

PRESS RELEASE

June 11th, 2019

## Italy: Small island community unites with international volunteer team for healthy seas and a sustainable tomorrow

The [Healthy Seas initiative](#) together with [Ghost Fishing](#) just departed from the small island of Lipari in Italy, together with over 5 tons of ghost nets which they removed during their 6-day World Oceans Day mission. They did however leave something back: Awareness. The event was co-organised by the [Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund](#) and [Blue Marine Foundation](#).

Lipari is home to 12,819<sup>i</sup> inhabitants so when the team docked there last Monday in their matching navy-blue t-shirts and orange diving dry suits, it triggered memories of last October, when they removed over 4 tons of ghost nets from the seabed. Pascal van Erp, founder of Ghost Fishing: *"We celebrated World Oceans Day by implementing our biggest project to date. Volunteer divers from 3 Ghost Fishing country chapters plus several local divers took part in 5 deep-sea and 6 harbour cleanup dives."*

What was collected during these days was mostly long-lines and gill nets, all very light in weight but a major threat to marine life as they appear invisible underwater, trapping and killing marine life. Divers rescued several species from the ghost nets, including starfish, sea urchins, rock crabs, sea cucumbers and juvenile fish. Lost fishing gear is a real problem in the Aeolian Islands and this project was an opportunity to raise awareness on the issue, actively involving the local community, divers, fishermen, children and authorities.

An education programme involving over 130 local children from Lipari but also Vulcano, a nearby island in the Aeolian Archipelago, took part during the week at the harbour.

This mission marked a turning point for Healthy Seas with the Italian Coast Guard deployed in Lipari (Guardia Costiera Lipari) supporting it underwater and on the surface. Ambra Messina, Executive Director, AIPF: *"The local stakeholders are happy to be part of this initiative and year by year they realize how important its mission is. The municipality of Malfa is providing suitable storage space for collecting the old nets which will ultimately be sent for regeneration. Fishermen will be able to dispose their nets there, doing their part towards a circular economy."*

The collected fishing nets will be cleaned by [Nofir A.S.](#) and sent to [Aquafil](#). Combined with other nylon waste materials, they will be transformed into [ECONYL](#)® regenerated nylon, the infinitely recyclable material. This will provide the basis for beautiful new products such as socks, sportswear, swimwear and carpets. **Healthy Seas** is an environmental initiative that provides an excellent example for the circular economy, where waste is a resource.

Funding for this World Oceans Day event in the Aeolian Islands was provided by [Maratona Dles Dolomites-Enel](#) (July 7th, 2019), one of the biggest cyclosporives in Europe now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year. This year's marathon is dedicated to "Tomorrow" to remind us that we need to find a better balance between the present and future by establishing a renewed relationship with nature.

--End of Message--

**Photos available here:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/sh7ox8sqvwtxj4g/AADFtYrGYA8jp4ba9Fqb7ygea?dl=0>

**Notes to Editors:**

**Healthy Seas**

The mission of 'Healthy Seas, a Journey from Waste to Wear' initiative, is to remove waste from the seas, in particular fishing nets, for the purpose of creating healthier seas and recycling marine litter into textile products. The recovered nylon fishing nets will be transformed and regenerated by Aquafil into ECONYL® yarn, a high-quality raw material used to create new products, such as socks, swimwear or carpets. Healthy Seas is a non-profit initiative.

<https://healthyseas.org/>

**Ghost Fishing Foundation**

Ghost Fishing is an international non-profit organization, executed by volunteer technical divers, which initiates, supports and promotes lost fishing gear removal initiatives in oceans, seas and local waters. Since 2012 they have run lost fishing gear survey and removal projects in the North Sea, Adriatic Sea, Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Pacific Ocean in cooperation with various environmental organizations and with the support of a continuously growing group of volunteer technical divers.

[www.ghostfishing.org](http://www.ghostfishing.org)

**Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund**

The Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund is dedicated to the preserve the natural beauty of the Aeolian Islands by promoting sustainable tourism. The fund supports projects to preserve the environment and the sea of the islands.

<https://www.aeolianpreservationfund.org/>

**Blue Marine Foundation**

Known as BLUE, this UK registered charity was set up in 2010 by some of the team behind the award-winning documentary film 'The End of the Line'. BLUE exists to fix the largest solvable problem on the planet – the crisis in the oceans. The charity is dedicated to combatting over-fishing and the destruction of biodiversity by creating marine reserves and establishing sustainable models of fishing. Its mission is the active and effective protection of 10% of the world's oceans by 2020 and 30% by 2030.

<http://www.bluemarinefoundation.com/>