



*Securing a future for fisheries and fishing communities in eastern Maine and beyond*



## A Good Time for Inspiration – 2017 Benchley Winners Announced



*Posted by David Helvarg of Blue Frontier in Ocean Views  
January 17, 2017*

They are among the winners of this year's 10th annual Peter Benchley Ocean Awards, also known as The Academy Awards of the Sea. Given the dangers our global ocean faces and a new U.S. President committed to climate denial and offshore drilling, we need to identify the kind of marine leadership that can offer solution-based answers to the threats we now face on our blue marble planet. This year's winners do just that. To date the 81 Benchley Award winners have included five Heads of State, U.S. Senators, marine scientists, journalists, explorers, youth leaders and "Seaweed" citizen activists.

Co-founded by ocean conservation and policy advocate Wendy Benchley and myself, the awards honor Peter Benchley (the author of *Jaws*) who worked for 40 years educating the public on shark and ocean conservation. The awards are now the globally recognized gold-standard for honoring marine conservation leaders across many sectors of society.

This year's winners include:

### **For Excellence in National Stewardship Susi Pudjiastuti, Indonesian Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries**

Susi Pudjiastuti was appointed by the Republic of Indonesia's President Joko Widodo in 2014. Since then she has ordered the blowing up and sinking of more than 200 illegal foreign fishing vessels caught poaching— a strong deterrent to organized crime groups that have invaded and overfished Indonesia's biologically rich waters for years. She has been instrumental in the freeing of slave crews held on many of these vessels, and she's had illegally trapped whale sharks freed. Her work has providing important economic benefits and sustained livelihoods for tens of thousands of Indonesian fishermen, their families and their communities.

## **2017 Excellence in Science**

### **Dr. Ben Halpern & Dr. Ussif Rashid Sumalia.**

Dr. Halpern is a Professor of Marine Ecology at UC Santa Barbara using big data to help inform and facilitate effective ocean conservation and resource management including the potential for marine reserves to improve ocean conditions.

Dr. Sumaila is Professor and Director of Fisheries Economics Research at the University of British Columbia focusing on how economics, through integration with ecology and other disciplines, can be used to help ensure ocean resources are sustainably managed. His work includes estimating the multiple benefits to be gained from setting up marine reserves.

## **2017 Excellence in Policy**

### **US Senators Brian Schatz & Richard Blumenthal**

Senator Schatz grew up in Hawai'i where he developed a passion for the ocean. In June 2016, he sent a proposal to President Barak Obama to expand Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument ten years after President George W. Bush signed the executive order establishing it. That expansion made it the largest permanent conservation area in the world. He has also helped develop and pass legislation to address toxic algae and dead zones, pirate fishing, coral reef conservation and seafood fraud.

Senator Blumenthal is a lifelong law enforcement leader and strong proponent for environmental stewardship. He was an early and outspoken voice in calling for the designation of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts area as a marine national monument, the first in the Atlantic. On September 15, 2016, President Obama designated the Monument, which protects 4,913 square miles of ocean, phases out commercial fishing, and prohibits other extractive activities such as mining and drilling. Senator Blumenthal has also played an important role in addressing the issue of climate change and its impact on our public seas.

## **2017 Excellence in Media**

### **One World One Ocean**

The One World One Ocean media campaign was launched in 2011 to bring focus and advocacy on behalf of the ocean through IMAX films like 'Humpback Whales' that MacGillivray Freeman Films has been making for over 40 years. One World One Ocean is committed to the long-term release of its ocean films and outreach programming across every platform including innovative social media and infographics. With an overarching goal of continually reminding the public that healthy oceans are essential for life on earth, their campaign goals focus on three key issues: getting people to eat sustainable seafood, reducing plastic pollution, and expanding ocean protected areas for wildlife, habitat and the future.

## **2017 Excellence in Solutions**

### **Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Planning Team & The Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Regional Planning Bodies**

To fully utilize and protect the ocean requires good planning which is why this year's Solutions Award is going to three model programs that engage a wide range of ocean stakeholders including state, federal and tribal managers to better understand, map and make use of our public seas for all citizens. They are: The ocean SAMP team in Rhode Island and two ocean policy planning bodies in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic that were established under the U.S. National Ocean Policy of 2010. Each of these three groups has produced landmark ocean plans that will benefit all users while protecting the ocean's ecosystem.

**2017 Christopher Benchley Youth Award  
Carter and Olivia Ries**

At the very young age of 7 and 8, this Georgia based brother and sister were motivated to help protect endangered species. The sight of sea turtles covered in oil and suffering due to the BP spill drove them to tears and action—collecting and delivering much needed supplies to animal cleaning stations down in the Gulf. It was during this time that they learned about the devastating impacts of plastic on turtles and ocean wildlife. This inspired them to create a plastic pollution curriculum that is has been adopted nationwide and overseas. They also formed the non-profit 'One More Generation,' (OMG) group with help from their dad to protect endangered species for the next generation of children. Now 14 and 16, Carter and Olivia have spent more than half their lives committed to raising awareness and making big waves of change including a new program to reduce use of plastic straws in restaurants across the U.S.

**2017 Hero of the Seas  
Robin Alden / The Penobscot East Resource Center**

Robin Alden is the Founding Executive Director of the Penobscot East Resource Center (PERC), based in Stonington Maine. It works through education, collaborative research and policy to bring together the knowledge and expertise of fishermen, scientists, and policy makers in the management of Maine's coastal fisheries focusing on the 150 miles of coast from the Penobscot Estuary to Canada's Maritime Provinces. Robin credits the urgent threat of climate change as a motivator for spurring government regulators to adopt more collaborative approaches that include local fisherman and their unique knowledge in making tough, informed decisions. A former fisheries journalist and state commissioner, Robin is also a recipient of the White House Champion of Change award for Sustainable Fisheries.

**Honored for Sustained Ocean Achievement  
Joshua S. Reichert and the Pew Charitable Trusts' Ocean Group**

For almost three decades, Dr. Reichert, and the Oceans Group of the Pew Charitable Trusts, have focused their attention on pushing decision-makers to protect the world's ocean. They've worked on overfishing, enforcement systems needed to deter illegal fishing and replacement of non-sustainable gear such as bottom trawls and longlines that results in the bycatch of non-targeted marine wildlife. In addition, Dr. Reichert has provided key leadership in a host of other environmental initiatives including the creation of the world's largest network of marine parks.

An additional Benchley Honor may be announced closer to the awards dinner and ceremony at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History and Sant Ocean Hall on Thursday May 11 in Washington D.C. This will follow the 6th biennial Blue Vision Summit May 9-11. For more on the Awards go to:

<http://peterbenchleyoceanawards.org>

For more on the Summit go to: <http://bluefront.org/bvs/>

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