
Jennifer Stock: You're listening to Ocean Currents, a podcast brought to you by NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. This show was originally broadcast on KWMR in Point Reyes Station, California. Thanks for listening!

(Music)

Welcome to another edition of Ocean Currents. I'm your host, Jennifer Stock. On this show, we talk with scientists, educators, fishermen, explorers, policymakers, ocean enthusiasts, kids, authors, and more all uncovering and learning about the mysterious and vital part of our planet, the blue ocean. I bring this show to you monthly from NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, one of four national marine sanctuaries in California all working to protect unique and biologically diverse ecosystems. Just offshore, the KWMR listing area on the West Marin coast are the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, which together protect 4,581 square miles of rocky shorelines, sandy sea floors, rocky banks, deep sea canyons, and maritime artifacts.

Today, we have a few different guests and topics. We have a very full show. With me in the studio, I'm pleased to welcome Kelly Collins-Geiser of Slow Food San Francisco. She recently put on the Slow Fish conference in San Francisco, so we'll hear about the outcomes from this gathering focused on clean traceable seafood.

Around 11:30am, we'll switch gears, come back to the coast, and be focusing on the California Coastal trail. I'll be talking with Morgan Visalli and Jocelyn Enevoldsen who hiked the entire 1,200 miles. We'll be chatting about this experience and the status of the California Coastal trail. Finally, this week is also World Oceans Week, so we'll have our Positively Ocean episode at the end focusing on that. Right now, I'd like to welcome Kelly Collins-Geiser, and you're live on the air, Kelly. Welcome!

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Thanks Jenny. Thanks for having me.

Jennifer Stock: You're welcome! Slow Fish-- it sounds like it's tied to the slow food movement. Can you give us a little bit of background on what Slow Fish is all about?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Sure. Slow Fish started back in the early 2000s in Genoa, Italy. It happens every two years on the odd years. The first time it came to North America was in 2016 in New Orleans. I got to go and was extremely inspired by the folks that spoke there and the people I

met. Fast forward, I became connected to Slow Food San Francisco, and I wanted to bring Slow Fish to San Francisco. Part of our deal with Slow Food or Slow Fish was to establish it and have it every other year on the even years.

Jennifer Stock: It was rather new?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: It is new.

Jennifer Stock: The whole premise was Slow Food and Slow Fish is just understanding the source of food, knowing the farmers, knowing the land, and how it's grown and where it comes from. Right? Is that kind of the premise of it?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right, good, clean, fair, and fair labor as well. That transfers to Slow Fish with the sourcing of seafood like knowing where your seafood is coming from, knowing how it was either caught and or processed, who benefits from that, and how it was preserved for you to purchase at the store, from the fisherman, or wherever you're purchasing your seafood.

Jennifer Stock: Is there a label for Slow Fish? There's all these labels like Marine Stewardship Council and Seafood Watch... how does Slow Fish interface with those other labels that are really trying to trace seafood?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Yeah, we've talked a lot about that certification program with Slow Fish. We found that you would have issues where things are changing rapidly. There may be a fishery that's becoming endangered, or fishermen are having a hard time. Things are always evolving, and there seems to be more and more with certification programs a price that's paid for that. You find fisheries coming together and having to pay hundreds of thousands or tens of thousands of dollars to be certified. We didn't feel that that was a program that we felt comfortable doing.

Jennifer Stock: I see. At the Slow Fish conference, who came together?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: I would say the majority of people we had in San Francisco were up and down the West Coast, so we had a huge amount of folks from Alaska and policymakers there. We had a lot of folks from Washington state, Oregon, California, and even Baja. We had a few random folks from the east coast, New Orleans, and even the Midwest. We had a Slow Fish international representative from Italy, as well.

Jennifer Stock: Wow! Are these actual fishing folks themselves or people who buy fish?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right. We had a lot of fisherman, fishing women, and fishing families even. We had a lot of policymakers and a lot of Slow Food advocates. We had a lot of folks that were within the processing of fish and distribution.

Jennifer Stock: These are very educated consumers that we're talking about. Those folks that actually have the money, thought, and time to really think about their food and their sourcing of it. How do you hope it might infiltrate the other markets for the average consumer?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Buying seafood that is caught and processed within the USA would be the best choice scenario, without or without a label. Asking your supermarket, the people who are purchasing the fish, "Where did this come from? What do you know about the process of the procedure?" and questions we ask just like with our meat or our dairy products. Then, I think it comes in full circle.

