



MEDIA RELEASE

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Large-screen film, *Ocean Oasis*, impacts conservation policies and education in Baja California, Mexico

San Diego- *Ocean Oasis*, a giant-screen film now showing at theaters around the world, is making a significant impact in the areas of conservation and environmental education in Baja California, Mexico.

Originally developed to educate viewers about the fragile ecosystems and enormous biological diversity of the Baja California peninsula and Sea of Cortés, its stunning visual portrayal of this spectacular region inspired two Mexican presidents and their cabinets to implement new conservation policies protecting this environmentally sensitive area.

Over the past two years *Ocean Oasis* has been screened for President Ernesto Zedillo, President Vicente Fox, and their respective cabinets. Shortly after these screenings the hard work and dedication of many conservation organizations and Mexican officials resulted in the establishment of a marine reserve in the central islands of the Sea of Cortés (home to numerous threatened and endangered species). Furthermore, all Mexican waters, especially the Sea of Cortés, were decreed a whale sanctuary, producing even further protection for these waters. Both presidents credited *Ocean Oasis*' beautiful portrayal of the Sea and its delicate balance of ecosystems as an important tool in furthering public understanding of the need to protect this region's natural resources.

The outstanding conservation achievements began as a collaborative vision between the San Diego Natural History Museum, PRONATURA A.C. (Mexico's oldest and largest non-profit environmental organization), and Summerhays Films. Support for educational outreach components has come from a variety of sources, including the film's international sponsor, Sempra Energy, the Walton Family Foundation, the California Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fundación La Puerta, and Wells Fargo Bank.

Since the film's release more than a dozen binational organizations have joined this partnership, working cooperatively to increase informed environmental stewardship in the greater Baja California peninsula and Sea of Cortés. One of the most notable activities being undertaken is development of the film's educational curriculum for use in Mexican schools. Over the next three years \$750,000 in private donations will be

invested to deliver environmental education to 550 schools throughout both states of Baja California.

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Add Two: *Ocean Oasis* in Baja California

Ocean Oasis as an instructional platform. Recent legislation passed in Baja California Sur mandates the teaching of environmental education to public school students there. This project meets that requirement by teaching children about the biological diversity and ecological importance of their own homeland. Activities include distribution of video copies of the film, complementary curriculum guides with hands-on learning projects for children, and conducting in-depth teacher training on how to effectively implement this innovative curriculum in the classroom.

These activities will benefit more than 12,000 teachers and 720,000 students over the next three years. They will also produce the long-term benefits of fostering environmental stewardship in the region, and factoring the need for conservation of natural resources in the Baja California peninsula in economic development decision-making.

Additional educational outreach that will be conducted includes partnering with small local museums throughout the region to show the video version of the film and teach local residents and tourists about the need to conserve the Sea of Cortés from environmental degradation. In Bahia de Los Angeles, a small fishing village of 750 people, project funding is supporting the addition of a \$40,000 environmental education center at the local natural history museum. This center will use the film and its supporting curriculum to educate children and adults about the nearby mid-rift islands, which are crucial to successful long-term conservation efforts in the Sea of Cortés.

These generous funders recognize that conservation of the biological diversity in the Baja California peninsula is of paramount importance, and that one of the most effective methods of spreading this method is through engaging large-screen films such as *Ocean Oasis*.

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