



BENEATH THE WAVES



2025



IMPACT REPORT



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BENEATH THE WAVES®

MISSION & APPROACH

A large whale, likely a humpback whale, is captured in the middle of breaching the ocean's surface. The whale's dark, sleek body is partially submerged, with its head and part of its back visible above the water. A massive, energetic splash of white water erupts from the point of exit, creating a large, billowing cloud of foam and droplets. The surrounding ocean is a deep, vibrant blue with gentle ripples. The sky above is a pale, clear blue, suggesting a bright, sunny day. The overall scene conveys a sense of power, grace, and the majesty of marine life.

Beneath The Waves is dedicated to promoting ocean health and using science and technology to catalyze ocean policy, with a focus on ocean giants, blue carbon, and the deep-sea.

Our research created the conservation evidence needed to inform broad-scale and region-specific ocean policies, while also providing solutions to new or emerging conservation challenges.

At the core, our mission is simple: to promote health and abundant oceans for future generations. We do this through cutting-edge science with tangible conservation outcomes, and also through storytelling that connects people to the wonders of the ocean and the discoveries our team and others are making. We also do some amazing things with technology and media, but we'll let the work speak for itself as you go deeper with our group.

LETTER FROM THE CEO

As I reflect on 2025, I am struck by how much this year represented both a continuation of our mission and the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Beneath The Waves.

This year marked one of the most significant periods of strategic growth in our organization's history. Globally, our Ocean Giants initiative expanded substantially, advancing research on some of the ocean's most iconic and ecologically important species. This included the start of a new killer whale monitoring effort off Mexico, while further strengthening our shark ecology and conservation portfolio across The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, and the Dutch Caribbean. We also broadened our reach into new regions and ecosystems, catalyzing our first deep-sea exploration efforts in Asia through a major project in Japan that continued to gain momentum throughout the year.

At the same time, we deepened our commitment to discovery-driven science. New research efforts are exploring the microbiome and microbial ecology of ocean sunfish in the United States and basking sharks in Ireland. A particularly meaningful milestone was the launch of the Bahamas Ocean Science Fellowship in partnership with the University of The Bahamas. This initiative reflects our belief that lasting conservation success depends on investing in people and creating pathways for the next generation of ocean leaders. Supporting local capacity, scientific training, and leadership development remains central to our vision for long-term impact.

Our efforts were also strengthened by a growing network of collaborators. New partnerships with Boston University, Tufts University, and the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT are helping us pursue increasingly interdisciplinary approaches to ocean science, connecting marine discovery with advances in genomics, biotechnology, and innovation. These relationships reflect a broader evolution in how we approach conservation challenges: bringing together diverse expertise to generate solutions that are both scientifically groundbreaking and societally relevant.

Importantly, 2025 was also a year of increased impact. The addition of new major philanthropic supporters enabled us to accelerate strategic priorities, while our science continued to inform policy development and strengthen conservation outcomes across multiple regions.

I am immensely proud of our team of scientists, collaborators, donors, board members, and partners. Together, we are turning a new page, expanding our reach while remaining grounded in the values that have defined Beneath The Waves from the beginning: scientific excellence, innovation, collaboration, and a relentless commitment to the ocean. As we look ahead, we remain focused on pushing the boundaries of discovery while ensuring that our science continues to deliver meaningful and lasting impact for the ecosystems and communities we serve.

With gratitude and optimism,



Austin J. Gallagher, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
Beneath The Waves



