

# Navy's Environmental Stewardship Exhibit Opens at Wallops Flight Facility

## Traveling Exhibit Educates While it Entertains

**OFTEN WHEN YOU** see a group of kids huddled around an electronic device, they're viewing selfies or watching video clips—but kids gathered around a tablet at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia are listening to a variety of distinct whistles, clicks, and rumbling noises. These are sounds of the sea that visitors can listen to as part of the United States

Fleet Forces (USFF) Command's "Stewards of the Sea: Defending Freedom, Protecting the Environment" traveling exhibit. The exhibit helps visitors learn to distinguish between differing whale, dolphin and seal species as well as sounds like earthquakes, ice calving, and boat engines.

The exhibit, which focuses on Navy environmental stewardship, kicked off its two-year traveling tour on March 17, 2016.

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—William Wrobel



The "Stewards of the Sea: Defending Freedom, Protecting the Environment" exhibit at the NASA Wallops Flight Facility Visitors Center.

Ted Brown

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this exhibit will help us to tell that great story.

—Rear Admiral Chris Sadler

“The folks coming will get a glimpse of the Navy outside of how they typically think of them as protecting our country. It adds a new sidebar that they are protectors of the environment and the U.S.,” said Wallops Flight Facility Director William Wrobel.

The Stewards of the Sea traveling exhibit is a scaled-down version of the permanent exhibit on display at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum at Nauticus, the National Maritime Center in downtown Norfolk. After two successful years at the museum, the environmental outreach program expanded to include the traveling exhibit.

“Our environmental outreach mission is to raise awareness of the Navy’s need to train, and provide a better understanding of the protective measures the Navy takes while training,” said Tracy Riker, USFF environmental readiness and planning section head. “The end state is an increased public awareness and confidence of the Navy’s environmental stewardship efforts while accomplishing our mission.”

Part of the Navy’s process of conducting training and testing activities is maintaining environmental readiness through compliance with environmental laws. This includes analyzing potential impacts of training and testing activities on resource areas, including sediments and water quality, air quality, marine habitats, marine animals and vegetation, as well as cultural resources, socioeconomics, and public health and safety.

“It [the exhibit] explains the mitigation measures that we take before and during our exercises at sea including activities that involve active sonar and munitions in order to minimize any chance of our actions negatively impacting marine species,” said Rear Admiral Chris Sadler, USFF reserve deputy director of maritime operations, who spoke at the exhibit’s opening. “Nothing can replace actual training in a realistic marine environment... this exhibit will help us to tell that great story.”

The sounds of the sea audio gallery provides visitors insight into the challenges sonar technicians face while trying to detect ultra-quiet submarines, as they have to be able to identify and correctly differentiate between marine mammals, natural sounds, and man-made noise.



Laura Busch, a natural resources specialist assigned to USFF Command, plays a video for Dave Mergan and his two daughters at the “Stewards of the Sea: Defending Freedom, Protecting the Environment” exhibit.

Todd Kraft



Fire Controlman 1st Class Jason Mosher discusses how the Navy compresses plastic waste with a child at the “Stewards of the Sea” exhibit. The Navy uses plastic waste processors to compress and melt shipboard-generated plastic waste into dense disks suitable for long-term storage.

Lt. Bobbie A. Camp





A visitor looks through the “Big Eyes” interactive during the grand opening of the “Stewards of the Sea” exhibit.

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Evelyn Shotwell, executive director of the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce, reads about the science of sonar during the grand opening of the “Stewards of the Sea” exhibit.

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“The ocean is generally noisier in coastal areas where about 80 percent of ocean life and many human activities occur, which is typically where most nations’ submarines operate today,” said Joe Atangan, a science advisor from USFF. “Many nations and potential adversaries have ultra-quiet submarines with long range missiles and torpedoes that can directly threaten our homeland and naval forces, as well as the world’s merchant shipping which carry 90 percent of all international trade by volume.”

Like the permanent exhibit, the traveling exhibit also highlights steps the Navy takes to protect marine life through shipboard plastic waste management.

“You’d be surprised at how shocked visitors are to find out that we even recycle,” said Yeoman 1st Class Agileo Bello, USFF administration department lead petty officer, who volunteers at local outreach events. “It’s been a great experience to educate the next generation about


the Navy in general and our environmental programs.”

Looking through giant “Big Eye” binoculars available at the exhibit, a visitor can be a virtual Sailor and scan the horizon, simulating standing lookout duty on a ship that is underway. Visitors may spot a whale pod, a flock of sea birds, or even some seals. This simulation allows visitors to “report” their sightings to the captain just as a Navy lookout would, enabling the ship to operate safely and avoid causing harm to the marine mammals.

The exhibit also explores the science of sound and the accompanying research the Navy conducts to better understand the effects of manmade sound, like sonar, on marine animals.

The Stewards of the Sea traveling exhibit will begin to rotate to locations in Washington, D.C. after Labor Day. Over the next two years, it will continue touring at a variety of museums throughout the country.

“For 2017, we’re targeting science and maritime museums in Chicago, Florida, North Carolina and New York to try to reach the public outside of fleet concentration areas to inform them about the Navy’s environmental stewardship efforts,” said Riker.

The permanent exhibit at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum will expand to feature the Navy’s energy initiatives within the next couple of years. For more information about the Stewards of the Sea program visit [www.public.navy.mil/usff/environmental/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.public.navy.mil/usff/environmental/Pages/default.aspx). 

Ted Brown  
U.S. Fleet Forces Command  
757-836-4427  
DSN: 836-4427  
[theodore.brown@navy.mil](mailto:theodore.brown@navy.mil)