

American Millennials:

Cultivating the Next Generation of Ocean Conservationists

Millennials are the largest generation in the United States. By 2020, one in three adults will be a Millennial (born from 1981 to 1997). This generation has already shown itself to be capable of immense innovation and disruption of the status quo. While a significant amount of research has been conducted on Millennials, there is little insight on conservation, and even less for the ocean. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation partnered with Edge Research to conduct new research on American Millennials' attitudes towards oceans, ocean conservation, and pathways for engaging this next generation of ocean leaders.



The Takeaways

Outlook

- Environment a second tier issue
- Oceans as threatened by pollution, oil spills, plastic trash, climate change, and decline in sea life – but not urgently so
- Individuals as source of solutions, less trust in institutions

Perceptions

- Hard to care for what they can't see
- In theory, oceans are global, marine habitat
- In practice, oceans are local, beaches and playgrounds, but not nature

Entry points

- Animal welfare, trash, and pollution are motivators
- Social groups and peers are persuasive
- Cause-involvement spikes in mid-20s

Three activation groups

- Global Greens – progressive, cause-engaged
- Coastal Concerned – outdoorsy, see many ocean problems
- Waiting in the Wings – skeptical of NGOs, love the coast

The Way Ahead

- Encourage lifestyle activists
- Create a rallying cry
- Speak to hearts and minds
- Share human and animal impact messages
- Reach as tweens, age 12 or 13
- Be edgy, authentic, and empathetic
- Use competition
- Be social online and in-person