MEET THE TEAM

CORE STAFF

Austin Gallagher, PhD
Founder & CEO

Shannon Aldridge
Director of Programs and Operations

Rosemary Mann
Director of Strategic Initiatives
and Partnerships

Carlos Duarte, PhD
Director of Research Innovation

Christine Avena, PhD
Associate Director, Science Programs

Kathryn Ayres, PhD
Research Scientist

Rebecca Simon
Director of HR and Finance

Monica Moritsch, PhD
Research Scientist

Jeremy Jenrette
Research Scientist

Brendan Shea, MsC
Research Associate

Tadzio Bervoets, MsC
Regional Expert

Andrew McDougall
Creative Coordinator

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SUPPORT TEAM

Anne Haley

Ayumi Kuramae

Zachary Graff, MsC

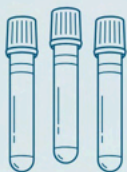
Sara Moffitt

Morgan Pfeiffer

Charlotte Young, MsC

BY THE NUMBERS

MARINE RESEARCH



14

MARINE RESEARCH
EXPEDITIONS



89

DAYS IN THE FIELD
CONDUCTING RESEARCH



5

PEER REVIEWED
PUBLICATIONS

GLOBAL AWARENESS & POLICY



6

MAJOR CONFERENCES
/ WORKSHOPS



841,000

VIEWS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA



5

PRESENTATIONS TO
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

PROGRAM CAPACITY



3

NEW RESEARCH INSTITUTION
COLLABORATIONS



1

NEW FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAM



1

NEW OCEAN GIANT
PROJECT

BAHAMAS OCEAN SCIENCE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Bahamas Ocean Science Fellowship Program officially launched in 2025, born from the partnership between Beneath The Waves and the University of The Bahamas, with support from Builders Vision. The Fellowship Program will enhance human and institutional capacities for excellence in marine science and conservation in The Bahamas. The Fellowship Program trains undergraduate students from University of The Bahamas during a year-long learning commitment of professional development and mentorship, while linking directly to Beneath The Waves' long-term research programs in the Commonwealth.



BUILDERS VISION



FEATURE FOCUS CONTINUED



Beneath The Waves accepted five University of The Bahamas students into the first cohort for the Bahamas Ocean Science Fellowship program for the 2025-2026 year.

Along with the field research expeditions to collect data for their individual projects, the Fellows participated in monthly meetings and corresponding assignments to learn about how to conduct literature reviews, what you need to plan for to make a field research expedition happen, how to write up the Materials and Methods section of a report, and several other topics.

The Fellows also had the opportunity to participate in an internship with the Office of the Prime Minister, obtain course credit with the University of The Bahamas, and participate in a DNA extraction workshop.

While the calendar year came to a close, the Fellows dove deeper into data analysis to begin drawing conclusions to wrap the program at the end of the academic calendar in 2026.



12
SHARKS
TAGGED



2
ACOUSTIC RECEIVERS
INSTALLED & SERVICED



4
DEEP-SEA ISOPODS
SAMPLED



27
SEDIMENT CORES
COLLECTED

PROGRAM FOCUS: OCEAN GIANTS

The Ocean Giants pillar comprised a significant portion of our research profile in 2025, from continued long-term research to new projects and locations. As we continue to dive deeper with animals that we have partnered with for years, we are always surprised at how much more we still have to learn. Through their incredible adaptations, we are gaining new insight into the connectivity of marine ecosystems at a level like never before.

Ocean Giants Highlights

- New ocean giant program: Killer whales off the coast of Mexico
- New research locations: Dominica, Japan, Mexico, and remote islands in the Southern Bahamas
- New technology: acoustic hydrophones



Killer whale project

At the beginning of 2025, Dr. Austin Gallagher joined our colleagues in Mexico to install three hydrophones strategically placed based on killer whale sightings. The objective of the hydrophones is to record killer whale vocalizations, enabling us to assess population presence, habitat use, and behavioral trends over time. Throughout the year the team in Mexico routinely downloaded the recordings, permitting us to begin the analysis.

OCEAN GIANTS CONTINUED



62
SHARKS
WORKED UP



3
NEW
HYDROPHONES



32
ACOUSTIC RECEIVERS
SERVICED



71
SHALLOW BRUVS
DEPLOYMENTS



10
MOLA MOLAS
WORKED UP



EXPEDITION SHARK WITH CHARLIE YOUNG

Charlotte Young (aka Charlie), is a marine biologist, storyteller, and now full-time sailor, who spent a lot of 2024 and most of 2025 sailing around the Atlantic Ocean. After connecting with our team in 2024, it was decided that Charlie would collaborate with Beneath The Waves to conduct threatened species biodiversity surveys in the waters throughout the remote Southern portion of The Bahamas archipelago. Living full-time on a sail boat allows Charlie access to extremely remote locations that many research expeditions cannot execute easily.

THE BAHAMAS

The Beneath The Waves team equipped Charlie and her partner Alexis with all the materials necessary to assemble Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems (BRUVS), and trained them on conducting deployments and analyzing the footage. From there, they began their expedition.



