

2025 FUTURE OF THE OCEAN SYMPOSIUM
AND CHAMPION OF THE OCEAN AWARDS

Exploring the Wine-Dark Sea

U.S. Ocean Science and Technology: Keys to Prosperity and Security

October 9 • Monmouth University Great Hall



20th
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GREAT HALL AUDITORIUM

Future of the Ocean Symposium

*Exploring the Wine-Dark Sea – U.S. Ocean Science and Technology:
Keys to Prosperity and Security*

- 9:30 AM Registration
- 10:00 AM Welcome **President Patrick Leahy, Ed.D.**
- 10:15 AM Introduction **Tony MacDonald**, Director,
Urban Coast Institute
- 10:30 AM Symposium



Panelists

- Victor Vescovo, CDR, USN (Ret.)**, Caladan Oceanic
- Larry Mayer, Ph.D.**, University of New Hampshire Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping
- Paul G. Gaffney II, VADM, USN (Ret.)**, Monmouth University president emeritus
- Philipp Stratmann, Eng.D.**, Ocean Power Technologies
- Deerin Babb-Brott**, formerly of White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Paula Bontempi, Ph.D.**, University of Rhode Island

Moderator

Tony MacDonald, Director, Urban Coast Institute



GREAT HALL MAIN FLOOR

Champion of the Ocean Awards Luncheon

- 12:00 PM Luncheon
- 12:20 PM Awards Presentation, **Tony MacDonald**

National Champions of the Ocean

Larry Mayer: For his pioneering role in advancing our ability to map and visualize the seafloor and the water column in support of safe navigation, coastal management, and ocean research.

U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone: For serving as a leading voice for the environment and for his many outstanding contributions to coastal and ocean conservation and sustainable communities during his tenure as a member of Congress.

Victor Vescovo: For his commitment to ocean exploration, including his feat of successfully diving to the deepest points of all five of the world's oceans, yielding important ocean mapping data and discoveries.

National Champions of the Ocean

Larry Mayer, Ph.D.

Director of the University of New Hampshire Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping, chair of U.S. Arctic Research Commission

Larry Mayer is a professor and director of The Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping (CCOM) at the University of New Hampshire. He received a Ph.D. from Scripps Institution of Oceanography and, after being selected as an astronaut candidate finalist for NASA's first class of mission specialists, went to the University of Rhode Island, where he worked on the development of the Chirp Sonar. In 2000 he became the founding director of the CCOM, a national center for excellence devoted to developing new approaches for ocean mapping and training the next generation of ocean mappers. Mayer has spent nearly 80 months at sea, including at least 15 cruises to the high Arctic,



mapping the U.S. extended continental shelf and studying the melting of the Greenland Ice Cap. He was appointed by President Obama to the Arctic Research Commission in 2016. Mayer's current research deals with sonar imaging and remote characterization of the seafloor as well as advanced applications of 3-D visualization to ocean mapping problems and applications of mapping to Law of the Sea issues, particularly in the Arctic.

U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.

Frank Pallone, Jr. is serving his 18th full term in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing New Jersey's 6th Congressional District. He is the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees health care, energy, the environment, and more. Throughout his career, Pallone has fought to expand health care access, protect the environment, and strengthen coastal resiliency. He played a key role in passing the Affordable Care Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. A lifelong resident of Long Branch, Pallone continues to advocate for New Jersey's communities and coastline.



Victor Vescovo, CDR, USN (Ret.)

Extreme ocean explorer, CEO and owner of Caladan Oceanic

Victor Vescovo is a private investor with over 30 years of experience in a variety of complex business situations. Vescovo served 20 years in the U.S. Navy Reserve as an intelligence and targeting officer, retiring in 2013 as a commander. In 2017,

Vescovo completed the "Explorer's Grand Slam" which requires climbing the highest peak on all seven of the world's continents, including Mt. Everest, and skiing at least 100 kilometers to the North and South Poles. He piloted the first repeated dives to the ocean's deepest point, Challenger Deep, in the Pacific's Mariana Trench, now 15 times, and in August 2019 became the first person to visit "The Five Deeps," the deepest point in all five of the world's oceans. Vescovo has now personally explored the bottom of 17 deep ocean trenches and has made three dives to the Titanic, including the only solo dive ever made there. He and his team also discovered and surveyed the two deepest shipwrecks in the world: the USS Johnston in 2021 and the deepest, the USS Samuel B. Roberts, at 22,600 feet, in 2022. He is also a commercially rated, multi-engine jet, glider, seaplane, and helicopter pilot, a certified submersible test pilot, and recently flew into space on Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket, becoming the first person in history to climb Mount Everest, dive to the bottom of the ocean, and visit space.



