



**Reef Check**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

[WWW.REEFCHECK.ORG](http://WWW.REEFCHECK.ORG)

## **2025–2030**

**REEF CHECK EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO SAVE OUR REEFS AND OCEANS. LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION.**

# Reef Check Overview

Reef Check was launched in 1997 to conduct the first global citizen science survey of coral reef health. Today, our tropical program consists of more than 40 chapters that operate autonomously using our standardized training and survey protocols to monitor coral reef health and report global data to the Foundation. In 2005, Reef Check launched its first temperate kelp forest monitoring program in California. Since then, the kelp forest monitoring program has grown to be the largest citizen science monitoring group collecting data on kelp forests along the North American West Coast. The temperate programs have expanded into working on restoring kelp forests and education through providing hands-on training to increase equity and diversity in marine science and conservation.

Since its beginning, Reef Check has collected coral reef and kelp forest data from more than 5,000 reefs during almost 20,000 surveys globally. Our global datasets, some of them spanning over a quarter century, are unique in that they are standardized across the world—allowing us to draw global conclusions and also provide communities directly with information for management, conservation and restoration at the local level. Both our tropical and temperate datasets document a time of rapid environmental change caused by over-exploitation and climate change. As such, they have led to more than 150 scientific publications that range from global analyses of the impact of climate change on coral reefs to studies of local approaches to community-based conservation and restoration.

Through citizen science, Reef Check empowers local communities and volunteers to take an active role in ocean conservation. By fostering a deeper understanding of marine ecosystems and promoting sustainable practices, we aim to make a tangible impact on the health of our oceans. Our data-driven approach not only informs science-based management and policy decisions but also inspires the next generation of ocean stewards. Reef Check continues to evolve and expand, ensuring that our oceans are protected for future generations through community engagement, education, and innovative conservation strategies.



# Reef Check's Global Structure

Reef Check is made up of tropical chapters and temperate programs. Tropical chapters operate autonomously of the Foundation, whereas programs are directly implemented by the Reef Check Foundation. The Foundation provides and manages global training materials and certifies volunteer citizen scientists, houses all datasets and ensures the quality of training and data through rigorous training and data quality standards.