Jennifer Stock: Let's go back to the conference a little bit.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right. We did a couple different events that I can go through. Our first event was with CUESA at the Ferry Building at the farmers market there. We did a seafood throwdown. We had two chefs, Matthew Dolan from San Francisco and Aaronette King from Oakland, and we brought in fishermen from the market. He brought us local seafood, which no one knew about, but it was very common. It was black cod. It's still not as common for some of the consumers and how you would cook that. They did a cook off there at the market, and it was super fun. We had some great participants cheering them on, and Arnett won by one point, which was quite a blow to Matthew Dolan since he had just come out with a book called *Simply Fish*.

Arnett did great, and they're both wonderful. It was a really great opportunity for us to talk about local fish versus fish from far away, what to ask your chefs or your waitress at the restaurant, what to ask your seafood counter person at the grocery store. That was a really great opportunity for us to have an outward consumer facing event.

Jennifer Stock: That was at the farmers market, so it's educational for people out at the market.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right.

Jennifer Stock: Did they know that they were going to be cooking the night before?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: No.

Jennifer Stock: Oh wow! Did they just have a slew of ingredients?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: They were allowed to bring three ingredients, and then, we gave them \$30 to shop at the market, which isn't that much at that market.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, definitely not. (laughs) Alright, so the seafood throwdown was an opportunity to highlight a local fish, how you can prepare that, and educate others. What were some of the other events?

Kelly Collins Geiser: Right. Then, we had more of an event for the attendees of the conference. TwoXSea opened their seafood company in San Francisco, and they really focus on knowing who the fisherman is, what boat, how the catch method was, the origin of the fish, and all this information. You are educated with the seafood that they have. They opened up their warehouse, and we had oysters from up from Alaska all the way down to Baja. We had maybe nine or ten different oyster companies there.

Then, the next two days, we had our conference, and we brought in kind of a world cafe style of conference where we had several different places within one room with different topics of being good, clean, and fair. We would just circle around the room and have it more of an audience open discussion. It was really fun, and I think a lot of people came away with some great information.

Jennifer Stock: What were some of the topics that were part of that?

Kelly Collins Geiser: We had fresh versus frozen and wild versus farmed, which it wasn't one thing or another. It was just talking about the differences. We discussed our 50 50. Right now, we purchase, as Americans, 90% of our seafood is away from this country and is imported. We export 80% of our seafood. So, it's a huge number.

Jennifer Stock: I don't think most of us know about that!

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Yeah. We have enough salmon up in Alaska to feed all of the US, but it's all exported out to Asia and Japan. That's just one example. We really thought that we could push this campaign by 2050 that 50% of our seafood in the US will stay here.

Jennifer Stock: What's the main reason for most of our catch being shipped away?

Kelly Collins Geiser: In some of the countries in Asia like Japan and China, it's part of their normal diet. They're willing to pay for it.

Jennifer Stock: I see, so paying for it.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: The fishermen are able to make a great living wage and ship their seafood out there. Here, there are people that are willing to pay for it, but a lot of the grocery stores say, "No, we're not going to sell salmon for \$20 a pound. We're going to sell farmed salmon for \$12 a pound." That farm salmon came all the way from New Zealand. At some point, we are going to end up paying for it.

Jennifer Stock: It's so interesting if there could be some visuals that could show how the carbon footprint works with seafood in terms of the food that's caught here in the United States, where it goes, the food that we have here, and where it comes from. My mind is always on the carbon footprint.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right.

Jennifer Stock: It's interesting. We're crossing ocean basins to deliver food to each other. Whether discussions about habitats and supporting habitats, was there discussion to support sustainable fisheries in the United States?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Yes. Well, there was some discussion on waterways like protecting the water rights and waterways within the river system.

