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## [Will 2014 Be the Year of the Ocean?](#)



Posted by [Valerie Craig](#) of [National Geographic Society](#) in [Ocean Views](#) on [December 22, 2013](#)

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World leaders will start the year at Half Moon Bay at the World Ocean Summit.  
Photograph from iStock.

The [United Nations says](#) 1998 was the Year of the Ocean, but I beg to differ. I'm fairly convinced that next year will be the year we see world leaders begin to take responsibility for the future of our ocean, and start to turn words into action.

We're also going to see an innovation explosion – new technologies, falling prices on high tech, new business models – that will offer new solutions and change the way we approach global problems. And we're going to see growing momentum in this [new age of exploration](#), from citizen science to connecting ancient cultures with modern science. It's time. We need it.

The ocean – and the billions of people that depend on it – is facing a series of unprecedented challenges:

from [ocean acidification](#) and [deep-sea mining](#), to [depletion of the world's fisheries](#) and the [melting of the Arctic ice cap](#).

## Leadership

The year is set to start strong with a convening of world leaders discussing the governance and sustainability of the world's ocean. [The World Ocean Summit 2014](#) is the forum where heads of state, corporate CEOs, scientists, and conservationists will gather to talk about charting a path forward.

But it's not just talk. These global leaders will be put to work with a [challenging program](#), including a full day devoted to devising solutions to specific challenges. Country leaders will challenge each other; with recent successes in fisheries management and implementation of marine reserves, there's proof that leadership is possible.

## Innovation

It may be a buzzword everyone loves to hate, but, when it comes to the ocean, it's happening in a big way.

The XPRIZE Foundation has recently turned its attention to the ocean with the [Wendy Schmidt Ocean Health XPRIZE](#) (see "[Newest XPRIZE Targets Ocean Health](#)"), specifically the massive threat of ocean acidification. While the winning solution won't actually come until 2015, 2014 is the critical period of innovation and development. Importantly, the challenge focuses both on accuracy and affordability, so we can expect to see some super expensive but accurate solutions that will only be affordable to wealthy governments, but we should also see solutions that are easy-to-use and more affordable. Definitely watch this space.

From [tracking marine trash](#) to [monitoring activities in protected areas](#), citizen science is changing the way we collect data on important issues. [Ocean Sampling Day](#) is just one example of a massive citizen science project coming in 2014. Although not truly "citizen" science (these are actually scientists), volunteers around the world will all go out on June 21<sup>st</sup> and collect samples of ocean water.

The idea is that, by understanding ocean microbes all over the world, scientists can develop ocean-derived biotechnologies to solve global-scale problems.

We're always looking to technology to solve difficult problems, but tech is often super expensive, which puts it out of reach for those trying to solve the problems on the ground. In 2014 the focus will shift from developing new technologies to figuring out how to make good tech cost less.



Innovators around the world are experimenting with technology solutions to do everything from counting wildlife to spotting illegal fishing boats like these off the coast of Guinea-Bissau. Photo by Richard White, Naturalist, Lindblad Expeditions.

A key area this is happening in is aerial surveillance – important work for understanding what’s going on in marine protected areas, and stopping illegal activities. Drones, seemingly always in the news these days, are finally going to become cost effective for [use in marine conservation](#).

But drones aren’t the only solution – innovators around the world are experimenting with more basic solutions, including [attaching cameras to kites](#) to do everything from counting wildlife to spotting illegal fishing boats. And underwater drones – or remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) – are also turning ocean enthusiasts into citizen scientists and ocean explorers, as groups like [OpenROV](#) make it easy to build or buy inexpensive equipment.

## Exploration

Can we really go beyond [James Cameron’s dive to the deepest part of the ocean](#)? While 2014 may not be the year of deep ocean exploration, there will be intrepid explorers to be sure.

In May next year, the Polynesian Voyaging Society will depart Hawaii for the beginning of their [World Wide Voyage](#). They will travel for five years around the world in a traditional Polynesian double-hulled voyaging canoe, using only traditional navigation methods – extreme low tech, and extreme inspiration. The voyage will inspire communities around the world to “think like an islander” and care for our children’s future and the future of the planet. You’ll want to follow this one.

With so much recent activity in ocean exploration, research, and conservation, I may not be going out on much of a limb with these predictions, but I think 2014 will be the year we really start paying attention and seeing results.

Keywords: [conservation](#), [drones](#), [environment](#), [exploration](#), [innovation](#), [mining](#), [ocean](#), [ocean acidification](#), [ROV](#), [The Economist](#), [World Ocean Summit](#), [XPRIZE](#)  
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## Comments



1. Geko Dive Bali  
Padangbai, Bali, Indonesia  
January 13, 4:53 am

Let's hope we capitalise on the few victories of 2013 and do not repel the courageous decisions governments have taken lately (MPAs, fish quotas, subventions for marine trash removal, etc)...

2. Dale Lanan  
United States  
December 24, 2013, 6:14 pm

Earth's Sea, Life Sea is what keeps her in HZ, Habitable Zone. That is compromised now.

<http://arctic-news.blogspot.com/2013/12/act-now-on-methane.html>

2014 will see rapid rise in awareness of how far gone Earth is.

Essentially as long as value of money stands; Closed System thermodynamics forces Entropy to rise guaranteed. Act of God could undo that lock in if applied to Open System.

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## NG's Ocean Initiative

Ocean Views is part of [National Geographic Society's ocean initiative](#), which supports efforts around the