine life. Their initial findings will also be released to the public in the coming months.

Upcoming Project Kaisei Events:

Aug. 25th: Kaisei co-founder and Project Director Doug Woodring is back on land after 3 weeks in the Gyre on the Scripps Oceanography research vessel, the New Horizon, and available for interviews today from 9:00 AM till 6:00 PM

Aug. 31: The SV Kaisei will be returning to San Francisco and sailing under the Golden Gate Bridge at 11:30 a.m.

Sept 1: The SV Kaisei will be holding a 1 p.m. PST press event. The event will feature a presentation on the mission's initial findings followed by a Q&A session, display of marine debris collection, speeches by Jean-Michel Cousteau, the Project Kaisei Co-founders - Mary T Crowley, Doug Woodring and George Orbelian, in addition to members of the Kaisei science and debris capture teams. Present will be representatives of Project Kaisei's various supporters and partner organizations and companies as well as members the scientific community, government agencies and other notables. For location information and to RSVP please contact: Camelia Checeanu (415) 318 4101 or camelia.checeanu@fleishman.com.

To download photos and videos taken during the trip, please visit:

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