

NEWS

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NEW MARINE RESEARCH TO STUDY OCEAN'S PAST

Glen Ellen CA: Today Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI) announced the recipients of the 2009 Mia J. Tegner Memorial Research Grants in Marine Environmental History and Historical Marine Ecology. This granting program is one of the first of its kind to support efforts that look at past ocean conditions.

This grant program is a tribute to Dr. Mia J. Tegner, a marine biologist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, who lost her life in January 2001 while diving off of Southern California. Dr. Tegner studied the ecology of kelp forest communities and abalone populations, and was particularly interested in understanding how marine populations and ecosystems have changed as a result of human activities. To honor her work, the Mia J. Tegner Program was established in 2001 to support the efforts of promising young scientists and graduate students to document the composition and abundance of ocean life before large-scale human alterations. This information is essential for helping policy-makers, law-makers, regulators, managers, and conservationists set appropriate targets for marine conservation efforts.

“We are proud to be advancing the science of marine conservation biology and the overlooked study of historical marine ecology by supporting these efforts to better understand the history of our oceans” said Dr. Lance Morgan, program manager of MCBI’s award program. He noted that this year’s selection process was particularly difficult because of the large number of deserving projects. “We received over 50 high quality proposals from applicants around the world to fund work in areas ranging from Antarctica to the Florida Keys, in the end we were able to fund 6 projects”.

Importantly these studies will help establish historical baselines of past ocean and coastal environments to inform conservation and management. Dr. Heather Lynch will be following in the steps of scientist-explorer Jean-Baptiste Charcot, whose ecological records from Antarctica during the first and second French Antarctic Expeditions in the early 1900’s will be used to investigate changes to the benthic community of Antarctica. Doctoral student Lida Teneva’s study will establish historical baselines of calcification rates and pollution for the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Three of the awards went to socio-ecological studies of tropical marine island ecosystems; Ms. Brittany Davis of the University of Arizona will be researching the socio-ecological history in the waters of Utila, Honduras, while Dr. Rintaro Ono and Mr. Alex Morrison will be examining the socio-ecological history of the waters around Tokelau, Polynesia, and Dr. John Crock will be studying the socio-ecological history of Anguilla in the Caribbean. Finally, Mr.

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Steven Choy will be expanding historical information available to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to assist future sanctuary management.

MCBI is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the science of marine conservation biology and securing protection for the world's marine ecosystems. Founded in 1996, MCBI is headquartered in Bellevue WA, and has offices in Honolulu HI, Glen Ellen CA and Washington DC.

Full list of 2009 Mia J. Tegner Memorial Research Grant Recipients:

- 1) Mr. Steven J. Choy, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, USA “Innovative Historical Ecology Trend Analysis and Interpretation for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary” The goal of this project is to enhance the marine environment by looking into the past to understand the present, and improve Sanctuary management for the future.
- 2) Dr. John G. Crock, The University of Vermont, USA “Establishing a Pre-Columbian Fishery Baseline on Anguilla: Impacts on Marine Resources and Implications for Management” This project provides statistically robust data on the long-term exploitation of sea turtles, fin-fishes and invertebrates on Anguilla, Lesser Antilles.
- 3) Ms. Brittany Y. Davis, The University of Arizona, USA “Commercialization, Conservation, and Enforcement: A Socio-ecological Analysis of Utila’s Fishery” This project asks two questions: 1) what are the ‘baseline’ ecological conditions to which current marine management aspires and to what extent is return to these conditions possible?; and 2) what are the social and ecological effects of rapid changes in marine management practices on individuals and communities?
- 4) Dr. Heather J. Lynch, USA “A century of change in the Antarctic: Intertidal and nearshore community change since the Second French Antarctic Expedition of 1909-1911” This project will analyze scientific documents from the 1909-1911 Second French Antarctic Expedition on the intertidal and nearshore species composition of Petermann Island, Antarctica in order to establish a baseline against which current conditions would be assessed. Changes in the coastal biodiversity of this region would provide an important link in our understanding of the impacts of climate change.
- 5) Dr. Rintaro Ono, Australian National University, Australia and Mr. Alex Morrison, University of Hawai’i – Manoa, USA “Historical Ecology and Marine Resource Management in Atoll Ecosystem: Archaeological and Ethno-Ecological Approach to Understanding the Effects of the Last 1000 Years of Indigenous Marine Exploitation in Tokelau, Polynesia” This project will document changes in the marine ecology of Tokelau over the last millennium.
- 6) Ms. Lida Teneva, Stanford University, USA “Establishing calcification and pollution baselines for the Great Barrier Reef prior to European settlement and the Industrial Revolution” This project will study the modern reef around Heron Island, at the southern edge of the Great Barrier Reef, using a novel approach to high temporal and spatial resolution monitoring of current coral calcification trends on the fringing reef and reef flat.

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