## REEF CHECK SURVEY SITES

Most extensive standardized, long-term monitoring dataset in the world



● KELP FOREST MONITORING SITES  
● CORAL REEF MONITORING SITES

10K+  
ECODIVERS

100+  
COUNTRIES

20K+  
TOTAL SITES

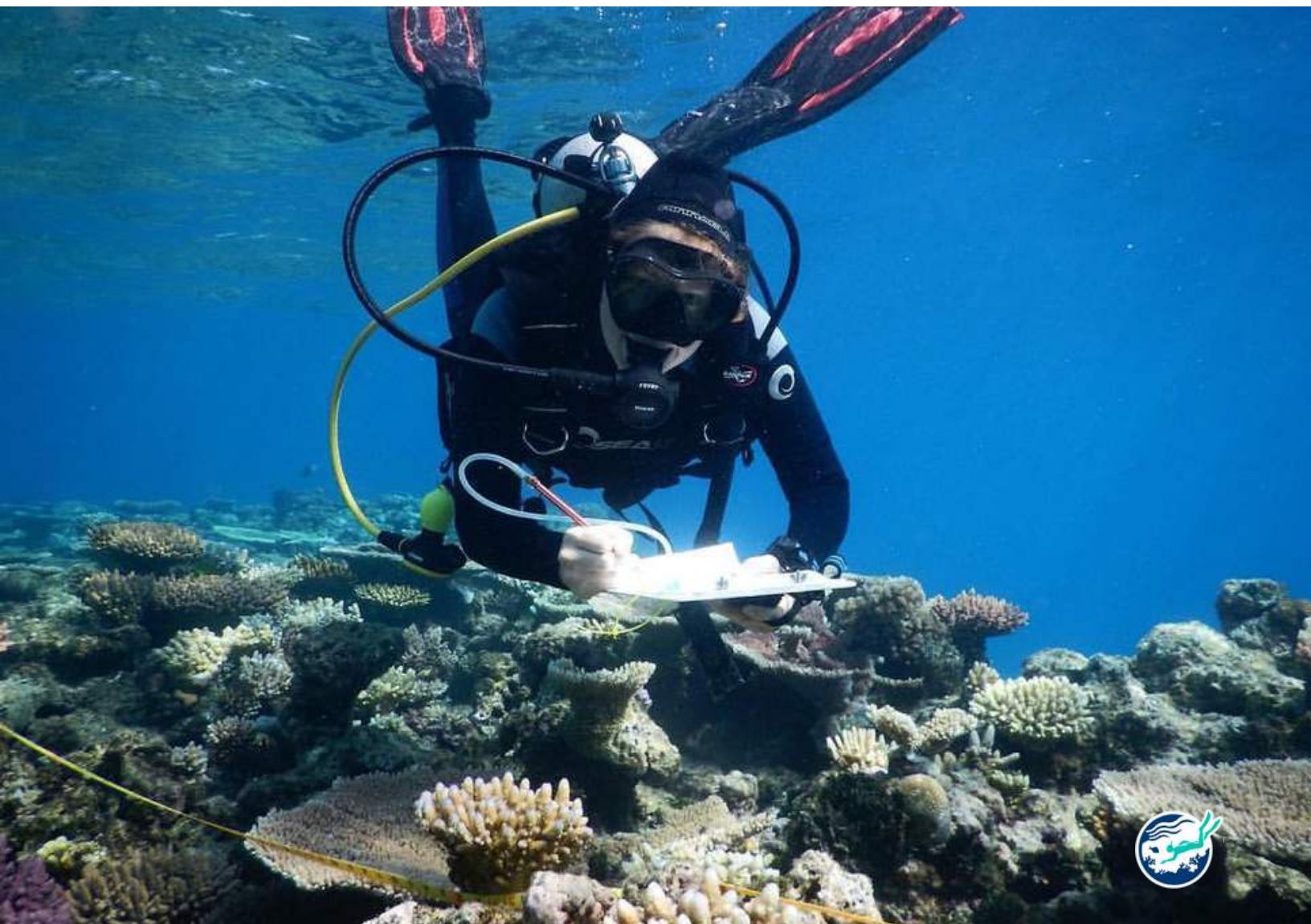
### REEF CHECK LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We recognize and honor the Indigenous Peoples whose sovereignty was never ceded. Since time immemorial they have been the stewards and custodians of the land and sea in the unceded territories where we live, work, and play. We are committed to honoring and upholding their rightful leadership in conserving and protecting the land and water that was seized from them. We acknowledge this truth as we strive towards a future that is built upon mutual understanding and collaboration. In offering this land acknowledgment, we affirm and support Tribal sovereignty, history and experiences of Indigenous Peoples past, present, and generations yet to come.



# What We Do

- **Research:** We train and organize teams of local volunteer citizen scientist divers. They collect data on reef health and assess climate change impacts on their reefs. Their work produces reliable information used by communities, marine resource managers, scientists, and policymakers to make science-based ocean management and conservation decisions.
- **Education:** We promote equity and inclusion through education about reefs and the ocean. Our goal is to develop teams of ocean ambassadors with the skills and knowledge to make a tangible and meaningful difference for marine conservation in their local communities.
- **Conservation and Restoration:** We develop ecologically sound and economically sustainable solutions for reef conservation and restoration.





## Our Vision

Thriving reefs, cared for by communities and sustained for generations to come



## Our Mission

To lead citizen scientists to promote stewardship of sustainable reef communities worldwide



## Our Niche

High-quality data collected by citizen scientists globally

# Citizen Science

The term “citizen science” emerged in the 1990s, right around the time Reef Check was founded. Now there are many alternative terms in use, ranging from *participatory science* to *civic science* or *community science*. The term “citizen science” has recently been criticized, particularly in the United States, where “citizen” is sometimes narrowly defined to mean only legally recognized citizens of the country where the research is being conducted. We do not understand the term “citizen science” as exclusive or as defining someone by their citizenship or national origin. For us, it is an inclusive term that embraces all to participate in science regardless of their background. This use is in the spirit of the term “world citizen” as has been used by thinkers from Greek philosopher Diogenes in 400 B.C. to Albert Einstein in the 20th century.



