

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!

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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. So we're here at Ocean Currents and 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 of the KWMR listening area on the West Marin coast are the Greater Farallones Islands and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, which together protects 4581 square miles on rocky shorelines, sandy sea floors, rocky banks, deep sea canyons, and maritime artifacts.

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There is a wave of change and involvement afoot, and it's led by youth. Across sectors of our biggest societal challenges, the youth are making strides and getting their voices heard while participating in civics and directly learning about the power of one's voice. Heirs to our Oceans is a rising tide of young leaders around the globe who are taking the ocean crisis into their own hands. They're educating themselves and others, bringing hope and solutions to the surface, and are creating waves of change that will ensure the health of our blue planet for their generation and for future generations. They are not PhDs, Master's levels, or even high school graduates yet, but they are demonstrating how passionate and directed voices matter. Heirs to our Oceans are the next generation and the future generations who will inherit this planet and all that comes with it after our generation is done with it.

Today, I'm thrilled to welcome two of the youth members of Heirs and one of the founders, Charley, April, and Ashlyn Clark. I want to have each of you actually introduce yourselves on the air. Tell us where you're from, your favorite ocean animal and your focus area for Heirs. There we go! Welcome!

- Charley Peebler:* Thank you! My name is Charlie Peebler. I am from Heirs to our Oceans, and I work on coral, derelict fishing gear, and issues that come with recycling.
- Jennifer Stock:* Excellent.
- Aislinn Clark:* Hi, my name is Aislinn Clark! I'm 12 years old and from Pescadero. My favorite sea animal has to be the orca because they're so beautiful and smart. I'm focusing on marine protected areas and ocean policy.
- Jennifer Stock:* Wonderful.
- April Peebler:* Hi, my name is April Peebler. I'm the executive director at Heirs to our Oceans and one of the founding family members. I don't think I have one favorite sea animal. I think I adore them all, but octopus are pretty cool. Yeah, octopus are my favorite.
- Jennifer Stock:* Awesome! Well, it is so exciting to finally have you on the air! I learned about Heirs a couple years ago with the Ocean Film Festival and was like, "What is this group all about?" I'm so thrilled to have you here. It's just great to have youth that are really leading the way. Thanks for coming all the way up to Point Reyes. Let's just hear a little bit about the beginnings! Tell us how did Heirs form? Maybe April, this is for you. Talk us a little bit through that. How did Heirs form and tell us about the beginnings.
- April Peebler:* The very beginnings go back to my family, along with so many other families, who I think have gone rogue in the world of education, realizing that the school systems were not situating our kids in the best place for them to deal with what they were going to be inheriting. When my kids were pre-K and K, after trying out many schools, I extracted them from schools, left my practice, and decided to adopt my own learning model where I started working with small groups. It was an interdisciplinary learning model where all subject matters tied to the theme of solving a real world issue. That's how my kids came to grow up with various themes through the years from human rights issues and how to feed a planet in 2050 of 9 billion-- so food issues-- and all kinds of processing through the years.
Three years ago, we lived near the coast in the peninsula of San Francisco Bay Area. My daughters, both of them have always had an affinity for the ocean, but one in particular said we need to have a year of solving the ocean problems. That blossomed into customizing classes to prepare them for then going on the next year and actually not processing the problems but instead going out

and doing something. Classes were formed with the Marine Science Institute, naturalists, Cal Academy of Sciences, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Then we formed a group of about 11 that we now call Founding Heirs. This is a collective of kids who are passionate about ocean issues, and we formed a 501c3 Heirs to our Oceans. That group of Founding Heirs were kids who do not learn in brick and mortar but instead learn their writing, their math, or science... it feeds their focus areas, which are areas of passion. It's incredibly important for successful education to be something they're interested in. Each of the kids have a particular human impact or resource or marine policy oriented work that they're focused on.

Jennifer Stock: That's fantastic. What's the youngest Heir and the oldest Heir?

