

Third National Student Summit on the Ocean and Coasts
February 14-17, 2011
Washington D.C.

Summary

The Third National Student Summit on the Ocean & Coasts was held February 14-17, 2011 in Washington, D.C. The summit was a resounding success with twenty delegations including 80 students and 40 educators. The Summit was truly outstanding from the excellent student presentations to the interesting guest speakers and substantive working sessions. The student action plans, their project posters and their consensus Proclamation were beyond all expectations. The use of a video format for the student presentations was very effective and enabled us to get the story out to a broader audience via the web. It was also evident from the interaction with the expert panelists, that the students were well prepared and eager to improve their action plans. The combination of engaged and motivated participants, interested and knowledgeable experts, inspiring keynote speakers and wonderful venues resulted in a unique and magical experience for all. It was truly an exciting summit with substantive outcomes every day. A summary of the summit follows:

Monday/Tuesday - The summit's opening keynote speakers provided inspiration and a variety of perspectives. On Monday night, Jim Toomey's creative and inspiring presentation with his Sherman's Lagoon cartoon characters and NOAA Policy Director Sally Yozell's overview of the Administration's new ocean policy set the stage for the summit. On Tuesday, The Smithsonian Marine Science Chair, Dr. Nancy Knowlton provided a scientific overview of our understanding of Climate & Ocean Interaction at the opening session. The student delegation presentations that followed were very interesting and informative. Response panels of national experts provided participants unique insight into our government's ocean policies and marine science issues. The day concluded with a special evening session with remarks by Dr. Larry Robinson, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce (NOAA) and Laura Davis, Interior's Chief of Staff, followed by an inspiring presentation by Jean Michel Cousteau and concluding remarks by two former student summiteers on the impact of the summit on their lives. And of course, what a perfect place to host the event - the National Museum of Natural History and the Sant Ocean Hall! It was especially exciting to see the student posters displayed in the Ocean Hall next to an appropriate exhibit and watch the students sharing stories with the many government officials and ocean leaders that joined us for the evening event and reception.

Wednesday - The day began with a wonderful breakfast at the National Aquarium in DC amidst exhibits highlighting our nation's marine protected areas and a variety of critters from alligators to an octopus. The students were welcomed by Mary Glackin, Deputy Under Secretary of NOAA and Shere Abbott, Associate Director, White House Office of Science & Technology, provided keynote remarks. Then the hardwork began with intensive separate workshops of students and educators providing an opportunity for substantive discussions. Educators learned of techniques and resources to bring ocean science alive in their classroom and provided valuable feedback to government representatives on how to improve our educational programs. The student workshop, though somewhat chaotic as any effort to reach consensus by 80 teenagers tends to be, provided a moving recitation of the students' passion for the environment and aspirations for the future culminating in an inspirational Proclamation. The highlight of the day was the introduction of the Student Delegations at the American Zoo & Aquarium Association Capitol Hill Reception and the opportunity to interact with Jack Hanna and his wild animals from penguins to cheetahs.

Thursday – The highlight of the Summit for many was Thursday - Capitol Hill day, where delegations were paired with a legislative liaison from one of the sponsoring agencies who escorted them through the halls of the House and Senate to visit their Congressional representatives. At the closing luncheon in the House Rayburn Building, many students excitedly shared stories about their meetings and the lessons they will take back to their communities. The students also had an opportunity to present their consensus proclamation to Congressman Sam Farr, Co-Chair of the House Ocean Caucus; Dr. Rebecca Blank, Deputy Secretary of Commerce, representing the Administration; and Jean-Michel Cousteau representing the non-governmental ocean community. The student proclamation speaks of their concerns and hopes for the future of our ocean and coasts, and their commitment to take action in their local communities to make a difference. Students were then presented certificates of participation by Eileen Sobeck, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and Donald Schregardus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Navy.

A true mark of the Summit was the innovative use of technology to reach a nationwide audience. On Tuesday during the opening day, the Summit website received over 85,000 hits from individuals and groups viewing the streamed student presentations! On Wednesday, the JASON Project had two exciting live interactive broadcasts with the students. Entire classes from numerous schools tied in to watch the student presentations on Tuesday and participate in the interactive JASON Project broadcast on Wednesday. You can read about the summit at the Coastal America website or the Smithsonian's Ocean Portal and you can view the JASON Project broadcast at http://www.jason.org/science/Live/coastal_america/jason/event.aspx.



Presentation of Proclamation to Congressman Farr, Deputy Secretary Blank and Jean-Michel Cousteau