Jennifer Stock: I wanted to talk a little bit more about that aquaculture piece that there seems to be a rise in the United States. I know that NOAA Fisheries, who manages the fisheries in the US waters, has an aquaculture plan to support expanded aquaculture in US waters with a lot of regulation and monitoring. What are your thoughts about that?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right. I think there's several things to think about. You want to think about, "Are these animals in such captivity that they're being fed medicines and antibiotics?" and if it's not a happy environment. You wouldn't want your chicken in these close quarters, and there's a lot of nasty things that go on with that. Also, the feed and what are they feeding their fish with. Then, I guess supporting the waterways. How's the water being protected and not being polluted? Those are, I guess, three aspects that I think about

with aquaculture. I think that it can be done well, but it's definitely a work in progress.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, definitely. We'll be following that for sure. I'm interested in learning more because there's the low scale, which is just passively feeding on the plankton. That actually helps clear up waterways, and then there's the predator based operator that's very intensive.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right. You have the carnivorous fish like tuna and salmon, and that's the work in progress that I'm thinking about.

Jennifer Stock: Interesting. How are you seeing Slow Fish values show up in communities?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: At Slow Food San Francisco, we are a brand new board as of a year and a half ago. I know Slow Food Russian River and Slow Food Sonoma County up north are very proactive within our communities, and we would love to just join hands with them and do more events with them because they have been very active with their farms and bringing in people for picnics.

Jennifer Stock: Is the goal to inform consumers basically about the source of food through all the chapters and events?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: It's to counter the fast food culture, really. Are we thinking about where we're getting our food from, are we supporting our community like the food processors, artisans, and farmers, and how can we eat better, and be together as a community? When you eat with the community, in your gathering, that I think is true life at its fullest.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, support so many other values too.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Right.

Jennifer Stock: We have that opportunity. Well, what are some next steps? First, for Slow Fish, is there a way for people to follow what you're up to with Slow Fish San Francisco?

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Our planning team is planning a Slow Fish 2020, and it will be somewhere on the East Coast, so up in the New England area. In the meantime, we plan to do a lot of smaller events within our communities. All the folks that are within the planning committee in San Diego, Portland, Alaska, and here can do little things.

I would suggest to be in contact with Slow Fish San Francisco and get on our newsletter. My email is on there, and you can email me at kelly@slowfishsanfrancisco.com. We'll be doing little events here and there. I'm going to do a "Know Your Fish" dinner in September or October. If you stay connected, then you'll know about that event. I know we want to connect with Slow Fish Russian River, and they want to do some events as well.

Jennifer Stock: That's great!

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Yeah.

Jennifer Stock: Follow Slow Food San Francisco online, and there's a newsletter signup.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Every two weeks, we have a newsletter that's free, and it talks about all the things that are going on. We also connect with the other Slow Food chapters. So, if you're anywhere in the Bay Area, there's a place for you to go.

Jennifer Stock: Excellent! Kelly, thanks for joining me in the studio and sharing this conference, its highlights, and I'm glad to see the infiltration to the communities and the other communities as well in terms of promoting the idea of really understanding our sources of food. It's so important for our health and supporting the local fishermen as well.

Kelly Collins-Geiser: Thanks, Jenny!

Jennifer Stock: Alright, we're going to take a short break here with some music, and we're going to come back in a little bit and start talking about the California Coastal trail.
(Music)

This is Ocean Currents, and we're going to switch gears for the second half of the show and talk about the California Coastal trail. I have Morgan Vassaley and Jocelyn Nettleson from the I guess Santa Barbara area. I actually want to catch up with you guys and find out where you're all at, but you're live on KWMR.

Morgan Vassaley: Hi, thanks for having us!

Jocelyn Nettleson: Great to be here!

Jennifer Stock: Thanks again for calling in, and just for listeners, in 2016, Morgan and Jocelyn both hiked the California Coastal trail, which a lot of

people don't even know about. I'm really happy that you're going to be talking a bit about that because it means some work to bring it all together, but they hiked the entire thing. Jocelyn and Morgan, you were both just recent graduates from UCSB in your master's program. What led you to decide to hike the California Coastal trail? Morgan, why don't you start.