EXPEDITION SHARK CONTINUED



6
WEEKS ON
EXPEDITION

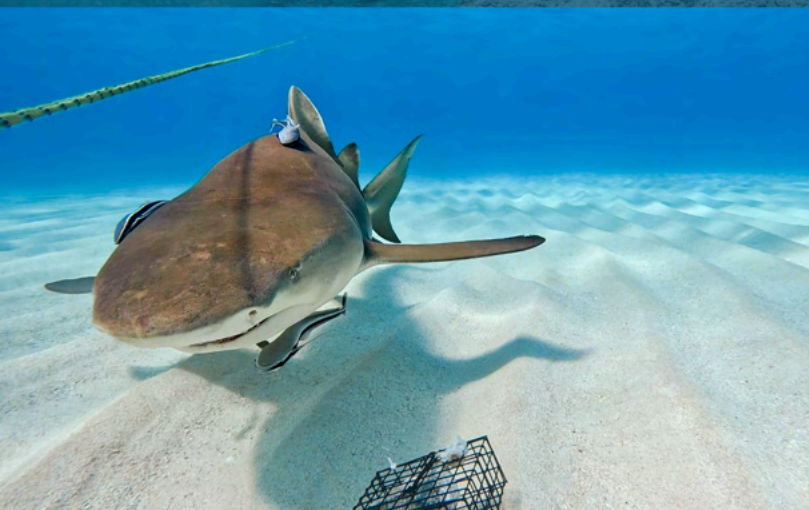


71
BRUVS
DEPLOYMENTS



28
DEPLOYMENT
LOCATIONS

"Being immersed in the remote southern Bahamas, uncovering its secrets and witnessing the lives of its sharks firsthand, was an immense privilege. This expedition became the flagship mission for our vessel and the blueprint for what Ocean Roamer is today: a floating, sail-powered platform for science, exploration and storytelling. What we achieved alongside Beneath The Waves demonstrated not only how much remains unknown about these remote ecosystems, but also the critical importance of expeditions that expand our understanding of the ocean and inspire its protection." - Charlie Young



PERSONNEL SPOTLIGHT: ZACHARY GRAFF

Where does your passion for the ocean come from?

My earliest memories as a child were fishing, boating, and camping with my parents; the waters near our home in Florida were our playground, food source, and sanctuary. From day one, my parents instilled a respect for the environment and the animals within it. As a young adult I felt the pull to focus my career protecting the ocean that I love.

What is a fun fact about you?

I love woodworking! Before I became a marine scientist I was a woodworker at my family's carpentry business. Even today, I enjoy tinkering in the wood shop whenever I get the chance.

What is your favorite memory from working with BTW in 2025?

My favorite memory with BTW in 2025 had to be when we were searching for *Mola molas* off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts in July. One day, our vessel was approached by multiple feeding humpback whales - that would surface and look right at us as we floated past. Their intelligence was very apparent and it was a privilege to witness this.

What are you most looking forward to with BTW in 2026?

In 2026 I am looking forward to expanding our BRUVS program and extending our science deeper than ever before, stay tuned for results!



PARTNER FOCUS: 1% FOR THE PLANET

This year we proudly announced that Beneath The Waves joined 1% For The Planet as an Environmental Partner. By doing so, we joined a global network made up of thousands of businesses and organizations that are committed to driving positive change for our environment.



About 1% For The Planet:

Purpose: To inspire commitment and action so that our planet and future generations thrive.

Mission: To accelerate smart environmental giving and prevent greenwashing.

Impact: We've certified over \$870 million in environmental giving to date.



**FOR THE
PLANET**
— ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNER —

*Giving back to the ocean means giving
back to all of us.*

FEATURE EXPEDITION: JAPAN'S DEEPEST BAY

This year, the team had the immense pleasure of returning to Japan, a location that was actually one of the first official Beneath The Waves expeditions in 2014. With the assistance of Dr. Yuuki Watanabe and his students from the Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI, we were able to plan and execute an extensive field expedition in the waters of Suruga Bay, the deepest bay in Japan.



Just a few hours south of Tokyo is Suruga Bay, where the Beneath The Waves team met Captain Hasegawa and his first mate, and son, Kazu-san. They are generational fisherman who have also hosted many research groups over the year, retaining an incredible knowledge of the local waters.



