

Marine Debris Foundation
Winter Board Meeting Notes
February 8th, 2023
Meeting Minutes

In attendance (listed alphabetically by first name)

- **Alexandra Refosco**, Marine Debris Foundation Secretary, The Ocean Foundation
- **Erica Nuñez**, Plastics Program Officer, The Ocean Foundation (Board Member)
- **Carrie Thompson**, (Board Member)
- **Ginny Eckert**, Marine Debris Foundation Chair, Director of Alaska Sea Grant (Board Member)
- **Jessica Seevers**, The Ocean Foundation, Meeting Facilitator
- **Jenna Jambeck**, Professor, University of Georgia (Board Member)
- **Julianne Curry**, Fisherman, Icicle Seafoods, (Board Member)
- **Katie Conlon**, National Geographic Explorer (Board Member)
- **Letise Lefeir**, Senior Advisor, NOAA
- **Melvin Alvarez**, Grants Program Associate, 11th Hour Racing (Board Member)
- **Miki Tomita**, Founder, Education Incubator (Board Member)
- **Nancy Wallace**, Director of the Marine Debris Program, NOAA
- **Neil Tangri**, Science and Policy Director, GAIA (Board Member)
- **Nick Mallos**, Vice President of Conservation, Ocean Conservancy (Board Member)
- **Rick Spinrad**, Undersecretary of Commerce for Ocean and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator, Department of Commerce (Board Member)
- **Scott Cassel**, CEO of the Product Stewardship Institute (Board Member)
- **Sherry Lippiatt**, Commercial Lead, Scoot Science (Board Member)
- **Lt. Shelley Devereaux**, Program Coordination Officer, NOAA National Ocean Service
- **Ya'el Said-Green**, Communications and Policy Specialists, NOAA Marine Debris Program

1. Welcome and Agenda (open)
 - 1.1. The meeting began at 8:48 a.m. with an introduction by Ginny Eckert who asked the board to play a short icebreaker game involving sharing a hobby.
 - 1.2. No changes to the agenda were made from the version sent out in the meeting agenda.
 - 1.3. The board then reviewed the meeting minutes from the Fall 2022 Board Meeting.
 - 1.3.1. A motion to approve the meeting minutes was put forth by Ginny. Rick seconded the motion. All board members voiced their agreement.
 - 1.3.2. The meeting minutes were approved and will be shared on the Marine Debris Foundation website following this meeting.

2. Nancy Wallace of NOAA's Marine Debris Foundation then presented to the board (open)
 - 2.1. Nancy began her presentation by discussing how the Marine Debris Foundation became part of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act (SOS 2.0). She noted that the federal government can do great things, but more can be done to supplement this work and expand beyond the federal government's purview.
 - 2.2. Nancy noted that in August 2022, she recorded a webinar for the board. This recording covers the current activities of the federal government regarding marine debris and is available in the Shared Drive, [here](#).
 - 2.3. Nancy then discussed the SOS 2.0 Amendments Act
 - 2.3.1. The Marine Debris Act created the Marine Debris Program under NOAA and "Established the NOAA Marine Debris Program to: "identify, determine sources of, assess, prevent, reduce, and remove marine debris and address the adverse impacts of marine debris on the economy of the United States, the marine environment, and navigation safety.""
 - 2.3.2. The Marine Debris Program team has roughly 30 people, which has expanded from an original 10 people when Nancy started in 2010.
 - 2.3.3. As a part of NOAA, a federal agency, they have restrictions. These restrictions are justified because the office is funded by taxpayers and they need to be deliberate and careful with their funding. However, there are - of course - gaps and they can't fund all the requests they receive.
 - 2.3.4. For example, the Marine Debris Program put out an RFP for roughly \$60 million in funding, but they received \$300 million in funding requests. They are not even close to meeting the need.
 - 2.3.5. Gaps and Opportunities for the foundation
 - 2.3.5.1. There is not much the Marine Debris Program can do upstream. She encourages the board to think about improved waste management, material design, and improved recycling, even when that is not the only solution.