April Peebler: I'm glad you asked that because most important to us was to have done this at what I think is the sweet spot in terms of a child able to really absorb and process yet still have this incredible fire. Their trajectories are not yet determined. We found that the middle school age period was such a sweet spot. The Founding Heirs were ages 10 to 13. Now two years later, we now have some that are freshmen in high school. Although with the Founding Heirs, like I said, they're not in brick and mortar schools. Age-wise usually 14 or 15, but still, at our international camp, we still have them as young as nine. Yeah, there's a wonderful tween middle school period that I hope our system can adjust and recognize the opportunity we have for kids to start processing this creative creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. We should not wait until it's an elective in university.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic. What an amazing model for education that you're putting at work and bringing others into. That's fantastic!

April Peebler: Let's hope it's applied at all public schools.

Jennifer Stock: I'm involved in the school system right now. I'm a parent too, and it's really interesting coming in with a youngun and seeing what's happening and trying to figure out what's the right path for our young learners. You're all involved in the ocean. That's fantastic! Aislinn, tell us what was your passion for getting into Heirs, and what was the first thing... was it the orcas or specific topic that brought you into it?

Aislinn Clark: Well, April's daughter, Dakota, who had the idea of starting this organization, was my friend. We took a marine science class together. I was invited to join, and then decided to join because

I've lived by the ocean for my entire life. I've played on the beach with my little brother for as long as I could remember. I love sea stars as well. I used to tie pooling all the time, and I used to see tons of sea stars everywhere. Then, one day, they just all started disappearing. Today, I know that was because of a disease called Sea Star Wasting Syndrome, which is happening from Alaska to Mexico. But then I was like, "Why are all the seas started disappearing?" This is awful. I need to save them. I need to save the oceans because that's so important to my health and my little brother's health and eventually, all our children.

Jennifer Stock: What did you learn about the sea star wasting event that happened?

Aislinn Clark: Sea Star Wasting Syndrome happened. I think it started happening in 2013 to 2015. It's probably caused by climate change, and it's turning the sea stars into this goop. They're dying, and it's so gross. I've seen so many goopy sea stars that I definitely need to start working to save them, I think.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, there's a lot of work happening to monitor the sea stars up and down. I've been learning a little bit about that, too. Have you been seeing any new sea stars? I've heard some sea stars are on the rebound.

Aislinn Clark: Yeah, I have been starting to notice like a few sea stars. Every once in a while, I'll see them and that gives me hope for the future.

Jennifer Stock: That's fantastic. Yeah, there's a lot of resilience. It seems that we can put a lot of hope on when we start to see that. From my understanding, they were really putting the cues around temperature as a cue for this potential disease that went up and down. They don't know exactly what caused it, but temperature was definitely involved. That is definitely a potential change here with climate change. Charley, how about you? You are, I take it, the executive director's daughter.

Charley Peebler: Yes. I've always been near the ocean my entire life, but I think the real deal breaker for me was definitely aquariums. If you bring me to an aquarium, I will ignore you. I will look at the fish. The fish are more interesting to me than you are when I'm in an aquarium.

I went to the California Academy of Sciences, one of my absolute favorite places, and they have a giant Pacific octopus there. When I was five, I got to see the octopus and that was incredible to me. I was mind blown. These animals are very, very fascinating. Then, in 2016, actually, almost exactly two years from now, it was in

May. I was at the tide pools with my cousin, and we were looking for a small nudibranch. That's a sea slug called the Hopkins rose. It's the most hot pink you will ever see in nature. It's small. It's about the size of your thumbnails, but it's very bright pink. I found one, and it turned out there was an octopus right nearby. It was a California two-spot octopus. It was one of the smaller octopods, I guess. It came out from underneath this boulder. The tentacles were probably about one and a half feet long at most. It started squirting water at us and was turning from like this pebbly gray to smooth red and back again. It was just an incredible experience. It was amazing. We have a video, and I think that was the moment I kind of fell in love with the ocean and realized, "Wow, these creatures are really special. I really want to protect these creatures." Yeah, I guess that's really my story.

Jennifer Stock: Thank you! There was a two-spot octopus up here?

