



GOOD PRACTICES HANDBOOK

5 | Engaging with local communities


A benchmark of **educational tools**
and **environmental activities** already
implemented in Europe and beyond.

Ocean Sustainability through Education and Sport (OSES)



Water sports offer humans a unique connection to the marine environment. As opposed to “leisure tourists” water sports enthusiasts take advantage of this unparalleled ecosystem all year round, and many times regardless of air and water temperature. This makes water sports enthusiasts highly susceptible to environmental degradation, be it from pollution hindering water access or shifting hydrological conditions disrupting their activities.

These enthusiasts often evolve into professional athletes, ocean advocates, or water sports business owners contributing significantly to local economies. Consequently, education and awareness among water sports practitioners at all levels of engagement are essential for protecting and improving our marine environment. Sports can be a powerful tool for fostering eco-responsible actions and environmental awareness. Activities like waste collection, biodiversity awareness, coastal preservation, and oceanic issue discussions can be seamlessly integrated into sports, and help create an ocean-literate community dedicated to safeguarding our waters.



The OSES project aligns with the broader goal of supporting education through sport. We believe that sports can play a pivotal role in educating youth about environmental protection. Addressing ocean preservation serves as a pilot initiative that can be expanded to other sports in the future.

Nautical sports, including surfing, sailing, scuba diving, and kayaking, have specific environmental concerns tied to marine area preservation. One unifying value across these sports is the imperative to protect their playground.

Sport, with its educational and exemplary values, has the power to raise awareness and drive behavioral change in environmental protection. The «green sport» dimension in the European Union's Work Plan for Sport emphasizes the sector's potential to combat climate change and become more sustainable.

OSES seeks to strengthen the role of sports actors in addressing ocean conservation through three dimensions:




Education for sustainable sport: Developing tools and methodologies to instill eco-responsible actions and environmental awareness in youth through sports.



Environmentally friendly sports practice, facilities, and events: Gathering expertise to integrate environmental aspects into all sporting activities, including events, competitions, and organizational management.



Evolution of sport and its practice in the context of climate change: Focusing on ocean health and preservation by addressing activities significantly impacted by ocean challenges such as pollution, coastal development, and water quality issues.



The OSES Good Practices Handbook seeks to compile impactful actions and projects across Europe and beyond, serving as a benchmark for environmental awareness and ocean protection education.

ENGAGING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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OCEAN LITERACY FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN E

Pilot program in Ecuador integrates ocean education, ecotourism, and eco-entrepreneurship

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SEA KEEPERS NETWORK

Collaborative network actively monitors and protects marine environment



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CUADOR



As mentioned in the previous chapter, the increasing popularity of water sports has the potential to bring impacts to the environment, local economies, and most importantly communities. The growing numbers of sports enthusiasts attract tourism, and as water sports practitioners become business owners, they often relocate, bringing their services and lessons to new locations. This not only affects the industry but also leads to changes in local communities, which can be either positive or negative.

Former fishing villages may transform into top tourist destinations, and local communities may be forced to change their occupations. Sometimes these changes occur uncontrollably, catching unsuspecting communities off guard. However, in some cases, communities evolve gradually, foreseeing upcoming changes and adapting in a timely manner.

Therefore, fostering collaboration among local stakeholders, including communities, business networks, universities, research centers, civic groups, governments, and municipalities, is essential. This collaboration aims not only to promote an ocean-literate society but also to help communities adapt to the changing ocean.

In this chapter, we present initiatives that focus on working with local communities and strengthening local connections, emphasizing the importance of adaptation to the new oceanic reality. These efforts showcase the significance of proactive engagement with local stakeholders to ensure a sustainable balance between water sports activities, environmental protection, economic development, and community well-being.

OCEAN LITERACY FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN ECUADOR

«Programa de Educación Oceánica para Comunidades Sostenibles de Ecuador»

SWIMMING, SCUBA DIVING, SNORKELING 

Led by *Amiguitos del Océano (an initiative of SeaLife Diving)*

Pilot program in Ecuador integrates ocean education, ecotourism, and eco-entrepreneurship

