When I founded MARE in 2003, I had one specific goal—collect information about the deep ocean, those little known areas beyond SCUBA depths. Our mission was simple: explore and document the world’s oceans in support of their conservation and management. We wanted to show the deep sea to resource managers to enable them to protect it. We wanted to determine if California’s bold marine protected area (MPA) conservation vision was effective.

I am proud that after fifteen years of exploration, discovery, and tracking change over time via thousands of hours at sea and turning it into knowledge, we have proven, unequivocally **YES:**

- Marine Protected Areas are an effective tool for marine conservation, and
- Long-term assessment of targeted areas is meaningful and necessary.

Reflecting on our experiences over the past fifteen years, I have learned a few critical lessons:

First, **no one else is looking at the ocean floor where—and how—we are**. Countless MARE expeditions have visited never-before-seen areas and discovered new habits, habitats and range extensions of marine organisms.

Second, a **picture—or better yet video—speaks a thousand words**. In partnership with other key influencers, our imagery has become a powerful tool for conservation, and brings reality into focus for marine resource managers.

Last, **continued exploration could not be more important**. Only 3% of our world’s oceans have been explored—there is still so much more to learn. Roughly 10% are within MARE’s exploration capabilities, on and around the continental shelf, the area richest in biodiversity and life-sustaining ecosystems.

To effectively manage our oceans, we must have unbiased, creditable information. MARE is grounded by these principles and strives to acquire and share that information with the people who can use it to facilitate change. I am proud to share our milestones and accomplishments in this report, and grateful for the support we have received from our community partners, funders, friends, and family over this time.

Best “fishes”
Dirk Rosen
Milestones & Achievements

1999
The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) required California to evaluate all existing MPAs and design new MPAs that together function as a statewide network.

2003
MARE was established in response to the MLPA’s implementation, and the need for accurate information about the marine landscape below SCUBA depth where much of our ocean’s marine life, particularly food fish reside.

2008
With our newly built technology, BEAGLE ROV, we launched our inaugural expedition to the Santa Barbara Channel Islands to demonstrate the efficacy of our ROV doing MPA assessment work.

2010
MARE expands capacity with new Eureka office to support video processing and data management activities.

2011
MARE Co-Chairs Visual Assessment Tools Workshop examining the capabilities, limitations, operational considerations, and cost of available technologies for visual surveys of seafloor communities.

2012
MARE engaged in our first coral survey in partnership with NOAA. This activity has since been integrated into annual programming.

2016
MARE published its first paper on the long-term monitoring of Channel Islands MPAs. Returning to deep-water sites to evaluate changes since initial baseline studies, we documented a 270% increase in fish populations for 13 harvested species.

2018
MARE launches its “Race to Save Deep Sea Coral” Program, joining forces Marine Conservation Institute (MCI) to document deep sea corals off the California coast. This effort will inform management actions, assisting in the protection of these ancient ocean forests.

Saving Deep Sea Corals
In April 2018, our partners NOAA, Oceana, and the Heirs to our Oceans presented information to Pacific Fisheries Management Council and showcased MARE’s video data about seafloor ecosystems, coral gardens. Citing the power of our imagery, the Council adopted the most precautionary approach by closing most of the coral rich areas to destructive bottom trawling in Southern California and expanding protections off Northern California.

NORTH COAST
Explored 2014 - 2015
Indicative of warming ocean temperatures, we discovered squid and warm water Mola Mola, sunfish, outside of their usual range far north of Eureka.

NORTH CENTRAL COAST
Explored in 2010 - 2012
We discovered range extensions of deep sea Christmas tree coral at the Farallon Islands estimated to be hundreds of years old.

CENTRAL COAST
Explored in 2007 - 2009
MARE explored the deep waters of the central coast including baseline surveys of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. From the whales at the surface to the seafloor thousands of meters deep, all marine life is dependent on healthy fish populations.

CHANNEL ISLANDS
A cornerstone of our Deep Sea Coral Program, the Channel Islands is home to some of the most biodiverse marine species in the world. We have discovered new patches of lophelia, a stony coral species hanging in the balance in our highly acidic, waters and an indicator species that will help us better understand ocean acidification impacts. Also, armed with our baseline data, we were able to document a significant gorgonian (sea fan) die-off in Anacapa Island, contributing to our knowledge about the impacts of our changing ocean.

SOUTH COAST
Explored 2008, 2011 - 2013
We discovered two White Abalone at the brink of extinction (in fact, the first mollusk on the endangered species list). They were taken to Bodega Bay Marine Lab, a world class breeding facility, to repopulate and be placed back to their natural ocean habitat.

* Markings represent locations MARE has visited since 2003
15 Years of Ocean Exploration and Discovery

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**PARTNERS**

Blue Frontier  
California Academy of Sciences  
California Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Channel Islands Marine Research Institute  
California Ocean Protection Council  
California Ocean Science Trust  
California Sea Grant  
California State Coastal Conservancy  
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary  
Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary  
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary  
Heirs to our Oceans  
California State University, Monterey Bay  
Institute for Fisheries Resources  
Marine Conservation Institute  
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute  
Moss Landing Marine Laboratories  
National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)  
NOAA Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program  
Oceana  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Oregon State University  
SeaDoc Society  
The Nature Conservancy  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
U.S. Geological Survey  
University of Alaska

Our goal posts have moved. Our ocean's health remains under threat from multiple sources, many unobserved in 2003, including climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation.

MARE is uniquely positioned to support solutions to these emerging issues. Empowered with over a decade at sea cataloging data, experience, and knowledge, we know that we play a key role in attacking global ocean conservation issues.

The information we gather today guides actions that will shape the world tomorrow.

Our informatics can help address climate change impacts, stabilize fisheries, and protect marine habitats. Our goals through 2020 are to:

- **Go further**, taking aim at the 97% of the ocean left to explore. We will explore and document at least three new regions globally over the next three years.
- **Go deeper**, enriching our vast database and tracking behavior of our marine life due to environmental changes. This requires enhancing our technology to increase our capacity.
- **Go bigger**, bringing information and solutions to more people who can take action, adopting a more active role in awareness, advocacy, and scientific discovery.

**Call of the Sea**

This vision requires more hands on deck. Be an Ocean Explorer!

**Ocean Explorers Fund**

We aim to raise $500,000 by the end of 2020 to make this expansion in breadth and depth of our programs possible. We want to explore more... discover more...and protect more, and this work is not cheap. However, it is far less expensive than ignorance.

The Ocean Explorers Fund will enable us to strive higher than ever before. Learn more about this Fund, and how to be part of MARE's next step in ocean conservation at [www.maregroup.org/oceanexplorers2020](http://www.maregroup.org/oceanexplorers2020)

**Contact Erin O'Toole for more information at erin@maregroup.org**
We greatly appreciate the generosity of the following donors from July 2017 - June 2018:

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- The Dean and Ann Witter Fund for Charitable Giving
- Anonymous

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