Charley Peebler: Yeah, so it was at the Pillar Point tide pools and kind of Halfmoon Bay.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, I think they're more of a Southern California species. So already I'm like, "Oh, this is interesting!" Usually, we have red octopus around here, which I've seen.

Charley Peebler: I described it to an expert, and they're saying, "Oh, this sounds like a two-spot, but it might have been a red."

Jennifer Stock: Wow! Well, they're so amazing. It feels like you're watching an art show when you see an octopus, right? They're just all over the place and changing right before your eyes. That's wonderful. I love hearing people's connections and when they fell in love with the ocean. I can't even remember mine. It's great. I want to talk a little bit about some of the most current work. Charley, you were just at a very important meeting. This is where I find it to be interesting. A youth led organization where the youth really want to speak out in an adult led world where they have meetings and specific policies of the way they work. I'm curious how that feels to you as a younger person and you as an adult, how those two worlds intersect. Maybe we could focus on that as an example, the meeting that you were just recently at, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting, right?

Charley Peebler: Yeah. At the council, I testified on deep sea corals because corals are a part of my focus area, and it's a little known fact that we have deep sea corals on the California coast and also on the US West Coast. We were in Portland, Oregon, and I was talking about how

these important reefs are being affected by bottom trawling. I did not expect to get emotional, but all of a sudden I did. I think a part of that was that was useful was that it also brought up this realization that this is really coming to these adults. I feel like one of the harder parts of being in a mainly adult led world of ocean conservation is they don't expect you to know the science. They expect that a little kid loves the ocean, and she wants to save dolphins or she wants to protect the corals or the octopus. I feel like when us, youth, share the knowledge that we know of, adults are really taken back and they're surprised. They didn't expect us to know about this specific type of coral in the deep sea that is very valued for jewelry, black corals or the gold corals.

Another part of that is when we're going to special events, we might not get in because it's deemed an adult event. For example, like a dive event we were unable to go to because kids weren't allowed, which was very interesting because they wanted youth there. I feel like a lot of these events are exclusively for adults. Then, some adults are taken back when you know about the problems and want to contribute to solutions.

Jennifer Stock:

Great. Thank you for sharing that experience. I can understand that frustration. How about you April?

April Peebler:

This has definitely been an interesting journey for me to watch and experience because as Charlie was mentioning, when she's referring to events, some of them are important human impact conferences. Aislinn is really involved in processing policymaking and so to have Congress persons being in a room with the general populace to discuss, for instance, oil spill issues or whether or not we're going to drill off our California coast. What I'm constantly hearing and seeing is that this is for adults. Largely, those in the room are white educated gray haired adults. And I keep looking around and thinking about everything they're talking about, the people who are most impacted, aren't in this room right now. For me to get a space for the Heirs at their ages into these rooms, it has been an uphill battle. As much as we see marginalized communities consistently, especially I think in our country due to the struggle fabrics, youth indiscriminately. Just their age, they're marginalized and excluded, yet they're going to be the ones facing the bigger issues at hand.

Jennifer Stock:

Absolutely.

April Peebler:

So it's something that I definitely have pushed. And I don't want to say in a bullish way, I'll say in a resolute way. But you know, the

mama bear comes out where I don't know these discussions need to be had with our youth and and listen to them, please. We have made headway. I mean, Heirs I think is on the map in some regards for certain, but it hasn't been easy and it still isn't. As much as we can, which is why I so appreciate you inviting youth voices on your show, because to get their perspective amplified is imperative.

Jennifer Stock:

Absolutely. One of the things I want to compliment you guys on is you're very effective in your tone and your style of communicating. I've seen some of the films that you've produced, some on your website and some that were submitted to the Ocean Film Festival. They're very articulate, look at the camera, you've had some coaching and help, and they're much more effective than some of the other films that I've seen where it's not the greatest audio or visuals. I really commend you on that and also some of the things that I've seen you speak at and some of the speeches online. You've really worked at your communication skills, which is probably one of the biggest things. Do either of you want to talk about what it was like to start talking in front of these big audiences about these issues? You can both take a turn.