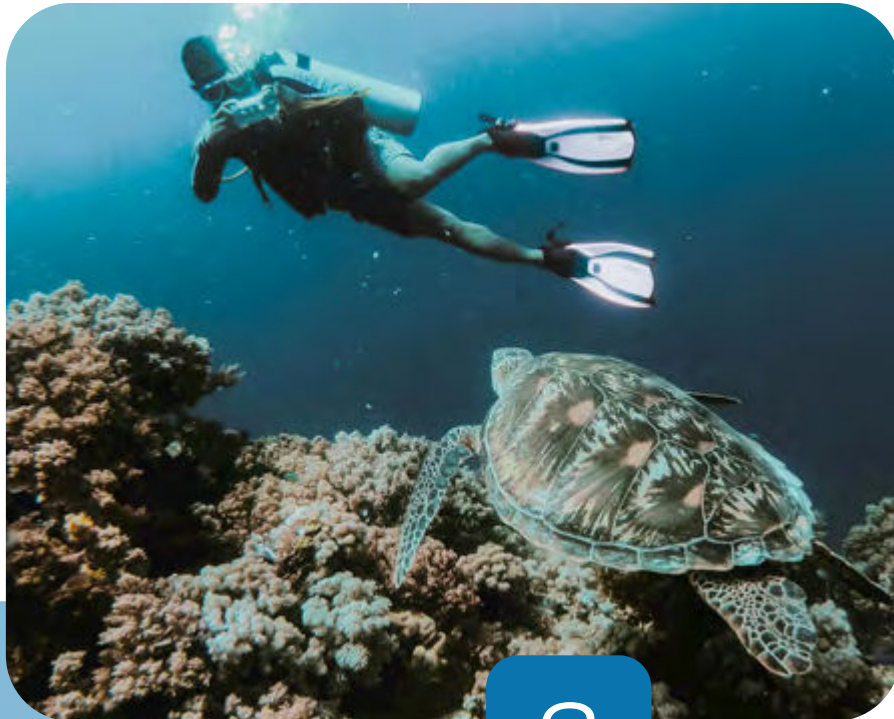
Ocean Literacy for Coastal Communities in Ecuador is a pilot program encompassing three fundamental pillars: Ocean Education, Ecotourism, and Eco-Entrepreneurship.

Our primary objective is to acquaint local coastal communities with the sea, fostering understanding and care. This is achieved through marine education programs tailored to align with community activities. Each program is deeply rooted in the local context and identity, catering to the specific needs and interests of the beneficiaries.

We initiated data gathering about the community in August 2021, and by 2022, we launched our first project. Currently, we are running three distinct projects designed to engage various stakeholders and community members:

1

The Ecoclub: This is a 10-month program tailored for local children aged 6 to 12, aimed at shaping them into community eco-leaders. Our focus is on instilling a profound understanding of the ocean's value, particularly in the context of Ayangué, an area directly influenced by a marine reserve. With one 2.5-hour session per week for 10 months, we cover topics such as sustainability, protected areas, ocean culture, and its 7 principles, etc. In addition to these sessions, we organize outdoor activities, such as intertidal tours, visits to protected areas, whale watching, and beach clean-ups. With the use of data collected in our program we established that out of the 10,000 children living in 34 coastal communities, a staggering 63% did not know how to swim, despite residing so close to the sea. Therefore we initiated a pilot project called EcoDivers to teach local children how to swim and snorkel, enhancing their connection with the ocean and encouraging shoreline clean-ups.



2

Ocean Education for Artisanal Fishermen: This program spans two months with two weekly sessions, aiming to foster a more conscious relationship with the ocean among fishermen. It seeks to impart the importance of adopting sustainable fishing practices and guides them in formulating actionable plans for each trained group. The fishermen's program includes sessions on sustainability, protected areas, ocean culture, the 7 principles of ocean culture, and good fishing practices. Towards the end of the program, we introduce a problem tree elaboration exercise, where fishermen identify problems, their causes, and consequences. Based on these findings, they prioritize one issue and develop an action plan. The fishermen have primarily focused on addressing marine litter in their communities.

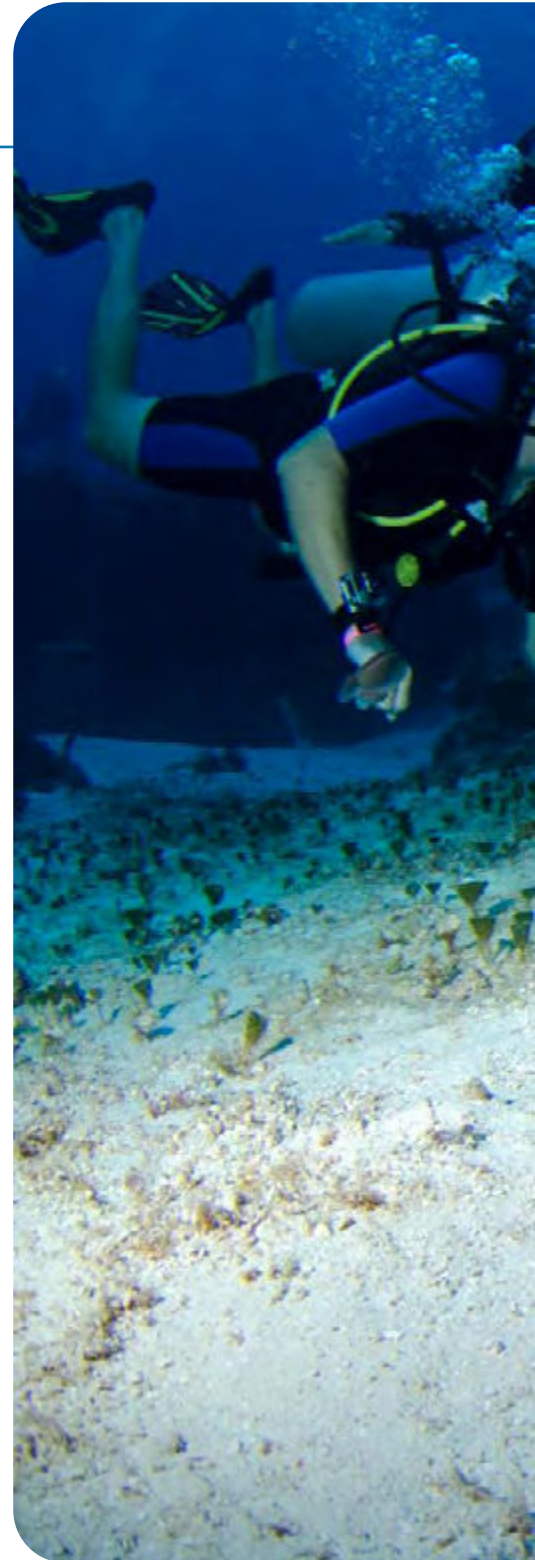
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Young Native Guides (CTC): This program imparts specialized oceanic education tailored for tourism. The young guides learn to enhance their techniques for sharing oceanic culture with tourists, including whale watching, marine reserve visits, and diving guides. Additionally, we provide training in subtidal monitoring techniques, enabling data collection on coral health within the marine reserve. While still in progress, our surveys indicate that these young guides are actively disseminating the knowledge they acquire. Each guide is certified by an international school, providing the necessary diving equipment as part of the certification process. Furthermore, we've collaboratively created species identification cards for visualizing emblematic species, which are also used during EcoDivers sessions.

