



**Environment at the crossroads.
Aiming for a sustainable future.**
Gulbenkian Conference 2009
27 and 28 October

Charting a Course for the Future of the Oceans: Present State and Future Perspectives

Julie Packard

As we chart a course for the 21st century, it is imperative that we acknowledge that the oceans are a central driving force in the natural systems that sustain human life. They not only cover most of the planet, they provide critical food, transportation and economic benefits. Most importantly, ocean ecosystems create a major portion of the oxygen that enables life on Earth to survive. Unfortunately, the health of our oceans is in decline, straining to accommodate the needs of growing populations and growing economies. As fisheries collapse, coastal wetlands disappear and ocean dead zones expand, global climate change looms as the overarching environmental challenge of this century, eclipsing all others. In the past decade, governments and the public across the globe have been taking steps to reverse these trends. The question is: will these efforts come in time? Recent public opinion research shows that the global community is increasingly concerned about the future of our environment. Our challenge now must be to harness this concern and convert it to action on the ocean's behalf. We live on a water planet, and critical ocean resource issues must be addressed if we are to survive into the future.



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Julie Packard was born in Los Altos, California and received her bachelors and masters degrees in biology from the University of California at Santa Cruz. Her principal scientific interests focused on marine algal ecology and aquaculture.

Based on her work as a board member of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, in the late 1970's Julie helped found the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the nation's first major public aquarium dedicated to interpreting a single region - the Monterey Bay.

Julie has served as the Aquarium's Executive Director since its opening and has led the institution through its first 25 years of hosting over 45 million visitors, almost 2 million free school group visitors, and a series of new exhibitions and conservation and science initiatives. Today, the Monterey Bay Aquarium is widely acknowledged as a leader among aquariums worldwide. With a mission to "inspire conservation of the oceans," it has expanded the public's world view by bringing new animals to light – from jellies to deep sea animals to the open sea.

The Aquarium has also led its field in inspiring and engaging the public to become involved in ocean conservation, redefining aquariums as a force for conservation. In its 20th year, the Aquarium broke new ground by being the first to exhibit a great white shark, and at the same time launched the Center for the Future of the Oceans, whose goal is to protect the oceans by promoting sound conservation policy.



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Grounded in a lifelong passion for conservation and the natural world, Julie is involved with many organizations dedicated to conservation activities. She has served as a trustee of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for 34 years and has been deeply involved in the foundation's Conservation and Science Programs. Julie also chairs the board of the Aquarium's sister institution, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, a leading institution dedicated to development of new technologies for understanding the deep sea and global ocean systems. She has served on numerous other boards and committees related to conservation, including the California Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund.

She was 1998 recipient of the Audubon Medal for Conservation; of the 2004 Ted Danson Ocean Hero Award from Oceana, a leading ocean conservation organization; was elected in 2009 as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and was named a California Coastal Hero in 2009 by the California Coastal Commission and *Sunset* magazine.

Julie was a member of the Pew Oceans Commission, a diverse group of U.S. leaders charged with developing recommendations to improve ocean resource management. She remains actively involved in national efforts to implement these recommendations.