Charley Peebler:

This is Charley speaking. I've always been practicing public speaking since a young age, and we had country days. We would have a country be picked for us, for example, France or Costa Rica. Then, each of us kids would pick a subject we wanted to talk about. For example, with France, I talked about one of their famous singers, Edith Piaf. Then, we would speak and give facts about this subject's life or what the culture is like. We'd share with other kids about that country. I was used to public speaking. I've always done acting class with Shakespeare, but bringing it to a new level and speaking to other kids who I don't know was definitely a different and scarier experience for me. Also speaking, for example, on a radio show or on a TV show was also new and different for me. It's weird not to see your audience's face. I feel like it was a harder transition to learn and create a presentation that's based off of real scientific data that if I get wrong could really reflect upon me from talking to my friends about Spain.

Jennifer Stock:

How about you, Aislinn?

Aislinn Clark:

Yeah, I started learning how to present and getting skills to learn how to present about two years ago. I used to do an improvisational acting class before where I would act in front of people, but that was like as a different character. I didn't really have to present anything scientific. I just had to say a few funny

lines, sing a song, and then I was done. Then, I joined Heirs, and I had to develop these skills to bring this message to kids all over the world. I started taking a class with a wonderful... she's someone that helped me learn how to present. Her name is Winifred Hagen. She's just a wonderful person in general, and that gave me so many more skills that I didn't think I would have to use in so many different ways. Now, I can walk up to people and talk. I can present on a stage, no matter if the audience is smaller, larger, or anything like that. Of course, in the beginning, I was super, super scared of presenting, but after a while, I got used to it. Now, I love to present, and I love to be dynamic and reach people all over the world.

Jennifer Stock: That's great. Something I'm hearing over and over again is reaching other students around the world and bringing more students and youth into this movement. Does Heirs have a movement afoot right now to start up other clubs or action groups of youth that you're trying to grow to magnify your voice?

Charley Peebler: Yeah. We present at schools and at different conferences, and almost always, we get a nice beneficial response. I think our executive director could speak more to the issues that are coming with starting new chapters. Otherwise, it turns out that kids are very, very responsive to something that we care about, and many people care about the oceans. We have currently four chapters... actually more than four chapters now, but there are chapters in four different areas. In Palau, which is an island nation in Micronesia, so it's southwest of Guam. There's several chapters there. Then, there's also a chapter in Pescadero, the Founding Heirs chapter. Then there's a chapter in Orange County.

Jennifer Stock: What's the connection to Micronesia and Palau?

Charley Peebler: Our executive director went to Palau for a law internship, and we really have seen the issues with the oceans there. The reef sanctuary they made was incredible to us when we first went there. That was definitely part of the first inspiration. We've known some of the people there before. It's overall a beautiful place as well and highly biodiverse. There we go. It's a very important place for oceans.

Jennifer Stock: I would imagine they're really on the forefront of ocean change being an island nation with sea level rise, food, and really dependent on the healthy oceans so they're probably engaged and interested to participate too.

Aislinn Clark: Yeah. Last year, we did a human impact on our oceans and youth empowerment camp, and we kind of became like an ocean protecting family. It's really interesting to learn more about the marine environment in Palau. We knew about the shark sanctuary and the MPA, the Marine Protected Area, there. We didn't know so much about the actual chemistry of the oceans or on land like the tar patches and how that intersects with climate change in the oceans. It was really cool to learn about the whole ecology and ecosystem in Palau.

Jennifer Stock: Have you thought about bringing Heirs to students in the interior United States, away from the ocean? Their lives are affected by the ocean too, but they may not have a connection. Have you all thought about that?

Charley Peebler: Definitely. We used to have a chapter in Kansas. I'm not sure what happened to that chapter, but we're definitely thinking about reaching people all across the country because no matter where you live, all waterways are connected to the oceans. Everyone is going to be affected by climate change and by our ocean being depleted. It's really important to spread that message and get kids involved no matter where they are.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic! I think we'll just take a quick break right now and come back in a few minutes to talk about some of the successes that you've had. We'll be back!
(Music)

You're tuned in to Ocean Currents here. And we're talking with Heirs to our Ocean. We're talking about some of the challenges and the successes of youth speaking up for the ocean. April, I want to come back to that. We were just talking a little about other chapters for Heirs to our Oceans, and you made a connection with Kansas, which is great away from the ocean. How did you land with Kansas?