- 2.3.5.2. Consider if there is a start-up that could do wonderful work, but is risky and not something that the federal government could support.
- 2.3.5.3. The Marine Debris Program is non-regulatory. They can and do work with industry but can't influence industry to reduce plastics.
- 2.3.5.4. She has been seeing more conversations lately that more regulations and standards would actually allow industry to work on alternatives and other initiatives and still be competitive.
- 2.3.5.5. Also, advocacy in congress and at the state level to fill in funding gaps.
- 2.3.5.6. Also, consider international negotiations. As most are aware the US. government has a position in international agreements and is working on international treaties, but foundations like the MDF can have other positions. She really believes that stakeholders will really drive the work and the MDF is in a better position to work with all stakeholders.
- 2.3.5.7. Additionally, the MDF can augment existing work, similar to the National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation. For example, the NMSF can give small grants of roughly \$3,000 to \$6,000 for projects that need just a little money to do really good work. The Marine Debris Program doesn't have small grant programs because applying for a federal grant can be very challenging and often it is not worth it to go through the full federal grant process for such small amounts and these groups may not have the time or manpower for very small amounts.
- 2.3.5.8. Additionally, longer-term marine debris research and support for monitoring and detection is an option, too.
- 2.3.5.9. And of course, there is the Genius Prize. The Genius Prize was established in the SOS 2.0 Act. This is something the Senators who advocated for the bill felt very strongly about so likely to get support. The Secretary of Commerce can enter into an agreement with the MDF and can provide some funding to help get started. The MDF can also fundraise to add to that dollar amount.
- 2.3.6. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
 - 2.3.6.1. NOAA would like to enter into an MOA with the MDF similar to the NMSF because our work can be very collaborative. Currently, we have a draft MOA within the Marine Debris Program and are working through the levels of NOAA. Nancy and her team will share the draft once the legal team deems it is ready. This would be an unfunded but formal agreement to set clear partnership

expectations, aid in long-term partnerships, etc., especially given the clear language in the SOS 2.0 Act.

- 2.3.7. SOS 2.0 Amendment Act - there were a few technical areas that could be improved and Marine Debris Program has worked with Senator Sullivan's office, it passed the Senate but did not pass the House.
 - 2.3.7.1. The Amendment includes mostly admin corrections i.e. COO changed to CEO, USAID was left off in some areas, and adding items regarding best practices when engaging with indigenous groups.
 - 2.3.7.2. The SOS 2.0 Act would allow current funds to pay for salaries for up to 18 months, and the new amendment would give NOAA a little more flexibility for continued salary support.
 - 2.3.7.3. The law says that federal funds need to be matching dollars and cannot be used for administrative, and that needs to change, but that was not included in the amendment.
- 2.4. Questions - noted that upstream and only voluntary, why is that?
 - 2.4.1. The way to think about the Marine Debris Program is that we can work upstream but it's through education and outreach and puts the responsibility on the individual. But when I talk about working upstream with the MDF there is a lot more that can be done. There are policies such as recycled content that would be outside of NOAAs authority but could help the problem of marine debris.
 - 2.4.2. Going a little further, the U.S. EPA does more regarding labeling standards, national standards, etc.
 - 2.4.2.1. EPA will release a new recycling strategy, but that policy is not in place. You can make recommendations to them.
 - 2.4.2.2. Rick noted that NOAA would love to see the MDF working through the Marine Debris Program and even interagency work. For example, they work on interagency dialogue through the Interagency Marine Debris Coordinating Committee which includes the National Science Foundation, the Navy, and other agencies' technical experts that are working on the issue. NOAA chairs the interagency committee from these various groups that sit on that body. This group is more staff level, but a new Interagency Policy Committee is at a little bit of a higher level and will need to think about how can we help make connections to the right groups.
- 2.5. Question - This is a very interesting strategy, my question is who convenes the strategy, are we in a position to do that or is that structure all in place? Also, I will add that with the international treaty now is a good time to be very aggressive with domestic action.

- 2.5.1. Nancy replies that it will be up to the board, but the benefit is the MDF can do things that NOAA cannot, i.e. NOAA can't make recommendations to the EPA, but the MDF could.
- 2.6. Question - could engagement with the IMDCC be part of the MOA with NOAA?
 - 2.6.1. Nancy replied that they could add something about working with the interagency coordinating committee as long as it is kept more generic. Yes, this is something that the MOA could certainly do.
 - 2.6.2. Letise added the CEQ has a new Interagency Policy Committee on Plastic Pollution and the Whitehouse Climate policy group is trying to better tie plastics to climate and EJ work. We need to ask if we develop an interagency MOA. Further, the national academies issued a report recently saying we need a national strategy. There is also a round table discussion. This is very new, with only one meeting so far, but that is a way to interact directly with how the U.S. might lead this work regarding marine debris.
- 2.7. Melvin asked if it was a dollar-by-dollar match. Technically the MD Act it is a one-for-one, but may need to ask the lawyers to look at
- 2.8. Neil noticed in the board packet there are notes that NOAA Marine Debris Program funding levels have dropped, and I am a little concerned about seeing the foundations as a replacement. Need to be careful about augmenting, and make sure we are complementary rather than competing. There is \$10 million in the SOS 2.0 Act from appropriations that had not been allocated.
- 2.9. Scott asked if taxpayer's money should be cleaning up other people's debris?
- 2.10. Nancy also shared the Marine Debris Calendars that were created from an art calendar contest for kids organized by the Marine Debris Program.
- 2.11. Melvin brought up a point about international communication, to what extent do you see the MDF working internationally?
 - 2.11.1. There is language in the law that says if you work internationally you need to alert the Department of State. So working internationally is possible.
- 2.12. Rick noted there are some very good injection points and the board needs to think about the most effective injection points.
- 2.13. Ginny asked who decides how much Marine Debris Program receives is that internal or congressional?
 - 2.13.1. Nancy responded that it's a dialogue that happens every year. It boils down to admin and ultimately it is congress who makes the final decision.
- 2.14. Discussion then focused on what the board wanted to work on and how can they find their niche.
- 2.15. While Nancy's Marine Debris Program is a focal point there are a number of other groups and people working on marine debris.