JAPAN'S DEEPEST BAY CONTINUED

深海調査

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- Biodiversity surveys via deep-sea baited remote underwater video systems (dBRUVS)
- Targeted discovery for rare, elusive sharks species which haven't been documented by science in over 10 years
- Isopod genomics and behavioral experiments
- Kitefin shark movement tracking



58
DEEP-SEA ISOPODS
SAMPLED



9
DBRUVS
DEPLOYMENTS



19
SHARKS
WORKED UP

PROGRAM FOCUS: DEEP-SEA

Our Deep-sea program expanded to two new locations in 2025: Dominica and Japan. By continuing to conduct biodiversity surveys of the deep-sea, we are contributing to worldwide datasets that support propositions to protect the depths of our world oceans from exploitation. Additionally, by better understanding the genetic code and adaptations of deep-sea organisms, we may be able to unlock discoveries that could help facilitate lab based replications to better human health and technology.



18
DBRUVS
DEPLOYMENTS



62
DEEP-SEA ISOPODS
SAMPLED



5
SPERM WHALE
SKIN SAMPLES



PERSONNEL SPOTLIGHT: SARA MOFFITT

Where does your passion for the ocean come from?

The first job I remember wanting, at around the age of eight, was as a marine biologist; growing up on the Cape near Woods Hole certainly sparked a passion for marine life and research that stuck with me through high school and college. Though I pursued a degree in cell biology at Northeastern University and saw myself entering that industry post-grad, I minored in marine sciences to maintain a connection with this passion.

What is a fun fact about you?

I have played the piano for 16 years! I started in 2nd grade, and have kept up with it (as much as I could) through college and beyond.

What is your favorite memory from working with BTW in 2025?

My favorite memory from working with BTW in 2025 was the December trip we took to Nassau; not only was it my first experience tagging and working up sharks, but I also got to meet and work alongside our Fellows at UB. Being so close in age, and coming from different facets of academic background, we were able to learn so much from each other. Additionally, getting into the field and physically seeing where the samples that I process in the lab come from (and how they are collected) gave me a much better informed perspective to interpret and analyze the data that we receive downstream.

What are you most looking forward to with BTW in 2026?

I am most looking forward to progressing more on the papers that we currently have in the pipeline, specifically regarding our *Mola mola* microbiome research. The results thus far have been really remarkable, and I'm very excited to share our findings with the rest of the scientific community!



BEHIND THE LENS WITH DREW MCDOUGALL

Introduction

My name is Drew McDougall and I'm a creative storyteller. Growing up on and in the waters of Florida pulled me into the world of conservation, marine science, and fly fishing. The word "storyteller" to me is an important distinction as I don't like to confine myself to a certain medium and I'm committed to finding the best ways to engage audiences with the captivating stories happening around us in the world of science, conservation, and marine research.

Why did you decide to become a photographer?

I don't think that I really decided to become a photographer (at one point in my life I actually said it was something I wouldn't do for a living). I decided to put myself into the world of marine research, conservation, and the outdoors, and I wanted to help others tell the stories of what they were doing. Turns out that for me, photography, videography, and sometimes writing, are the tools that worked best for achieving these goals.

How would you describe your creative process when working with BTW and other marine conservation organizations?

For me I do my best to first understand the science and procedures. Once I know what's going on it's easier for me to find the spots I want to be in without getting in the way of what's most important — the work itself. My thought process always works in a series trying to best capture the whole story of the scene. From underwater to the lab I'm simply driven by what I think best captures the real moments happening and how to make the scientific process engaging.



BEHIND THE LENS CONTINUED

How important is understanding the scientific process when capturing content in the field?

It's paramount and my entire process revolves around it. I learn everything I can about what research is being done and the methods that are being used. What are the organization's goals and what problem are they looking to solve or explore? Having an background in marine science has been a tool in understanding the scientific language and I think for me, understanding the science and even being able to help with it then allows me a sense of freedom creatively.

What advice would you give to someone who is looking to get into marine photography/videography?

I would say focus on everything else other than photography, at first. Become comfortable in the water. Learn how fish move, boats move, and where you are safe and not safe. If you want to work in conversation, learn about it and become knowledgeable about that world. Invest your curiosity into the ocean and the photography will come in due time.

What is your favorite photo (or project) that you're most proud of, but doesn't get as much attention as it probably deserves?

I would have to say our efforts here in my home town of stopping a cruise ship port from being constructed which would have led to the death of thousands of animals, harm to our bay, and the destruction of a unique estuary. Through my media, marine ecological surveys, and the proper public and political efforts, we successfully safeguarded this area, and have started movements towards fortifying protections.



SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

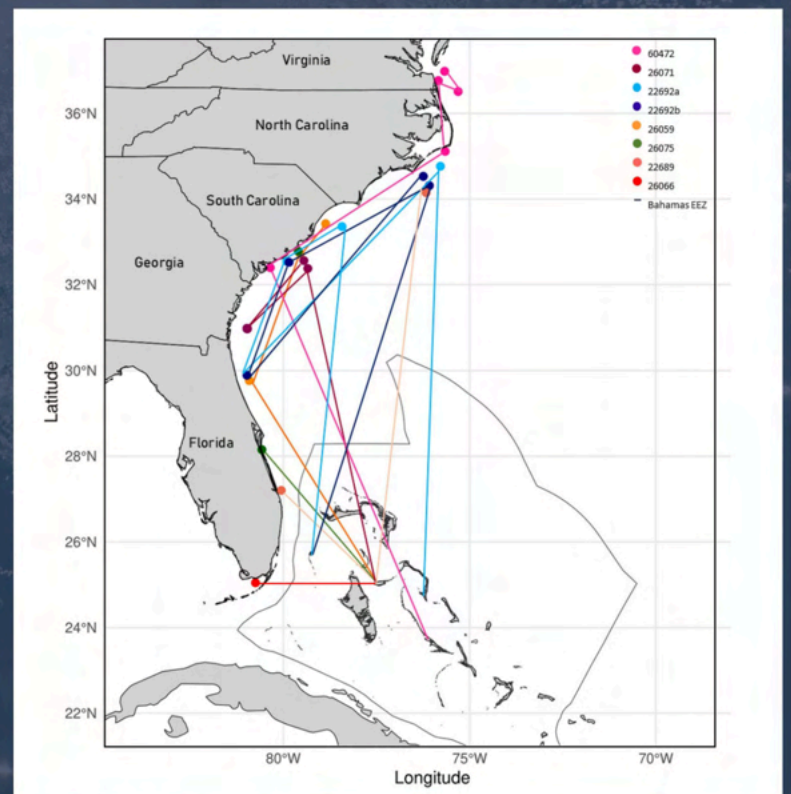
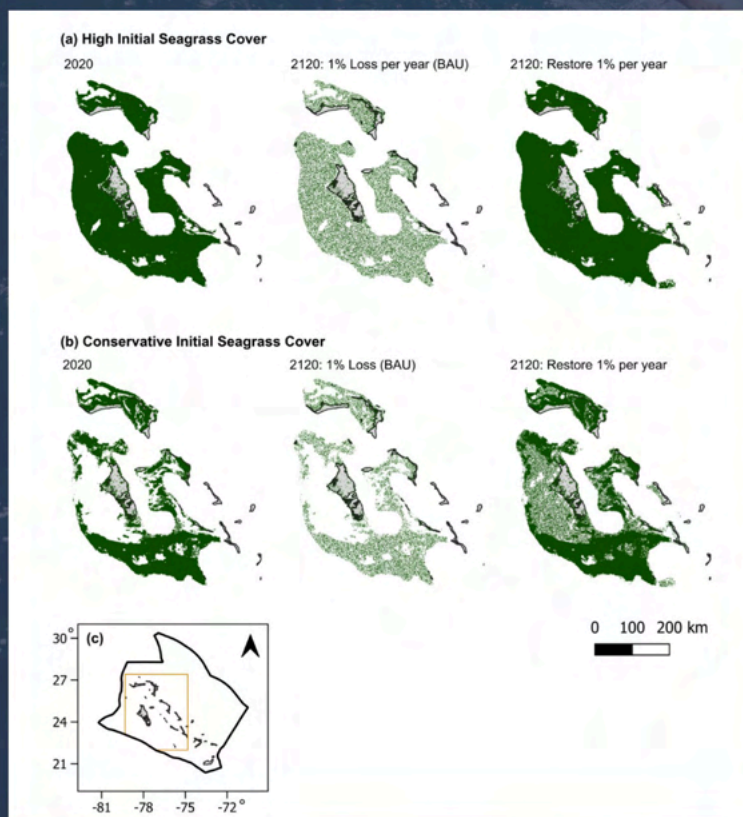
Global tracking of marine megafauna space use reveals how to achieve conservation targets, **Science** DOI: [10.1126/science.adl0239](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adl0239)