April Peebler: My husband's from Kansas, and we really felt that it's so important to us. One thing that the Heirs did was went to Standing Rock because we understand so well the importance of "water is life" and we are a water planet. It all connects to the ocean, and that's a big premise of Heirs to our Oceans. In Kansas, we really tried to land right in Middle America, and we spent four days in four different schools. There were fantastic presentations with a great response.

The biggest challenge we found, and this was a year ago now, was ultimately the adult support. I think with the current climate, it is very, very challenging. Believe it or not, we can hold hands and get more momentum happening across the Pacific and island nations right now, where we have three solid chapters in Palau, one in Guam, several Heirs throughout Micronesia and individual Heirs. It's easier, believe it or not, then to go off our coast here in the US because of challenges with adult support politically. We're not giving up. We're hoping this is going to be something... that we can crack that nut as time goes on. We're working on something special for next year. In that regard, it's going to be another one of our very effective two weeks camps where we're going to bring in folks who have been segregated, marginalized, alienated from one another in the various communities into a one purpose-- to protect our oceans and waterways together, for two weeks to start making headways around tha. It's easier for us to take a 24 hour flight to Micronesia to get things started.

Jennifer Stock: Interesting. I'm curious if Kansas has adopted the next generation science standards. Not every state in the United States has, but these new standards are really about doing science and acknowledging all the different aspects of science and the environment. It is a much more positive and innovative way for becoming thinkers and thinking about the planet. I'm kind of curious if they have adopted them in that state. I don't know.

April Peebler: I'll have to find out. My husband's mother is a retired educator, so I'll find out. It'll be interesting.

Jennifer Stock: Good! That's fantastic! I know there's been some successes in Colorado with the Colorado Ocean Coalition.

April Peebler: Yes.

Jennifer Stock: Building momentum with people in Colorado...

April Peebler: Super effective!

Jennifer Stock: There's the potential. We just got to keep hammering down the doors, and I think that might be one of the learning lessons and one of the challenges that you might be facing. That's what I want to ask. What do you perceive as the biggest challenges to making progress on the issues that you're working on and your other Heirs colleagues are?

Aislinn Clark: I think one of the biggest challenges is really inspiring those who don't or didn't care. Those who don't or didn't care are the ones that are most important to inspire because they're the ones who are going to take more action in their lives when they are empowered.

An amazing and beautiful story about this is the girl who started our chapter in Guam. She didn't know about the oceans very much even though she's an islander, and unfortunately that's one of the challenges there is because in Micronesia, their school systems don't allow them to get out into nature very often. They don't get to go out onto the water very often. She didn't know much about the ocean. She came into our camp a little bit late because that's the only time flights would allow her. She was very homesick, and she didn't know she was coming to camp until the day before. She turned out to be one of the most empowered youth leaders, and she ran for class president and won back at her home in Guam. She has started one of the most successful Heirs chapters, and we're very proud of her. I'm excited to see her next year or this year actually, as a youth leader instead of as a participant. She will be in one of the roles that some of the US Heirs were in last year, as a youth leader. I'm very excited. I think that's one of the most important things is to empower those who didn't care at first because they will be the ones who care the most.

Jennifer Stock: That's a fantastic story. Now, this camp, is this a two week camp, and is this really focused on generating an action plan for the future for advocacy and speaking out? Is it more about what's learned about this environment and the interconnections? Or is it a little bit of both?