Participants of all three initiatives, take part in monthly collaborative cleanup initiatives. CTCs who are trained diving guides work on the seabed, extracting debris and coral nets from protected zones, while others conduct beach cleanups in the area. These cleanup events often involve 60 to 100 participants. To date, we've received assistance from over 2,700 volunteers since 2018. In locations with established EcoClubs, monthly cleanups are a routine activity, typically involving 15-25 participants.

A sample of the collected trash is systematically retained, especially for research purposes, such as cigarette butts used in a university thesis. Recyclable materials are delivered to local collection centers, encouraging grassroots recycling efforts. Unfortunately, the majority of waste collected is disposed of at the local rubbish dump, as more sustainable alternatives are yet to be established.

Our efforts have made a significant impact, with statistics indicating that from 2018 to 2022, we've collected a staggering 5.98 tonnes of waste.





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SEA KEEPERS NETWORK

«Itsas Zaintza Sarea»

ROWING, KAYAKING, SCUBA DIVING



TARGET AUDIENCE



tourists

Led by *Mater Museoa*

Collaborative network actively monitors and protects marine environment

The Environmental Surveillance Network (Itsas Zaintza Sarea) is a collaborative initiative comprising all interested sea users including maritime workers, sea enthusiasts, and water sports practitioners. Established by Mater Museoa in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Hydraulic Works of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa (Basque Country), our network's mission is to leverage the collective knowledge of the sea for its defense and protection, advocating for the conservation of this vital ecosystem.

Participants, including rowers, swimmers, kayakers, fishermen, divers, etc. actively engage in coastal surveillance during their daily activities at sea. We use monitoring sheets to collect data and provide valuable information on the environmental status of the sea beyond the marine environment.





We organize quarterly meetings to facilitate the **sharing of observations and experiences**, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

The network also plays a crucial role in promoting good environmental practices within the local community. It provides environmental awareness resources to affiliated entities, contributing to the establishment of sustainable practices. The ultimate goal is to unite and coordinate sea surveillance efforts, showcasing the impactful work of the network's entities to the wider society.

An example of an activity conducted by our Network as a commitment to environmental stewardship is a joint waste collection across the six major river

basins of Gipuzkoa. On November 26th, conditions permitting, maritime agents and users will collaborate on a synchronized waste collection in their respective river basins.

This initiative not only emphasizes the collective responsibility of our Network but also serves to highlight the collaborative efforts of its members. Additionally, joint training sessions are being conducted to enhance environmental practices and deepen understanding of the marine ecosystem and its vulnerabilities. Together, the Environmental Surveillance Network strives to create a visible and impactful force for the care and defense of the sea.



GOOD PRACTICES HANDBOOK

The OSES Good Practices Handbook serves as a reference point for assessing our progress as a society in terms of connecting water sports with OL, environmental awareness, and marine education.

It is aimed at people and organizations at different stages of their journey towards a cleaner, more sustainable ocean, and covers a number of themes :

1. **Connecting schools, water sports, and ocean literacy**
2. **Environmental cleanups**
3. **Citizen science, environmental data collection, and monitoring**
4. **Sustainable practices in water sport tourism**
5. **Engaging with local communities**
6. **Good Practices in Professional Sports**

**Discover the other sections of
the handbook on :
www.oses-project.org**

Reference:

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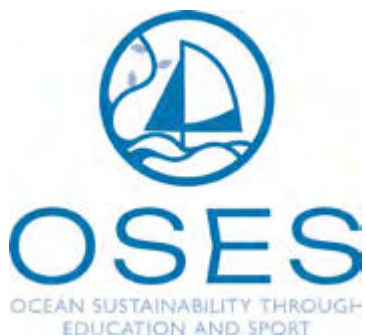
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