

Trash Free Seas Alliance® Membership Principles: An Overview

Ocean Conservancy
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**Addressing
Marine Plastics**
A Systemic Approach



MEMBERSHIP PRINCIPLES BACKGROUND

Ocean Conservancy launched the Trash Free Seas Alliance® (Alliance) in 2012 to bring together leaders from the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia to create a forum for pragmatic, real-world collaboration focused on the measurable reduction of ocean plastics. The Alliance experienced substantial growth (both from a membership and project portfolio perspective) in the first 5 years of operation, and in 2017, the Alliance adopted its [Membership Principles](#) document. The Membership Principles document increased clarity on the shared philosophy and operational framework that drives the Alliance's work. Moreover, it represents the structure to ensure members' engagement and efforts are focused on a common mission.

As part of the adoption of the Membership Principles document, Alliance members were asked to provide details on current, or planned, time-bound organizational initiatives aligned with the Alliance goal to reduce the amount of plastic waste leaking into the ocean, and to the extent possible, to identify and quantify the metric(s) that will measure progress on these initiatives (additional details in the "*MEASURING and TRACKING PROGRESS*" section). Ocean Conservancy first distributed the Reporting Template as part of the Alliance Membership renewal process in 2018 to help members articulate those commitments. The following information is a summary of the reporting template process and examples of the collective impact and continued engagement of Alliance members.

TEMPLATE ASSESSMENT

As of January of 2018, all existing and any new Alliance members, receive the Membership Principles document and are expected to complete a Reporting Template as part of the membership process. Once a template is submitted to Ocean Conservancy, it is analyzed and assessed by internal subject matter experts on whether the information provided in the template meet the items outlined in the Membership Principles document's *Shared Commitments* section. Following the assessment, a score (1-4) is assigned based on how well the template include context on:

1. A time bound commitment commensurate with achieving a 50% reduction of waste entering the ocean annually by 2025, and reflective of the size and nature of an organization
2. Advancing collaborative, cross-sector efforts to create the enabling conditions for change (financial, policy, legal, technical, etc.)
3. Identifying individual commitments and implement changes in business practices, where appropriate, within their home institution
4. Engagement in aligned efforts to move toward more circular systems of materials use and reduce the generation of waste
5. Advocacy (within organization) for best practices, sound policies and good governance to reduce marine debris

6. Leveraging institutional resources (e.g. marketing reach) to significantly expand public awareness and engagement on ocean plastic waste entering the ocean
7. Quantifiable impacts on marine debris reduction

RESULTS SUMMARY

The Alliance established a common goal of achieving a 50% reduction of waste entering the ocean annually by 2025. The Alliance has engaged partners around the world to identify the barriers to effective marine debris reduction, and to provide a roadmap for how businesses, governments and nonprofits can come together around this issue. Members of the Alliance are working both collectively and within their own institutions on a number of initiatives that support efforts to mitigate plastics entering the ocean, the collective Alliance is ultimately committed to making progress towards the 2025 reduction goal by:

- Investing more than **\$100 million** into research and helping to incubate and advance solution development for marine debris prevention, response, and impact mitigation.
- **Replacing or avoiding over 500,000 tons of virgin plastic** per year used in products and packaging
- Working in over **100 countries and 1,000 cities** to advance marine debris and waste management solutions through policy, education, research, and collaborative initiatives.
- Engaging over **3 million people annually** in direct action to combat marine debris and raising awareness on the threats of marine debris to over **1 billion people globally**.

Members of the Alliance have also made public goals to address animal entanglement; small scale projects on the ground to support communities and organizations on the frontlines of combatting marine debris; supporting research on the sources, impacts, fate and distribution of ocean plastics; and improving product and operational efficiencies among a number of other things. Ocean Conservancy is committed to continuing to work with its members and organizations developing resilient solutions to this ever growing challenge.

MEASURING AND TRACKING PROGRESS

While some of the commitments are directly tied to the work being done in the Alliance, there are many instances where the commitments made by members are a direct result of internal initiatives or participation in other conservation coalitions including groups like Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastic Economy. Accordingly, the Trash Free Seas Alliance will provide opportunities to highlight and amplify progress on these commitments, but does not view itself as the sole entity responsible for monitoring or tracking progress against commitments – much of this will be done externally or via self-reporting. At the start of each

calendar year, we encourage members to update commitments or report out demonstrable progress.

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

The Membership Principles and the Reporting Template have ensured deeper engagement from Alliance members. The commitments made as a result of the reporting template are not intended to be publically attributed to individual organizations, but they are intended to reflect the collective impact of the TFSA as a start to understanding the global efforts employed to address this issue. We have designed the commitment and reporting process to evolve overtime and we intend to increase the collective impact of the Alliance as we progress toward trash free seas.