Charley Peebler: This camp is a human impact on our oceans and youth empowerment camp. Last year, it was 10 days with almost 30 kids. This year, it'll be two weeks with 40 kids. In this camp, we've learned about the Palau ecosystem, and we learned about what is affecting Palau now. For example, climate change is affecting one of their main food sources which is taro. It's also about learning public speaking skills and human connectivity. It's a very interesting experience to go into a new culture and learn about a new culture. We only knew a few of the kids there who we had met previously in other Palau trips. It is really cool to make new friends who look at the different things in you. It really shows how far you can go if you have the same passion as someone else. During this camp, we learn human connectivity, public speaking skills, and how to be an empowered youth. Those who were the leader Heirs, who taught about some of the scientific stuff that we had known, we learned stuff. We learned new information from the

Palau Heirs. They also taught us, and it was a really amazing experience overall.

Jennifer Stock: That's fantastic! Now, you also have something else coming up in June. March for the Ocean is coming up, and I understand Heirs is very involved in helping shape this march. Who wants to talk a little bit about the March for the Ocean?

Aislinn Clark: Yeah. March for Oceans is happening June 9 in Washington DC. Heirs to our Ocean has been very involved in helping shape this march. Originally, it was led mostly by adults. We're trying to get more youth involved and questioning how we can really bring youth around this event because they're going to be the most affected by the oceans in the future. It's very important to get them inspired and very important to get them marching together for one cause.

Jennifer Stock: What is the March for the Oceans about?

Aislinn Clark: The March for our Oceans, for us, is not only about the oceans, but it's also about our waterways because it's all interconnected. We will be marching not only for the oceans but for our waterways--for the water in Flint, Michigan, for the Amazon, and the other waterways that are being impacted by illegal mining. We will be marching for all waterways and for protection of all water, not only because our oceans are one of the most important bodies of water, but also because freshwater is where we get our drinking water. Fresh water is what feeds our crops. Even though it's not most of the water on the planet, it's the most important water on the planet.

Jennifer Stock: You're trying to get some other youth to come participate at this event, I'm assuming. There'll be speakers, and where is it happening? Is it in front of the White House?

April Peebler: June 9 is the actual march, but there will be a gathering of youth and different events on the 7th, 8th, and 9th. It's been interesting to have been on the steering committee since we started processing this last summer. We're watching some growing pains as things shift, and there's becoming a paradigm shift where those who have led the way and are our wonderful hero ocean elders, the youth though are coming in with full force. We're seeing that in many regards to rising up from oppressive situations from Hardland to the our Children's Trust action Juliana versus US with young plaintiffs bringing action against the US around climate change. You're seeing in this last year, this amazing trajectory with youth rising up. It's interesting to watch it around March for the Ocean

because you're seeing this collision of the old traditional ways meet the new resolution. We need to do things from a different perspective. There are two different perceptions coming into the room around it, and it'll be an interesting thing to I think see each organization come in depending on where it aligns traditionally or more youth and paradigm shifting oriented and still bringing their message while doing it together. It's not as Charley said a March for the Ocean for us. It is truly a march for our future, which is what the Heirs at their Heirs retreat processes to really be. It has to be about our future. Water is life, and we have had enough. Yes, time's up, like bringing all those pieces into "what is this march about" -- it's recognizing that we need to rise up on our water planet.

Jennifer Stock:

Fantastic! I can't wait to see. I hope it's as publicized as the other ones are and all over the place that people that couldn't hear everybody speaking about this important topic can. I know you're working on a film. This has been a project to try to grow the Heirs networks, and you're working on a film. Do you want to tell us a little bit about the film? Do one of you want to talk about it?

Aislinn Clark:

We're making out a full feature documentary that will include action, and it'll include scientific data. It is about what's happening to our oceans here and now and what will be happening to our oceans and our planet in the future. It's also going to include comedy. We're doing a "Plastic Busters" skit that's based off of Ghostbusters, but instead of ghosts, we are busting plastic because that's one of the main impacts to our oceans.

We have over almost 1000 hours of footage now, but we're hoping to have the film done by June of next year. Is that correct? Yeah, that's June of next year. I'm very excited for that to come out. I hope that by the time we do have it out, it's going to be an incredible piece of art. Just like "Mission Blue" was by Dr. Sylvia Earle. That was a very inspiring movie, and I hope that our movie inspires as well.