Morgan:

Yeah, we both met at the Bren School of Environmental Sciences and Management at UCSB where we were studying coastal and marine policy and science. Following grad school, we are both awarded the California state grant fellowship where we get to spend the year kind of doing hands on marine policy work with different states or federal agencies. I was working with NOAA at Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary down in Santa Barbara, and Jocelyn is doing a winter fellowship with the California State Coastal Conservancy. The Coastal Conservancy is one of the lead agencies, kind of in charge of helping to get the California Coastal trail completed. It was actually during her fellowship that she found out about the trail and told me about it. We were so excited about it, but we hadn't heard about this trail before. Chances are that there are a lot of other people who haven't either. We were really inspired. When we both finished up our fellowships, we decided that we were going to hike the entire thing, do an outreach campaign, and do some mapping work and data collection as we were hiking to increase awareness of the trail and hopefully help get it completed.

Jennifer Stock:

Fantastic! What percentage of it is actually a continuous trail, or I guess how much of it is discontinuous?

Morgan:

Yeah, the trail right now exists in segments all along the coast, and the California Coastal trail is known as a braided trail. In some sections, there is a trail that's either on the blocks or next to the coastline. In some places, you're actually walking on the beach, and then in other sections, it's not trail or beach accessible, and you have to do road walking. Those are kind of the incomplete sections. It's somewhere in between about halfway to two thirds of the way complete, depending on which sections of the braid you're talking about.

Jennifer Stock:

What is the history of the trail in terms of California policy and acts that were passed?

Jocelyn:

The California Coastal trail was actually called out in the Coastal Act, which began as a voters' initiative Proposition 20. The idea, which was sort of brainstormed and brought into fruition in the

early 70s, is that the public has the right to access the coastline, and the coast belongs to all of us in California. So, in addition to establishing the California Coastal Commission, the Coastal Act of 1976 actually says that California Coastal trail needs to be completed, and it will be a way for the public to access the coast right away, which is wet sand below the high tide line.

Jennifer Stock: This started in 1976, and we're about halfway there. The California Coastal Conservancy manages this effort?

Jocelyn: Yes, the Coastal Conservancy is the lead agency that's in charge of organizing all of the different jurisdictions. There are actually over 100 jurisdictions that own or manage different sections of the California Coastal trail. It's a giant organizational feat, and they've been plugging away at it for the last 40 or so years. There are a lot of really beautiful sections of trail, and they're still working on acquiring new parcels to create new sections of trail and also working on signing the trail, which is to make sure that people know that there is the continuous trail that goes all the way from Oregon to Mexico, all along the California coast.

Jennifer Stock: I'm imagining, to prepare for this adventure, you have to do quite a bit of research because it's probably not well signed as it is right now. How did you prepare for understanding where to go, in terms of accessing potential future links to this trail? How did you prepare for that?

Morgan: There is actually a great book called *Hiking the California Coastal Trail* that was published, I believe in early 2001 or 2002, that does provide a route for the whole trail from Oregon to Mexico. We followed that very closely day by day. We had the pages ripped out, and we would be following it along. So what it does is it basically shows you where the existing sections of trail are, and then, it suggests routes to basically connect to those existing sections of trails, taking roads that will have the widest shoulders and the least amount of vehicle traffic so that way you can find the safest route. Since that book was published, there have definitely been new sections of trail that have been added, and part of our work when you're doing research was to find these sections of trails as well, we can make sure that we can get all the new beautiful segments of trail on our journey.

Jennifer Stock: That's fantastic! I didn't know about that book. It sounds like a great resource. Are there other organizations that are helping to work on this effort in terms of completing the trail like Coastwalk, which I believe is one of the organizations?

Morgan: In addition to the Coastal Conservancy on the government side, there's also the Coastal Commission, which is a big partner on this, as well as California State Park. Also, Caltrans is a part of this too because some of the trail is going to have to be along road shoulders, so they're an important partner as well. Then, on the more nonprofit NGO side, Coastwalk, which is also known as the California Coastal Trail Association, has been working on this also since the 70s. They're a network of coastal activists that have been pushing for coastal access, stewardship, and preservation and specifically working on the California Coastal trail as well as leading group hikes on the California Coastal trail for decades.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic! What were some of the key findings that you had along the hike in terms of recommendations to all of these players to keep this effort moving forward? Jocelyn, do you want to take that?

Jocelyn: The first thing that we really realized was how much support there is for this idea of a completed California Coastal trail. People that we came across along the way didn't necessarily know about the trail, and when we told them about it, they were so excited to hear about it. People know about their local sections of the trail, which for instance the Venice Beach boardwalk. That's a part of the coastal trail. The Lost Coast, that's part of it. But really, the widespread support was one of the huge takeaways that we got from our journey.

