



EarthEcho International is a nonprofit organization, founded in 2005 by siblings Philippe and Alexandra Cousteau in honor of their father Philippe Cousteau Sr., son of the legendary explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, that aims to build a global youth movement to protect and restore our ocean planet. EarthEcho collaborates with youth around the world to provide knowledge and develop tools that drive meaningful environmental action. Reaching more than 2 million people in 146 countries, we support the next generation to become environmental leaders who will transform the future.

The EarthEcho Youth Leadership Council is a committee of youth who advise the organization on global conservation campaigns and education programs. We come from many corners of the ocean, from the kelp forests of the Pacific Northwest to the rocky reefs of the Sea of Marmara. All of us have felt a strong connection to the ocean from a young age. All of us have felt the impacts of climate change, pollution, and environmental exploitation. And all of us know that in order to have a livable future, leaders and communities must listen to the youth who are inheriting this planet.

From this sense of urgency, action was born. The Youth Leadership Council is spearheading OceanEcho 30x30, a global initiative elevating youth voice in advancing efforts to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 (30x30) through coastal restoration, environmental education, and advocacy in support of marine protected areas.

OceanEcho 30x30 has already made an impact – directly engaging over 17,000 youth and community members worldwide through educational programs and events highlighting marine protected areas, organizing youth-driven coastal restoration initiatives from Indonesia to Puerto Rico and the Galapagos to California to connect local communities to ocean-based climate solutions, and successfully advancing policies to expand and bolster marine protected areas on the national and international scale. YLC members continue to elevate these issues at the highest level, speaking alongside world leaders at the One Ocean Summit, organizing a Youth Town Hall to engage leaders from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in discussing the role of youth in ocean policy, meeting with federal officials to advocate for the restoration of marine protected areas, such as the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, which was restored in October 2021, and leading regional campaigns to advance the 30x30 ocean goal through the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

Time and time again, the efforts of our Youth Leadership Council members, and the broader EarthEcho youth network, have proven that having young people in the room is powerful. Youth introduce fresh ideas, passion, and a sense of urgency to discussions about ocean and climate. We are steadfast in our idealism yet grounded in the stark reality of the crisis facing our generation.

Today, the voices of generations that are far less affected by climate change take center stage in policy making, and young people are left to live with the consequences. To protect our future, world leaders must incorporate youth input in decision making processes.



We sincerely thank the UN Ocean Conference organizers for understanding the critical role that youth leaders must play in advancing the ocean conservation priorities discussed at the Conference, and we challenge delegates to meaningfully integrate the voices of youth leaders into the commitments and plans emerging from this historic event. We hope that through this Conference, delegates will embrace the ocean-climate solutions needed to face this crisis, and long-term dialogues will be established that meaningfully engage youth.

Young people are already leading the charge for a livable future, understanding the critical importance of ocean health and the intersection with the climate crisis. Together, we are calling on world leaders to join us in this movement.

*Intervention prepared by members of the EarthEcho International Youth Leadership Council*

*Submitted by Sean Russell, Associate Director of Youth Engagement & Partnerships, EarthEcho International*