Jennifer Stock:

Yeah, I've seen film being such a role for communicating these days and moving people to action happens because they've been moved by a film. I think that's a wonderful way to bring the art and the science to new audiences and maybe grow your network. I have a little clip here we can play from your teaser, which is on your website. So standby, let's pull this up.

Teaser Recording:

San Jose had an Heirs to our Oceans club in school. We probably have this message out pretty fast. So, we really need kids all over the nation to help with this project. The kids who are doing this are

going to send a message out to society. That “wow these kids are actually getting outside of their comfort zone,” and they're telling us something that's really important. The best way for people to learn about orcas is not through seeing them in tanks.

Hi, I'm Charley, and I'm going to be talking about how we are going to connect with an island nation, Palau. We want to collaborate...

Jennifer Stock: This is exciting! This is a great little teaser on your website. Is this one way you might be able to invite others to become part of the Heirs network if this film is completed, being able to distribute this?

April Peebler: Yeah, it is. We can't fly everywhere. We don't want to fly everywhere. We're very aware of carbon emissions, and we buy our offsets. Nonetheless, once the film is made, hopefully that can be distributed in a way that not only inspires youth to be aware at an early age of ocean protection but also adults to support them, hopefully everywhere. So that's the intention.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic! Good luck with that! I guess people can learn more about this film by going to your website. What's your website?

Charley Peebler: Our website is heirstoourocean.com. We have blog posts, our teaser, and how you can donate and support us.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic! Well, I just want to say, we have about a minute left, and I want to give you an opportunity just to share any last words that you'd like to leave with listeners about the work that you're doing, the passion that you have for helping protect the ocean, and bring more people into this movement.

Charley Peebler: I think I'd like to say that what you can do to protect our oceans, you can reduce single use plastics in your life -- so bottles, bags, plastic utensils, coffee lids. You can also walk or bike to school or work. You can turn off your AC during the summer, or turn off your heater during the winter. Sweaters are very useful. There are many solutions on our website. We do have a solutions infographic. Yeah, there we go. I think that everyone can do small parts to save the ocean. That's one of the most important parts of getting the community involved is small actions added up to create a big action.

Jennifer Stock: Thanks, Charley.

- Aislinn Clark:* Yeah, I would say don't be afraid to make change. Don't be afraid to take the next steps in order to save our world because anyone can do it.
- Jennifer Stock:* Fantastic. Thanks, Ashlynn!
- April Peebler:* Adults out there, please make space for your kids to learn about what they are going to inherit and encourage them to process solutions and also give them space to follow their passions.
- Jennifer Stock:* Fantastic. Thank you so much! It's been really inspiring listening to you all talk about where you're going and have a lot of hope that this is going to grow, this movement to bring more youth into the fold of helping to take care of the ocean and the whole planet. I mean, the ocean is most of the planet.
- April Peebler:* Thank you so much for having us!
- Aislinn Clark:* Thank you!
- Charley Peebler:* Thank you!
- Jennifer Stock:* Well, we're gonna take a break here and actually play our Positively Ocean episode for the month. We are actually focusing on a fantastic story that is all about straws and what along with the single use plastics effort that Charley mentioned earlier. There's a lot of work going on trying to reduce the single use straws being used in restaurants and eateries. So 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. If you're not on the beach right now, you're probably dreaming about being on one. Imagine the waves lapping, salty air, maybe a lighthouse horn in the distance, you sit and stretch out in the warm sand, dig your feet in, and feel the unmistakable rigidity of a plastic straw. Chances are, if you've been to a beach, you've seen a straw or two. That's because our oceans are teeming with discarded single use plastics that make our on-the-go lifestyle seem convenient and flexible. But along the California coast, communities are working to make meaningful change, and their efforts are spreading.

Jackie Nunez is the founder of the Last Plastic Straw and program director of the Plastic Pollution Coalition. She had her last plastic

straw in 2009. Since then, she's told her story around the world to show the impact of passive choices.