Another thing is the importance of signage. While we were doing our hike, we were mapping where the existing signs are and where signs are needed in different communities so that all of these different local communities can rally around this idea and get their county section completed. It's through that process that the whole trail will eventually be connected.

Another takeaway that we discovered was just the importance of funding. Trying to make sure that the California legislature really understands the importance of completing the California Coastal trail. It is a huge thing, and we really need to have advocates in the senate and the assembly pushing for more funding to get this trail completed and more funding for the Coastal Conservancy to make it happen. Those are some of the big takeaways that we got.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic! I'm thinking that you know some of the segments are trying to navigate around private land or land that was purchased before the California Coastal Act. Did you interact with any

landowners along the way and tell them about these efforts? What were some of the responses from private landowners where their property might be next to the trail?

Jocelyn: That's a really interesting question. Actually, it turns out that the biggest issue that we had was trying to navigate around military property rather than smaller sections of private property. A lot of the time, if there are folks that have private property along the coast, you can walk along the wet sand. That is public land. That part wasn't as big of a deal. The sections that we really had to pay close attention to were the military properties. For instance, at Vandenberg Air Force Base, there are folks who aren't allowed on the coast there, so there's a 100 mile inland detour that we have to manage. Some of those military properties were a little bit larger of an issue than the private property.

Jennifer Stock: Wow! What are some of the thoughts of how that might interface in the future? You said you had to do a 100 mile detour around the base inland?

Jocelyn: Yes, we did. For example, in San Diego, a base down there, which Morgan... which base was that?

Morgan: Pendleton.

Jocelyn: Yes, Pendleton. They've dealt with this issue by allowing folks to bike through the base, and you just have to register two weeks in advance. We had to bike through that section because you're not allowed to hike. That is one really great option that maybe some of the other military properties could consider bringing into play, as we're trying to get this trail completed with a through route.

Jennifer Stock: What were some of your highlights in terms of specific areas that you really enjoyed for getting coastal views or appreciating our coastal ecology?

Morgan: Definitely, the coastal redwoods up in the north coast, in northern Humboldt counties, were absolutely gorgeous. It's really rugged with breathtaking scenery and lots of epic wildlife out there. Hiking the Lost Coast was definitely a highlight. Some wonderful remote rugged sections along the Sonoma coast as well. Yeah, there are a couple.

Jocelyn: I'll just chime in there. On the north coast, we really felt the magic of the lands there. We were really aware that even though the California Coastal trail has been an idea in our mind since the 70s,

this is actually a route that native peoples have hiked for millennia. Really, when we were hiking, we were focusing on respecting those who came before us and also thinking about those who will come after. One of the lessons that we learned is the fact that some of these native tribes really try to plan for seven generations when they are walking this earth. To have that kind of foresight is something that we think is so important for our society today to incorporate into all the decisions that we're making. We really felt that spirit when we were hiking through the north coast, especially because it was so remote and rugged. Then, we carried that with us down through Central California and into southern California where there's a lot more people. The communities are so vibrant there. That was a really wonderful part, getting to connect with all of the different beach lovers that we met along the way.

Jennifer Stock:

That's incredible. Californians love their beach and their coastline for sure, so I bet you they were super excited to see you hiking. How can listeners help support the completion of the trail at this point? It sounds like funding is a big issue for the state to continue connecting pieces of it and signage, but are there other ways listeners can help support the completion of the trail?

Jocelyn:

Absolutely. One important way that you can help is by reaching out to your county supervisors. In terms of actually on the ground, how this trail is built, what needs to happen is always the coastal county needs to make sure that they have an alignment for the California Coastal trail in their local coastal program. That's the planning document that these jurisdictions have that regulate developments in the coastal zone. It's part of the duties of all of California's coastal counties to actually get this trail alignment into these plans, and the coastal county supervisors are the elected officials that are responsible for making that happen. Reaching out to your county supervisor, letting them know that you want the trail completed through your county, is really important to make this dream a reality.

Jennifer Stock:

Great! Morgan, do you want to add anything?

