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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5 Gyres launches global study on plastic marine pollution

December 26th, 2009 (Santa Monica, CA) Are the world's oceans filling with plastic? Marine scientists seek to answer this question with the 5 Gyres Project, the first global study of plastic marine pollution. A collaboration between **three groups**; The Algalita Marine Research Foundation (AMRF), Livable Legacy, and Pangaea Explorations; 5 Gyres will expand upon AMRF's groundbreaking research on plastic pollution in the North Pacific Gyre, where wind and current patterns circulate untold billions of plastic particles. The 5 Gyres project will sail in early January across the North Atlantic, and again in August across the South Atlantic Gyre, researching plastic.

"Our plastic pollution is literally entering the food chain, getting into the food we eat and potentially exposing us to toxic chemicals" said actor/activist Ed Begley Jr., "we need to change our disposable habits now - we simply can't afford to keep trashing our oceans."

Growing public interest in plastic marine pollution has sparked a surge of related media, "good news but still a long way to go" according to AMRF founder Captain Charles Moore. "This is a global problem – we're seeing evidence of plastic pollution everywhere in the world, and it's getting worse. We need more international awareness, and actions to stop it."

Through two research expeditions across the North and South Atlantic Gyres, and research equipment on loan to volunteer sailors, 5 Gyres will gather international data on plastic pollution, collecting surface samples and foraging fish for evidence of plastic ingestion. Directing the research, funding, and communications for the project, husband-wife team Marcus Eriksen and Anna Cummins will manage both expeditions. Dr. Eriksen, AMRF's Director of Project Development, and Cummins, co-founder of Livable Legacy, Inc., have traveled previously with Captain Moore across the North Pacific Gyre.

"We've now seen how bad things are in the North Pacific gyre, as plastic trash continues to wash off our coasts and out to sea," stated Cummins. "We know

very little however about plastic pollution in the four other large oceanic gyres. This is a chance to go global with the research and with our public communication campaigns.”

The crew will maintain a blog documenting the voyage at **5gyres.org**, including videos and photographs of the research. Also on the 5gyres.org site is an overview of plastic marine pollution – ecosystem impacts, scientific literature, and land-based solutions

The first leg of the North Atlantic expedition will set sail on January 7th from the US Virgin Islands and will cross the Sargasso Sea, an area of relative calm between the West Indies and the Azores. The crew will stop in Bermuda, giving a series of public lectures with local NGOs, meeting with the American Ambassador to Bermuda, and picking up new crewmembers before sailing on to the Azores. The second expedition in August, 2010 will cross the South Atlantic Gyre, from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to Cape Town, South Africa. To date, little research on plastic pollution has been conducted in the Southern Hemisphere.

“Our research goals are to understand the endgame for plastic pollution at sea by sampling the ocean surface, seafloor, and the contents of fish stomachs.”
Said Dr. Marcus Eriksen.

San Francisco based Blue Turtle is the project’s title sponsor, with key additional sponsorship provided by Ecousable, Quiksilver Foundation, Patagonia, Keen Footwear, Surfrider Foundation, and Aquapac.

The crew will follow the two Atlantic gyre voyages with a yearlong public communications project titled “The Last Straw”. Eriksen and Cummins will embark on a 2000-mile North America East Coast cycling/speaking tour to lecture about the Atlantic plastic soup, and will build a boat from a quarter-million plastic straws in Paris, France. The boat, to be called “STRA,” will sail the Seine River and cross the English Channel. “Like the JUNKraft that sailed across the Pacific Ocean on 15,000 plastic bottles,” explained Eriksen, “STRA will also bring attention to the environmental hazards of plastic pollution and begin the important conversation about solutions.”

More information: 5gyres.org

