

Sea Academy: the Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation launches a participatory ocean conservation and restoration project supported by Blancpain

Guided by a resolutely pioneering spirit since its foundation in 1735, Blancpain is one of the first Haute Horlogerie *manufactures* to be actively committed to protecting the oceans. For nearly 20 years, the Brand has supported numerous initiatives to preserve the underwater world, including the Sea Academy project. Initiated by the Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation, and in collaboration with local communities, the project focuses on the creation of marine protected areas around Pangatalan Island and Shark Fin Bay in the Philippines.

The partnership between Blancpain and the Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation is part of the Blancpain Ocean Commitment, which brings together all the Brand's actions in support of the oceans. The programme has already led to concrete results, notably by extending the surface of marine protected areas (MPAs) around the world by more than four million square kilometres. This success is notably due to the Pristine Seas expeditions of which Blancpain was a founding partner. Through the Sea Academy project, Blancpain and the Sulubaaï Foundation wish to contribute to the creation of a model of marine protected areas on a human scale, the management and conservation of which is directly undertaken by local communities. The model has the advantage of fostering the development of sustainable management with a positive and direct impact on both the environment and these communities.

The Philippines has one of the largest areas of coral reef in the world. Located within the Coral Triangle, these islands lie within an extremely rich reef zone that is home to 80% of the world's coral species. These 'rainforests' of the sea are teeming with life and provide vital services such as food and income to the human populations surrounding them. Unfortunately, this region is heavily impacted by human activity and global warming. It is therefore imperative to protect it. In order to address these threats and allow for a resurgence of marine biodiversity in harmony with the societies that depend on it, the Sea Academy project acts around the following pillars:

1. The development of 3 MPAs – totalling 150 hectares – in Shark Fin Bay, around Pangatalan Island, in collaboration with three neighbouring villages. This project is supervised by a management committee composed of local communities, authorities and the foundation.
2. The restoration of coral habitats, with the installation of 800 artificial structures on which coral fragments will be cuttings. The habitats will also be restocked with 40,000 juvenile fish released using the PCC technique (capture and culture of fish larvae taken from the bay) in order to strengthen the extremely depleted fisheries resources in the Philippines.
3. Awareness-raising and education of children and adults from the surrounding villages, as well as students from the two universities in Palawan.

4. Communication and media coverage of national and international experiences with the same aim of raising awareness, this time globally.

The new MPAs will be marked and monitored to study the benefits of the measures implemented in the short and long term. The restoration model created by the Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation, which is an example, could be replicated in other marine areas to be protected.

The Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation and Pangatalan Island

The Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation is a Franco-Philippine non-profit organisation, born of a passion for the ocean and a desire to help local communities. It is dedicated to the conservation and protection of Palawan's natural resources through environmentally friendly practices and active ecosystem restoration. Its work is mainly focused on Pangatalan Island and Shark Fin Bay.

Since its inception in 2012, Sulubaaï has progressively developed broader community-based actions for ecosystem restoration, first on land and then in the waters of the bay. Pangatalan Island has been and remains the pilot site for the foundation's activities, which are intended to be extended to the entire bay and replicated in other sites in collaboration with local populations. Since 2016, an initial 46-hectare marine protected area has been created, engaging local people, the environment and an economy based on a sustainable strategy.

Link: www.sulubaaï-foundation.com

Blancpain Ocean Commitment (BOC)

Exploring and preserving the world's oceans is core to Blancpain. Throughout the nearly 70-year history of the Fifty Fathoms – the world's first modern diving watch – Blancpain has woven close ties with the explorers, photographers, scientists, and environmentalists who treasure these precious resources. These affinities have inspired the Manufacture to support important activities and initiatives dedicated to the oceans.

In recent years, the Blancpain Ocean Commitment (BOC) has invested in oceanographic initiatives and partnerships with leading institutions, such as the Pristine Seas expeditions, Laurent Ballesta's Gombessa project, the World Ocean Initiative organised by The Economist, and World Oceans Day, which takes place every year at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

To date, all these activities in support of exploring and preserving the oceans, undertaken with great passion by Blancpain, have led to tangible results, and made a significant contribution in extending the surface of marine protected areas around the world, with the addition of more than four million square kilometres.