Life stage and seasonal habitat use of the porbeagle *Lamna nasus* in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean, **Frontiers** DOI: [10.3389/fmars.2025.1553509](https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2025.1553509)

Ontogenetic shifts in space use and habitat selection of tiger sharks (*Galeocerdo cuvier*) in The Bahamas, **PLoS One** DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0335659](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0335659)

Vulnerability of marine megafauna to global at-sea anthropogenic threats, **Conservation Biology** DOI: [10.1111/cobi.70147](https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.70147)

Carbon dynamics under loss and restoration scenarios in the world's largest seagrass meadow, **Nature** DOI: [10.1038/s41598-025-01993-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-01993-1)



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- The Bahamas Department of Marine Resources
- The Bahamas Department of Environmental Planning and Protection
- Government of the Turks & Caicos Islands, Department of Environment and Coastal Resources
- Cayman Islands Department of Environment
- United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

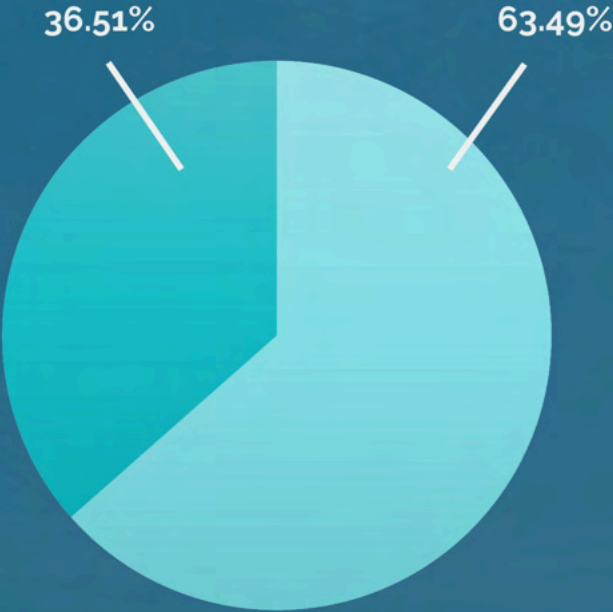
OPERATIONAL PARTNERS

- Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance
- Big Blue Collective
- Caribbean Shark Coalition
- Re:wild
- Senckenberg Ocean Species Alliance (SOSA)
- Oregon State University, Big Shark Lab
- Top Tier Marine Management
- The International SeaKeepers Society



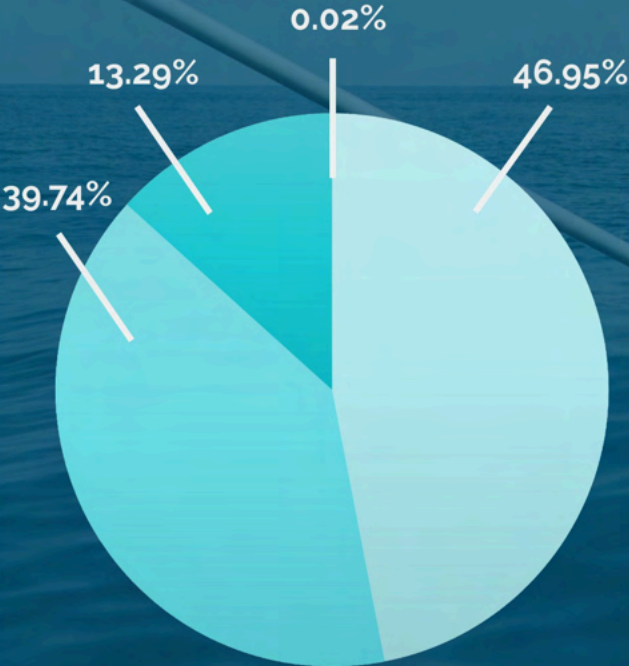
FINANCIALS

REVENUE:



Grants	\$587,000
Donations & Gifts	\$337,562
Total	\$924,562

EXPENSES:



Program Services	\$486,449
General Administration	\$411,787
Professional Services	\$137,725
Charitable Contributions	\$165
Total	\$1,036,126



BENEATH THE WAVES®

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PHOTO CREDITS

Drew McDougall
Michael Penhollow
Mathias Van Asch
Brian Daniels
Shannon Aldridge
Charlotte Young
Zachary Graff
Kelly Kingon

www.beneaththewaves.org





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