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PRESS RELEASE

## Underwater explorers and conservationists team up for a circular economy

Healthy Seas teamed up with legendary underwater explorer Mario Arena who has been scouring the international and high seas for archeological artifacts since 1994.

During June 27 - July 22, Mario and a team of 14 volunteer divers from The Society for the Documentation of Submerged Sites (SDSS) explored the marine area around Lampedusa, Italy, to identify and document, in order to ultimately protect, various wrecks sunk during WWII Battle of the Convoys (1941-1943). DAN Europe Vice President, Laura Marroni was also part of the team.

Shipwrecks provide excellent habitats for marine life, acting as a reef and providing shelter. At the same time, it is on wrecks that fishing nets get most often snagged. It is estimated that 640,000 tons of fishing gear are lost or abandoned annually in the world's seas and oceans leading to the suffering and death of millions of marine animals. To help mitigate this pollution, the team also removed fishing nets covering 2 sunken structures during the 4-week expedition with the support of Healthy Seas and Ghost Diving.

Descending to 76 meters, about 20 miles off the shore of Lampedusa, the divers spotted a huge trawl net that was recently lost on the postal steamer Egadi. It was so massive that they were able to retrieve half of it. The second net was 40 miles away from shore, on the wreck of the Narval, a French submarine that sank 3 months after it launched during WWII, taking 50 boys to their grave. The team placed a memorial plaque to commemorate the crew.

The divers were able to set free a very big crayfish from one of the nets that was fighting and kicking. They also encountered many fishbones entangled in the nets and even a *Caretta caretta* carcass.

"Removing nets has been on my agenda for many years, mainly because they cover important characteristics of the shipwrecks. Through our collaboration with Healthy Seas, we were able to turn our passion for historical wrecks into a positive environmental solution," says Arena. "We are also thankful to Ghost Diving for sharing their knowledge and procedures on ghost net removals," he added.

Healthy Seas is a best practice example for circular economy and will ensure that the recovered nets will become a new resource. The nylon parts will be regenerated by Aquafil, together with other nylon waste, into ECONYL® yarn, the basis for new sustainable products such as swimwear, activewear, socks and carpets.



In the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the team also utilized 360° cameras and 3D photogrammetry, contributing valuable materials to scientific research of the Ocean in order to support global efforts to strengthen their sustainable management for the benefit of the planet and humanity.

The project is also contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal for the Sustainable Cities and Communities (11.4) by strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

The project was carried out also with the support of Hyundai Motor Europe that announced its partnership with Healthy Seas back in April. They will be providing funding in order for complex clean-up activities to come to fruition.

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **About Healthy Seas**

The mission of the '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 fishing nets will be transformed and regenerated by Aquafil, together with other nylon waste, into ECONYL® yarn, a high-quality raw material used to create new products, such as socks, swimwear, sportswear or carpets. Since its founding in 2013, Healthy Seas has collected over 585 tons of fishing nets with the help of volunteer divers and fishermen.

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

#### **About SDSS**

The mission of SDSS is to explore, document, and protect the underwater environments and the submerged cultural heritage, contributing to the work of scientists and institutions with their capacities to operate effectively at deeper ocean depth.

Mario Arena is an avid underwater explorer; his passion for naval history, his research, and activities have yielded the location and identification of many historical shipwrecks. Mario has also organized and led a number of projects in collaboration with Italian and Croatian archaeological authorities. Mario is an Instructor Evaluator for GUE.

<http://sdss.blue/home/>

#### **About Ghost Diving**

Ghost Diving is an international non-profit organization of volunteer technical divers specialized in the removal of lost fishing gear and other marine debris since 2009. To this day, the Ghost Diving team has carried out diving projects independently or in collaboration with several international environmental and/or diving organizations like:



Healthy Seas Foundation, Greenpeace, WWF, Global Ghost Gear Initiative and Global Underwater Explorers.

<https://ghostdiving.org/>

**Photos:**

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qz6lsghdrnvvs9/AADgUzASn44yZRPm\\_NEI0xO5a?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qz6lsghdrnvvs9/AADgUzASn44yZRPm_NEI0xO5a?dl=0)

**Contact:**

**Christina Wiegers**

Project Manager

Email: [Christina.Wiegers@healthyseas.org](mailto:Christina.Wiegers@healthyseas.org)

Tel.: +49 170 1874160