



Pioneering Researchers Launch World's 1st South Atlantic Ocean Plastic-Pollution Study

Pro Surfers Join Voyage to Advance Research on Impact of Floating Pollution on Human Health & Marine Life

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SANTA MONICA, CA: OCT. 27--Researchers will embark on the world's first voyage of its kind on Nov. 8 to show that every ocean on the globe is polluted with plastic that's harming marine wildlife and potentially threatening human health. The [5 Gyres Institute](#), collaborating with [Algalita Marine Research Foundation](#) (AMRF) and [Pangaea Explorations](#), is leading this expedition.

The 5 Gyres team, lead by its co-founders Marcus Eriksen, PhD and Anna Cummins, will sail from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town, South Africa on the first transatlantic Southern Hemisphere plastic-pollution research trip. Cummins and Eriksen, overseeing a 13-member crew of researchers, journalists and others for the first global study of the problem, want the world to know that the scourge is not confined to a single mythical "Texas-size garbage patch."

"You can't cross an ocean today without finding plastic pollution," says Cummins, whose 5 Gyres Institute, a nonprofit organization, is based in Santa Monica, CA.

A gyre is a rotating system of ocean currents where floating debris accumulates. Eriksen and Cummins plan to produce the first comprehensive snapshot analysis of plastic pollution in each of the globe's five gyres. Building on AMRF's discovery of plastic pollution in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, the 5 Gyres crew has discovered garbage patches in the North Atlantic Gyre and the Indian Ocean Gyre. No other researchers have been to as many gyres.

Two renowned professional surfers, [James Pribram](#) and [Mary Osborne](#), will join the voyage to help raise awareness. "My goal is to share my experience with the world in becoming a spokesperson against plastic waste," says Pribram, a.k.a. the ECO-Warrior and O'Neill ambassador.

5 Gyres' Rio-to-Cape Town voyage will be aboard Pangaea Explorations's racing sloop, Sea Dragon. In addition to sailing through gyres, the team aims to advance its research into whether humans are being harmed by eating fish that have ingested plastic debris

contaminated with persistent organic pollutants such as DDT and PCBs. PhD candidate Chelsea Rochman of UC Davis will lead this research. Cummins has already found trace elements of such toxins in her body. The crew will also analyze seawater for the same pollutants.

“We want to show people wherever we sail that the problem contaminates their international waters,” Eriksen says. “They cannot say, ‘Well, that’s across the ocean, what does that have to do with my country?’ “

Eriksen and Cummins plan to sail across the South Pacific Gyre—the fifth subtropical gyre—in March 2011.

5 Gyres is partnering with the [United Nations Environmental Program’s Safe Planet](#) campaign and Eriksen and Cummins will be speaking at AMRF’s 2011 [Plastics Are Forever](#) International Youth Summit and Training Program.

Sea Dragon crew will be communicating via blogs with more than 1,850 Los Angeles school children through AMRF’s Ship-2-Shore Education program. Charles Moore, AMRF’s founder, first put the Great Pacific Garbage Patch on the map.

5 Gyres’ Rio-to-Cape Town sponsors include Chaco, Quiksilver and Ecousable.

About 5 Gyres Institute: 5 Gyres Institute is a nonprofit organization committed to meaningful change through research and education. 5 Gyres disseminates its findings through national lecture tours and raises awareness of ocean plastic pollution through voyages including that aboard JUNKraft, the boat built in 2008 of 15,000 plastic bottles. It collaborates with Algalita Marine Research Foundation and Pangaea Explorations, which provide it with a marine laboratory and research vessel, respectively. After studying the five subtropical gyres, 5 Gyres will monitor these vortexes through Traveling Trawl Program voyages which loan research equipment to volunteer “citizen scientists.”

PHOTOS FOR MEDIA: Upload photographs [here](#) of Eriksen and Cummins on previous voyages, of plastic particles taken from a fish’s stomach, and of James Pribram and Mary Osborne. Media Contact: Zan Dubin Scott, (310) 383-0956; zan@zdscommunications.com.