Morgan:

They're also a lot of local coastal nonprofit organizations that are working on coastal access, preservation, and specifically on building the California Coastal trail. In addition to potentially getting involved with Coastwalk or the California Coastal Trail Association, I encourage you to look at your local ocean route nonprofits as well for opportunities to get involved. Get out there! Get on the trail, get on the beach, keep an eye peeled for California Coastal Trail signs. There are some out there along the beach at the

blue swirl. If you see those signs, you can take a picture of it posted on social media, tag it, start using the word California Coastal trail when you're referring to your local coastal trails so that people start to think of it within the context of this wonderful braided network that will go along our entire coastline. We always tell people to please tell three friends about the CCT!

Jennifer Stock: Awesome! Tell three friends! I love it. Now, this sounds like an amazing experience to transition out of your graduate school work and environmental studies. What are you both doing now that it's been two years since you've completed this big project? Morgan, let's start with you.

Morgan: Go hiking it again!

Jennifer Stock: I want to join you this time!

Morgan: Yeah, I'm actually back at UC Santa Barbara and working as a marine scientist for the Benioff Ocean Initiative, which is an organization, basically a CSP that's focused on applied ocean problem solving.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic. How about you, Jocelyn?

Jocelyn: I'm working as a policy analyst looking at fisheries management for the state of California, and there's a big effort underway right now. The Marine Life Management Act is being implemented. I am working to represent conservation interests and focused on helping fishing communities to make sure that we have an economically and environmentally thoughtful approach to fishery management.

Jennifer Stock: Wow! Both of you are total powerhouses! I'm really impressed. Great job, and it's so exciting that you've been able to get right into the workforce for helping support people appreciating our coastal resources and treating them well!

Jocelyn: One more thing. We really could not have done this through hike without our best friend, Alisan Amrhein. She was our support person who managed the logistics of this trip, and she also went to Bren with us. She got her master's degree in coastal science and policy, and she's just somebody who we need to thank again and again for really making this happen. Shout out to Ally.

Jennifer Stock: You were actually a trio, so was she travelling along with you as well?

Jocelyn: Yes, so for parts of the trip, we were backpacking, and for parts of the trip, she would come meet us when we needed to recharge all of our technology for our mapping work and our video work. She hiked sections of the trail with us and just had a really wonderful time. It's so exciting to know of all the powerful women out in the world who care so much about the oceans and really dedicate our lives to making sure that this is something that the future generations will have to appreciate.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic! Morgan, Jocelyn, and Allison, all three were through hiking and supporting this wonderful opportunity to raise attention about the California Coastal trail, and I believe they kept a blog. Do you want to share your website so people can learn and see some of the highlights from your trip?

Morgan: Yeah, alright! Our website is mojocoastwalk.com.

Jennifer Stock: Excellent! mojocoastwalk.com. Well, I want to say thank you to both of you for your work and Allison as well for helping support this awesome hike. This is a great opportunity to raise awareness of the California Coastal trail, and I will certainly be following more of it. I wish you lots of luck in your future endeavors. Thanks for joining us today!

Jocelyn: Thanks so much.

Morgan: Thank you so much.

Jennifer Stock: You're welcome. Take care!

Jocelyn: Fun with the ocean!

Jennifer Stock: We've just been talking with Morgan Vassaley and Jocelyn A who hiked the California Coastal trail with support of their third support person Allison Arnheim. They are raising awareness about completing the California Coastal trail, something that would be great to finish in the next 20 or so years, I guess. It takes a while to bring these braids together, but lots of progress and new additions have been made so that is awesome. You can follow their blog at mojocoastwalk.com. Learn more about the effort and how to continue to get involved.

Well, we've had a full show here, and I'm going to try to squeeze this in. We always end our show with Positively Ocean, a curated piece by a volunteer, Liz Fox, and this week, we focus on World

Oceans Day because it is Friday! So please, stay tuned for Positively Ocean!

(Music)

Liz Fox: Hi, this is Positively Ocean where we celebrate the ocean and look at what's working well. I'm Liz Fox. In late May, a modern day scene from Huckleberry Finn played out on a small river in Illinois, all in the name of ocean conservation. Baylee Ritter was following behind when three high school students from her hometown of Pontiac and the school superintendent floated two and a half miles on a raft they built solely from riverbank debris that they had collected in the days before. The ragtag team wove plastic grocery bags to form a sail, bound barrels cast aside from farms for floatation, and improvised braided rope with plastic that they shredded from water bottles. And even though the local fire department deployed a rescue boat, they never needed a tow.