- 2.16. Melvin asked since there will only be one staff member at the MDF in the beginning, to what extent will NOAA be able to provide support at the early stages of the foundation as it progresses?
 - 2.16.1. A lot, hopefully! There are a lot of groups working on this and how it will play out will ultimately be decided by the board and the executive director. However, support from NOAA should never be an issue as long as it always happens within the law. And there are a number of models like the NMSF to help. Other agreements are not cookie-cutter, but they can act as guides.
 - 2.16.2. Ginny noted this is something she has thought about a lot. Rick is here to make the connection and NOAA is here to help make it all work.
 - 2.16.3. Neil added that it is also important - which Nancy began talking about - to think about where we can make an impact.
 - 2.16.4. Rick said he is also working with the ethics committee at NOAA to balance his role on the board. He wants to make sure there is nothing even inadvertently that could be biased. If anyone has any questions, we are happy to discuss them.
- 2.17. Erica added one thing that stood out is the advocacy role. We have a lot of groups that are working as grassroots organizations, and MDF can be an advocate. And of course the upstream as well.

3. Executive Committee (closed)

4. Mission, Vision, and Values (closed)

5. Lunch Break

6. Fundraising Committee (closed)

7. Executive Search Committee (closed)

8. 2:30 - Return to the Mission, Vision, and Values (closed)

8.1. Mission - it is agreed that no additional comments

8.1.1. Ginny puts forth the motion to finalize the Mission

8.1.2. Neil seconds the motion

8.1.3. No discussion and no objection

8.1.4. The motion passes and is now confirmed, the Mission Statement has been adopted

8.2. Vision - 2:32 p.m.

8.2.1. Ginny put forth a motion to accept the Vision Statement

- 8.2.2. Carrie seconds and Jenna seconds the motion
 - 8.2.3. No discussion and no objection
 - 8.2.4. The motion passes and is now confirmed, the Vision Statement has been adopted
- 8.3. Discussion of the Values continues

- 9. Priority and Focus - What is the MDF Niche? (closed)

- 10. Grantmaking Strategy Committee Presentation (closed)

- 11. Wrap-up and Next Steps
 - 11.1. Jessica provided an overview of the Hill Day Schedule
 - 11.2. Executive committee
 - 11.2.1. Consider how the MDF will fulfill a policy role - how to engage with policy?
 - 11.2.2. Work on engagement with USAID and the Department of State
 - 11.2.3. Revisit values & bring them back to the Board for discussion at the Spring 2023 Board Meeting
 - 11.2.4. Define innovation, complementarity, impact
 - 11.3. Grantwriting committee
 - 11.3.1. Work on engagement with environmental & biodiversity funders groups (this will be in the future once an Executive Director (ED) has been hired)
 - 11.3.2. Scaffold a short-term strategy for DOS funding to be fleshed out with the ED
 - 11.3.3. Engage with MDP along with the fundraising committee - what can MDP not do?
 - 11.4. Fundraising Committee
 - 11.4.1. Develop a near-term and mid-term plan for fundraising - what are our funding and monetary goals?
 - 11.4.2. Identify potential near-term funders
 - 11.4.3. Meet with The Ocean Foundation's Development Department
 - 11.5. Search committee
 - 11.5.1. Select consultant, and bring top-tier ED candidates to virtually meet with Board
 - 11.6. The Ocean Foundation
 - 11.6.1. Minor website updates - add Mission/Vision/email
 - 11.7. NOAA Marine Debris Program
 - 11.7.1. Engage with grantmaking/fundraising committees

 - 11.8. The Meeting Adjourned at 4:49 p.m.