

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2018
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-C063
TITLE: Advocate for Ocean Health
PROPOSER: Province VIII
TOPIC: Environment

Directly Related: (Attached)

1994-D062 On the Topic of Biodiversity and Natural Habitats (Rejected)

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2012-B023 Seek Environmental Justice
2012-D055 Advocate for Reducing Climate-Changing Emissions
2009-C011 Directs Advocacy on Renewable Energy and Environmental Stewardship
2009-D014 Direct Dioceses to Educate on Public Environmental Decisions
2009-D015 Urge Dioceses to Educate on Environmental Decisions Affecting Animal Species
2006-B002 Acknowledge and Reduce Global Warming
2006-C018 Recognize Global Warming and Reaffirm Church's Environmental Responsibility

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1976 through 2015, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The "direct" resolutions are attached and "indirect" resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.

C063 Advocate for Ocean Health

Proposer	Province VIII
Endorsed by	
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
HiA / Leg. Cttee	/
Current Status	Pre-Filed Resolution
Version	Original (as filed)
Review Status	Not yet reviewed

RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 79th General Convention affirm any and all work and projects being carried out across the Church to protect and restore the Earth’s oceans to ecological health and to advocate for ocean health through the adoption of appropriate public policies, including, without limitation, projects, programs, and public policies and advocacy designed: (1) to establish and protect areas of the oceans from human interference or to limit human interference through the establishment of marine sanctuaries, reserves, and similar protected areas; (2) to protect, preserve, and restore all species that live in ocean habitats; (3) to prevent and remediate ocean pollution from all sources and of all kinds, including plastics, petroleum products and wastes, fertilizers, and hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, solid wastes, and toxic materials as defined in environmental laws; (4) to mitigate ocean acidification and to assist with adaptation to ocean acidification; (5) to mitigate ocean warming and sea level rise and to assist with adaptation to ocean warming and sea level rise; (6) to prevent or limit adverse effects to species and ecosystems from offshore oil, gas, and mineral exploration, drilling, and extraction; (7) to support sustainable fisheries and to prevent illegal fishing, over-fishing, and by-catch; (8) to prevent migration of invasive species through ocean-going vessels and, where invasive species have taken hold, to restore native ecosystems to health; and (9) to minister to people and human populations adversely affected by declines and secondary impacts from declines in ocean health, especially those whose livelihoods are lost or put at risk and those who are forced to migrate due to sea level rise (“Ocean Health Work”); and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention encourage the further development of programs and projects across the Church that support and advance Ocean Health Work; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention call on the Office of Governmental Relations to advocate for public policies that support and advance Ocean Health Work nationally and internationally; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention call on dioceses, congregations, and all the baptized to deepen our understanding of and commitment to Ocean Health Work as Christian communities through prayer and study and to then act to support and advance Ocean Health Work including, when appropriate, in partnership with ecumenical, interfaith, and non-

governmental organizations; and be it further

- 5 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention call on dioceses, congregations, and all the baptized to respond to the needs of refugees in our own communities who have had to leave their homes due to sea level rise, pollution of oceans and coastal areas, and other ocean health concerns; and be it further
- 6 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention call on the dioceses of The Episcopal Church located in Pacific Ocean or on the Pacific Rim to partner with other Anglican provinces and dioceses in the Pacific to work together for oceanic health, and the safety and well-being of environmental refugees.

EXPLANATION

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.” Psalm 24:1-2. As stewards with dominion over God’s good Creation, we have a sacred covenant relationship with God to use the resources of nature wisely and with reverence, preserving God’s bounty for all generations to come. Genesis Ch. 1; BCP Prayer 41, p. 827. Thus, as Christians, as Episcopalians, and as God’s stewards, we are called to care for the oceans and to pray, study, and act in support of Ocean Health.

Threats to Ocean Health from climate change, ocean acidification, pollution, and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources are a pressing global environmental crisis. In response, the global community has made the restoration of ocean health a high priority as recognized by the United Nations in Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.[1] Efforts to mitigate sea level rise and to adapt to unavoidable effects from sea level rise are recognized as a high priority in Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

As summarized by the UN, the world’s oceans – their temperature, chemistry, currents and life – drive global systems that make the Earth habitable for humankind.[2] Moreover, our rainwater, drinking water, weather, climate, coastlines, much of our food, and even the oxygen in the air we breathe, are all ultimately provided and regulated by the oceans.[3] The following facts from the UN explain show how Ocean Health is critical to human development and well-being:

- Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods
- Oceans contain nearly 200,000 identified species, but actual numbers may lie in the millions
- Oceans absorb about 30 per cent of carbon dioxide produced by humans, buffering the impacts of global warming
- Oceans serve as the world’s largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people depending on the oceans as their primary source of protein
- Marine fisheries directly or indirectly employ over 200 million people
- As much as 40 per cent of the world oceans are heavily affected by human activities, including pollution, depleted fisheries, and loss of coastal habitats.[4]

Sustainable Development Goal 14’s recommended actions were based largely on a three-year study process overseen by the Global Ocean Commission, which launched in February 2013 and published final reports in February 2016.[5] The Commission’s focus was on the “high seas,” vast ocean areas that lie beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones of individual countries.[6] Importantly, Ocean Health Work must occur within the Exclusive Economic Zones of countries as well as on the “high seas.” Thus, while this explanation references the SDG program that is familiar to the Episcopal Church, the resolution is intended to support the widest possible call to engage in Ocean Health Work at all levels of engagement, international, national, state, and local.

Sustainable Development Goal 13’s recommended actions are based largely on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”).[7] The IPCC produces periodic reports summarizing the peer-reviewed literature on climate change that support the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is the main international treaty on climate change. The IPCC’s reports include assessments of the causes and risks of sea level rise and of actions needed to mitigate risks and to adapt to unavoidable impacts from sea level rise.

Finally, especially in recognition of the magnitude of problems to be addressed, dioceses, congregations, and all the baptized are encouraged to partner with ecumenical and interfaith groups and with non-governmental organizations engaging in Ocean Health Work, and also to minister to the climate refugees in our communities who have had to leave their homes due to sea level rise and ocean pollution.

[1] <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

[2] Id.

[3] Id.

[4] Id.

[5] The reports from the Global Ocean Commission can be downloaded here:

<http://www.some.ox.ac.uk/research/global-ocean-commission/download-reports/>

[6] <http://www.some.ox.ac.uk/research/global-ocean-commission/>

[7] <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/goals/goal-13/en/>



Resolution Number: 1994-D062
Title: On the Topic of Biodiversity and Natural Habitats
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church:
Affirm the inherent goodness and value of all creatures by virtue of their creation by God, independent of their aesthetic or utilitarian value to humanity or the human enterprise; and
Affirm the right of all wild creatures to natural habitat in sufficient quantity and quality that will insure their species' continuation and natural development, to protect and sustain both the integrity of each species and the biodiversity of the planet, with which it has been imbued by God; and
Call upon the members of the Episcopal Church to adopt lifestyles that are consistent with these principles and to urge their legislators to draft and work for the adoption of appropriate laws that will provide for the protection of the rights of all wild creatures to natural habitat, not only those now deemed "endangered species."