Jackie Nunez: When I was served my little last straw at a beachside bar in Santa Cruz looking over at Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary, you'd get water and then it comes with a straw in it. I'm like "what the heck" and that was it.

Liz Fox Reducing plastic straws seems like a simple change with a big environmental impact, she said. First, straws are usually unnecessary, and straws made of paper, metal, glass, or compostable material can replace plastic for people who need help swallowing or lifting a drink, Nunez said.

Jackie Nunez: That's really the gist of it, right? Wants and needs. Do we really need this?

Liz Fox: Leaders from Santa Monica to Davis and from San Luis Obispo to Berkeley are even changing the laws. Some cities choose straws upon request policy. In fact, the state assembly will vote on similar legislation later this year.

Berkeley has the most comprehensive proposal, requiring alternatives to plastics for straws in local restaurants. The bill that councilwoman Sophie Hahn introduced goes even further. It would add a 25 cent fee for single use cups and to-go containers. It would require that all single use items are recyclable or compostable within the city's refuse system, and it requires eating establishments to serve food with reusable dishes and cutlery. The legislation passed its first hurdle in April and will be returned to City Council for a final vote in the fall.

Hahn said she hopes the new rules will reduce the \$11 million annually that the city spends to clean streets, sidewalks, and waterways and to empty public trash cans.

Sophie Hahn: We have been cleaning up the garbage generated by this proliferation of the fast food idea. They are profiting, and the cost of cleaning up after it has fallen to cities and other public agencies. And it's falling into our environment.

Liz Fox: John, a UC Berkeley student, recently ordered lunch at the downtown Subway sandwich shop. A clerk handed him a single-use cup with a plastic straw and a plastic lid so he could fill up at the soda fountain.

(Soda fountain noise)

He said he hadn't heard of the new legislation. He said he thought it was a good idea, but:

John: A lot of things we use are plastic, so straws aren't really in the forefront.

Liz Fox: And that's a point Nunez has been drilling for years.

Jackie Nunez: You know, nobody said this to stop the pollution of the planet, we're just not aware. We've been sold this convenience, and all this plastic is in our lives, when we ask for it or not. And it's the kind of a wake up moment when people are like, "You know, we don't really need this stuff."

Liz Fox: She knows awareness brings change. Since 2009, she's been the unofficial aggregator for global ditch the straw efforts. Usually, a group starts with a beach cleanup, and after finding plastic straws, they ask local restaurant owners to rethink putting one in every drink every time.

Then in 2015, came the video. Christine Figgenger, a marine biologist, netted a female Kemp's ridley turtle with something protruding from its nose. She filmed for eight excruciating minutes as her colleague tugged and pulled at it with pliers. The turtle bled throughout the grueling extraction. Halfway through, the team identified the object. Here's Figgenger at the time:

Christine Figgenger: Plastic? What? Don't tell me it's a freaking straw? It's a straw, a plastic straw. That is just stupid. So, this is the reason why we do not need plastic straws.

Liz Fox: The video went viral, and a sea change ensued. And it's not just local governments that are eliminating plastic. In mid April, Theresa May announced the United Kingdom will ban the sale of all single use plastic including straws, stirrers, and cotton swabs in 2019.

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 in Berkeley, California.

(Music)

Jennifer Stock:

Thank you, Liz Fox, for putting that story together about straws. It's very exciting to see all the momentum people are getting involved and speaking up about removing straws from restaurants and not just handing them out. I hope that momentum continues, and I know Heirs will be involved in helping spread that word with the single use plastics as well.

Ocean Currents is the first Monday of every month at our new time 11am to 12. Ocean Currents also has a Twitter feed you can follow at Ocean KWMR to get information about this program and supporting links on the web about each show and the topics that we cover on Ocean Currents. So check that out! I love hearing from listeners. If you have ideas for topics, questions, or comments, please email me at cordellbank.noaa.gov or tweet at Ocean KWMR. Thanks so much for listening! Enjoy the ocean, bay, or whatever body of water you can get into safely. This has been Ocean Currents here. Take care!

(Music)

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