Baylee Ritter: People from the shore were calling, "Hey, do you need help? Is everything alright?" The kids would yell back, "Yeah, we're floating for a purpose!" It was a huge yelling back and forth of, "Okay, what actually is this World Oceans Day?"

Liz Fox: Ritter, a 20 year old DePaul University student, embarked on the project to creatively fulfill her responsibility as a member of the Ocean Projects Youth Advisory Council. Besides advocating for ocean conservation in Washington DC this year, the Ocean Project asked its youth leaders to host their own World Oceans Day events. Ritter held her event before the global June 8 celebration to reach kids before school got out and show them how trash in their landlocked state floats downstream to the ocean.

Baylee Ritter: This boat was more than a boat. It was something that exists purely to get people talking. I think that if we can show everybody that they too have a voice in the game and that their voice can be heard, I think people will start to care.

Liz Fox: And that's the point, said Samantha Mackiewicz, the director of World Oceans Day at the Rhode Island based advocacy organization. She maintains the website worldoceansday.org, which allows people and groups to post and find events anywhere. Mackiewicz expects more than 1000 events this year. And the ocean projects connection to a very special network of zoos and aquaria help keep everyone in the loop. Here's Mackiewicz.

Samantha Mackiewicz: We have tons and tons of zoos and aquariums celebrating World Oceans Day all over the country, especially in inland communities where they're not as connected to the sea. The zoo and aquarium can help establish that connection for them.

Liz Fox: The growing network can take credit for the day itself. The Ocean Project worked for several years to connect with and coordinate through museums, aquaria, and private sector networks to successfully petition the United Nations in 2008 to designate June 8 as World Oceans Day. The benefits of working with zoo and aquaria were twofold. First, the institutions already reached a broad audience across the country and world. And second, the audience they reach is young, open to new ideas, and eager to participate in determining their future. After kids' initial introduction to environmental science and conservations at zoos and aquaria, the Ocean Project picks up the reins to train youth, like Ritter, to work on solutions from multiple angles. That's why she'll spend the first weekend in June in Vancouver speaking to corporate executives about sustainability and her vision for the future. Then, she'll head to Washington DC for World Oceans Week.

Baylee Ritter: You know if you're at a restaurant, why do you have the people leaving the table order for you? Right? It doesn't quite make sense. I want to honestly change that dialogue and have them sit back down at the table. I want us to eat together and figure out a way where our future can be protected now.

Liz Fox: Back here in California, the Oakland Zoo will screen *Moana* on World Oceans Day and continue to educate patrons as to why there are no plastic straws, condiment packets, or drink lids in their cafe. Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary and Point Reyes National Seashore will provide a special day of programming at Bear Valley Visitor Center and the Point Reyes National Lighthouse Visitor Center. So if you're a kid, or if you have one and you're listening, head on over and remember this message from Mackiewicz.

Samantha Mackiewicz: And youth are the next wave of change, and they're the ones who should be leading the charge of World Oceans Day.

Liz Fox: And that's an example of folks doing right by the ocean. Until next time, I'll be searching for all things Positively

Ocean. For Ocean Currents and KWMR radio, this is Liz Fox reporting from Berkeley, California.

(Music)

Jennifer Stock:

Thank you, Liz Fox for reporting about World Ocean Day, which is this Friday, June 8. You can also go to worldoceansday.org to learn more about this effort to really raise awareness about the importance of our ocean for our lives. Thank you so much for tuning in to Ocean Currents, which is always the first Monday of every month. I love hearing from listeners, so if you have topics, ideas, questions, comments, please email me at cordellbank@noaa.gov. Enjoy the ocean, bay, or whatever body of water you can get into safely. This has been Ocean Currents here. Take care!

(Music)

Thank you for listening to Ocean Currents. This show is brought to you by NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary on the West Marin community radio KWMR. Views expressed by guests on this program may or may not be that of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and are meant to be educational in nature. To contact the show's host, Jennifer Stock, email me at jennifer.stock@noaa.gov. To learn more about Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, go to cordellbank.noaa.gov.

(Music)

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