Future of the Ocean Symposium Panelists


Deerin Babb-Brott

Former principal assistant director for oceans and the environment, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

Deerin Babb-Brott is an ocean policy expert and former director of the White House National Ocean Council at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. He played a central role in developing and implementing the U.S. National Ocean Policy and advancing regional ocean action planning and marine spatial planning at the federal and regional level. He has held senior positions in both federal and state government focused on coastal and ocean planning. His work reflects a career-long commitment to collaborative, science-informed marine policy. Babb-Brott has been instrumental in shaping national ocean



policy, including the implementation of the U.S. National Ocean Policy and the advancement of marine spatial planning. His career has focused on collaborative, science-based ocean governance that supports both ecological protection and economic development. He has worked across federal, state, and nonprofit sectors to guide policy and planning in a practical, inclusive way.



“And what if one of the gods does wreck me out on the wine-dark sea? I have a heart that is inured to suffering and I shall steel it to endure that too.”

—HOMER, *THE ODYSSEY*

Paula Bontempi, Ph.D.

University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography professor, president of the Oceanography Society

Paula Bontempi is a professor of oceanography at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography. She served as dean from 2020-25. Prior to URI, Bontempi served as acting deputy director of NASA's Earth Science Division in the Science Mission Directorate of NASA Headquarters, located in Washington, D.C. from 2019-20, and spent more than 16 years prior as the physical scientist and program manager for ocean biology and biogeochemistry at NASA Headquarters. Her scientific interests include Earth and ocean remote sensing, phytoplankton ecology, marine bio-optics, Earth system science, oceans across the solar system, the connection of ocean exploration to global economics, and the development of ocean sensors and innovative technologies. She served as NASA program scientist for instrument



and mission science integrity on several flight missions, including but not limited to, the Sea-Viewing Wide Field-of-View Sensor (SeaWiFS), Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership (NPP), and the recently launched Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission. She is a fellow and president of The Oceanography Society, and was elected last year as the inaugural chair of a US ocean advocacy coalition, the Research and Education Coalition for Ocean Sciences. She is from Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.



Paul G. Gaffney II, VADM, USN (Ret.)

Monmouth University
president emeritus

Paul Gaffney was honored to serve for a decade as president of Monmouth University. He and his wife, Linda, count the years at Monmouth as the most rewarding in a 60-year working career. He is a retired Navy vice admiral and served as president of National Defense University, chief of naval research, head of Navy meteorological and oceanographic operations and commander of the Naval Research Lab. He was a commissioner on the US Commission on Ocean Policy and



is a member of the National Academy of Engineering. He has been an Urban Coast Institute fellow since 2013. He currently serves as counselor to the dean of engineering at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina.



Philipp Stratmann, Eng.D.

President and CEO, Ocean Power
Technologies

Philipp Stratmann is Ocean Power Technologies' (OPT) president and chief executive officer, based in the company's New Jersey headquarters.

Stratmann joined OPT in 2019 as vice president, global business development, bringing with him broad energy industry experience from oil and gas to renewables, both offshore and onshore, and experience in the defense and security industry. Prior to OPT, Stratmann was vice president, biofuels, for Velocys, which he joined in 2015 as business development director. He previously served as general manager of global development and West Africa for InterMoor and has held leadership positions with Acteon Group and Ernst & Young, in addition to experience with VT Group and Shell. Stratmann is a graduate of the United Kingdom's University of Southampton, where he received his engineering doctorate and his master of engineering degree in ship science

CONGRATULATIONS

To the
Monmouth University
Urban Coast Institute
and its Director
Tony MacDonald

For twenty years
of exceptional science, education, and policy service
to the region and the nation

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A hearty thank you to our brother UCI Director Tony MacDonald for his 20 years of guidance and collaboration to create the Urban Coast Institute.

In honor of our parents Lilian and Jim MacDonald, The MacDonald Family UCI Scholarship Fund is always available for your generous gifts.

Onward!



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