# Core Values



## PASSION

We are a team of people who live and breathe ocean conservation and are dedicated to positive change.



## INTEGRITY

We follow through with our goals and commitments with honesty. We hold ourselves accountable and uphold strong moral principles.



## GRIT

We work hard and persevere under pressure and in tough conditions.



## INCLUSIVITY

We include all community members as part of our team and network of volunteers, regardless of experience, background, gender, or identity.



## TRUST

We strive to be an organization that volunteers, donors, the community, scientists, and managers can trust.



# Goal 1

## Become Leaders in Marine Science

We train and organize teams of local volunteer citizen scientist divers, expanding our programs worldwide. We create and disseminate reports and publications using our data to inform resource managers, scientists, communities, and policymakers for science-based ocean management and conservation decisions. We ensure our kelp forest and coral reef data is locally and globally relevant and easily accessible to all.

### Strategy 1.1

Ensure global data is easily accessible and showcased in a single data visualization portal

### Strategy 1.2

Build and publish globally significant evidence of changes in reef health

### Strategy 1.3

Work directly with local communities, conservation scientists, and resource managers to provide reliable and trusted data

### Strategy 1.4

Develop a communications and capacity-building strategy that promotes Reef Check values and data

#### Indicators of progress:

- Scientific publications
- Public reports on the status and trends of ecosystem health
- Global data visualization is available for public use



# Goal 2

## Build an Inclusive Team through Training and Education

We develop an inclusive team of ocean ambassadors equipped with the skills and knowledge to drive tangible and meaningful progress in marine science and conservation for their local communities.

### Strategy 2.1

Continue to conduct and develop high quality trainings for citizen scientists and lead them in data collection globally

### Strategy 2.2

Train an inclusive and diverse team of dive ambassadors who contribute meaningfully to science, conservation, and outreach

### Strategy 2.3

Create opportunities for non-divers to participate in marine science and conservation

### Strategy 2.4

Establish and lead an international community of Reef Check chapters that increases access to research and scientific diving

#### Indicators of progress:

- Retention of diverse citizen scientist volunteers
- New programs that decrease barriers to participation
- Growth in the number of Reef Check trained divers





# Goal 3

## Advance Conservation and Restoration

We develop and implement ecologically sound and economically sustainable, community-based coral reef and kelp forest conservation and restoration approaches. We work through our programs and with our global chapters to implement and scale conservation and restoration of reefs and their sustainable use by local communities.

### Strategy 3.1

Leverage Reef Check data, local knowledge, and scientific advancements to develop conservation and restoration approaches

### Strategy 3.2

Empower local communities to develop and implement conservation strategies to address their unique challenges

### Strategy 3.3

Promote responsible use of marine resources to ensure economic sustainability for ocean-dependent local economies

### Strategy 3.4

Scale up the most successful methods in conservation and restoration to create lasting impacts

#### Indicators of progress:

- Use our data in policy decisions, science-based management and conservation
- Increased participation in community-driven marine conservation projects globally
- Local ocean economies moving toward sustainable practices
- Growth in number and size of local restoration sites



## Goal 4

# Ensure Organizational Growth and Financial Stability

We grow the organization to meet the increasing demand for citizen science, conservation and restoration of the ocean and build a culture of philanthropy and financial stability.

### Strategy 4.1

The Foundation provides financial support for work conducted locally by our chapters and programs, and ensures that we have the resources needed to address global threats to reef ecosystems

### Strategy 4.2

Diversify revenue streams to increase income for accelerated impact

### Strategy 4.3

Grow the kelp forest programs and tropical chapters to expand beyond their current geographies

### Strategy 4.4

Develop an inclusive and culturally competent organization that employs talented people from diverse backgrounds and experiences

#### Indicators of progress:

- Increased philanthropic support
- Endowment established to ensure long-term financial stability
- Increased number of international kelp forest programs
- Sustainable growth of tropical chapters





# Reef Check



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