



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

May 11, 2023

### **BEATING MARINE POLLUTION IN COSTA BRAVA**

Healthy Seas, together with Ghost Diving Spain, organised a ghost net cleanup from April 25-26th in Costa Brava. The two organisations have been working together in the area since 2021, to rid the sea from derelict fishing gear. The cleanup also marked the kick-off activity of Healthy Seas' partnership with Hyundai Motor Europe for this year and was supported by company employees who volunteered and joined forces with the Healthy Seas and Ghost Diving team.

It is estimated that 640,000 tons of fishing gear is lost or abandoned in the seas and oceans each year. It is plastic waste that does not biodegrade, remaining hundreds of years in the environment, all the while losing tiny particles called microplastics that end up in the food chain. The phenomenon takes the name "ghost fishing" because the nets that are made to appear invisible underwater are trapping and killing all manner of marine animals including turtles, fish, mammals and birds that get entangled, suffer and eventually die.

During the 2-day cleanup project, 8 volunteer divers set out from Tossa de Mar to remove a large gill net found 40 minutes from shore, covering a reef within the boundaries of a Marine Protected Area. Although gill nets are typically very light, they are also the deadliest form of marine litter. Many animals, particularly crustaceans, were found entangled and rescued during the operation. Trammel nets, a broken crab pot and many meters of long lines as well as recreational fishing gear, were also removed. According to a recent study, enough commercial fishing line is left in the ocean each year to stretch to the moon and back.<sup>1</sup>

Back on land, the volunteer team cut off the led and ropes and sorted the debris by type. "We spent 3 hours working on the net bundles and sorting everything by type of material in order to reuse or recycle them. This is when we realized that our catch was made up of 6 different types of nets all from different sources and lost in the sea at different times. Ghost nets also catch other ghost nets so by removing them we are preventing more marine litter," says Veronika Mikos, director of international non-profit, Healthy Seas.

"We already know from scientific studies that the sea surrounding Barcelona is one of the three areas in Spain most polluted with plastics from fishing activity and that is why we are here, doing our bit to restore the ecosystem and allow biodiversity to thrive", says Raul Alvarez, director of Ghost Diving Spain.

The event was also made possible thanks to Hyundai Motor Europe that is providing funding for the implementation of Healthy Seas cleanup and education activities around the world since 2021.

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abq0135#.Y1aJx7dC34>

waste, into ECONYL® yarn, the basis for new products such as swimwear, activewear, socks and carpets.

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### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **Photos & video:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/hwjqeq5ki0opssccmmhoj/h?dl=0&rkey=bsyn57zsusv0pwk5ghns1a981>

#### **About Healthy Seas**

Healthy Seas is an international non-profit organisation whose mission 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 905 tons of fishing nets and other marine litter with the help of volunteer divers and fishers.

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

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#### **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/>

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