

California Ocean Summit to Unite Top Scientists, Policymakers, Investors, Innovators to Accelerate Ocean Solutions

Inaugural December gathering designed to mobilize investment, advance blue innovation, and inspire coordinated ocean action through California's leadership

SANTA BARBARA, CA, UNITED STATES, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Registration is now

“

Now's California's moment to demonstrate, nationally and globally, what happens when people shaping our ocean's future have space to collaborate, accelerate action, and make meaningful commitments.”

*California Assemblymember
Gregg Hart*

open for the inaugural California Ocean Summit, a landmark three-day convening taking place December 9–11, 2026, in Santa Barbara. Bringing together leading ocean scientists, policymakers, investors, innovators, and advocates from across California and beyond, the Summit will showcase solutions, mobilize capital toward ocean impact, and build the cross-sector relationships needed to turn shared ambition into coordinated ocean action.

The Summit's launch came into sharper focus this month as registration opened and the community gathered for an invitation-only kick-off reception on August 22 at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. Steering committee members,

sponsors, and community partners came together for an evening on the harbor to connect, align, and set the stage for December – marking the first official event in the lead-up to the Summit.

California is home to world-class ocean research institutions, a thriving community of innovators, and some of the most forward-thinking environmental policymakers in the world. As the challenges facing our ocean intensify, too few opportunities exist to bring these sectors together around a common vision. The California Ocean Summit was created to bridge that gap, designed as a launchpad for bold ocean health solutions and a catalyst for progress across research, policy, and innovation.

“California is uniquely connected to the ocean, both through our economy and our identity,” said Assemblymember Gregg Hart, a member of the Summit Steering Committee. “Now is our moment to lead and demonstrate, both nationally and globally, what can happen when the

people shaping our ocean's future have the space to collaborate, accelerate action, and make meaningful commitments."

A Three-Day Program Built for Impact
The Summit is designed to move ocean leadership forward across interconnected outcomes: shaping California's future ocean policy, investing in the next generation of ocean innovation, and advancing a shared Declaration for Ocean Stewardship.

Programming will span three days of working sessions, expert panels, and keynote addresses. A Blue Innovation Showcase at the Community Environmental Council's Environmental Hub will spotlight emerging ocean startups and technologies, and public programming will be offered at the Santa Barbara Public Library, including film screenings and author meet & greets. On December 11, attendees are invited on guided field excursions to Santa Cruz Island and conservation sites along the Central Coast. Evening programming includes a screening of *Ocean with David Attenborough* accompanied by the Santa Barbara Symphony performing the score live, presented in partnership with UCSB Arts & Lectures.

Dr. Dawn Wright, Chief Scientist of Esri, will open the Summit with a keynote. Additional confirmed participants include Assemblymember Gregg Hart, Laura Francis of [Sea Forward Fund](#), Tom Quigley of Superorganism, Peter Bryant of Builder's Vision, Dr. Cat Burns of NatureVest at The Nature Conservancy, Matthew Stotts of Cerulean Ventures, Gracie White of Conservation International Ventures, and Robert Mazurek of the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

"Researchers, entrepreneurs, investors, and decision-makers can drive tremendous impact, but to turn the tide on ocean health, everyone must see themselves as part of our ocean's future," said Laura Francis, Founder of Sea Forward Fund and Summit Steering Committee Member. "By weaving together art, storytelling, science, philanthropy, and policy, the Summit aims to create a sense of urgency grounded in hope and possibility, one that inspires action beyond California."

Partners and Sponsors

The California Ocean Summit is supported by a growing coalition of organizations and individuals committed to advancing ocean stewardship across California and beyond.



California Ocean Summit Steering Committee leaders gather for kick off event August 22. From Left to Right: CA Assemblymember Gregg Hart, Sea Forward Fund Founder Laura Francis, Cerulean Ventures Co-Founder/Partner Matthew Stotts. Photo Credit: Sarita Relis

The [California Legislative Central Coast Caucus Foundation](#) and Sea Forward Fund serve as Ocean Visionary Presenting Philanthropic Partners, whose leadership makes the Summit possible. The Summit also received generous contributions from the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Deckers Brands, Yardi, Central Coast Community Energy (3CE), The Patricia Bragg Foundation, MarBorg Industries, Santa Barbara Foundation, Port of Hueneme, Port of Long Beach, STAX Engineering, Bragg Foundation, Santa Barbara Zoo, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and Sea Center, and Peter Schuyler & Lisa Stratton.

Community partners provide programming, venues, and logistical support that will shape the Summit's experience — including UC Santa Barbara, UCSB Arts & Lectures, UCSB Bren School for Environmental Science & Management, UCSB Marine Science Institute, UCSB Natural Reserve System, City of Santa Barbara Sustainability & Resilience Department, Community Environmental Council, Environmental Defense Center, Erika Woolsey and the Hydrous Project, Gaviota Coast Conservancy, Island Packers, Laura and Jack Dangermond Preserve, The Nature Conservancy, Rancho Tajiguas Preserve, Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, and Santa Barbara Public Library.

Sponsorship and partnership opportunities remain available. Organizations interested in supporting the California Ocean Summit are encouraged to visit calocean.org/sponsors or contact info@calocean.org.

Registration & Inquiries

The California Ocean Summit offers two ways to participate. The Working Summit — taking place December 9–11, 2026 — brings together invited leaders from science, policy, investment, philanthropy, and innovation for a multi-day, action-oriented experience. [Registration is required](#) and limited tickets are available at calocean.org/register.

Throughout Summit Week, public programming invites the broader community to engage with the ideas and conversations at the heart of the Summit. Film screenings, cultural experiences, and community events are free and open to everyone. Select events presented in partnership with UCSB Arts & Lectures — including the Ocean with David Attenborough screening — require tickets purchased through the UCSB Arts & Lectures website.

For sponsorship inquiries or media credentials, contact info@calocean.org.

About the California Ocean Summit

The California Ocean Summit is an inaugural gathering bringing together scientists, policymakers, philanthropists, investors, innovators, and advocates to advance practical, scalable solutions for ocean health and coastal resilience. Taking place December 9–11, 2026 in Santa Barbara, California, the Summit is designed to align leadership, funding, and innovation around what's already working and how to scale it. Learn more at calocean.org.

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