



**Journey to the HOPE Spots
June 27, 2015**

with Captain Buddy Vandervoort and Sarah Nixon
on the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute's Tioga

It's early afternoon on a gloomy Saturday as we eagerly await the arrival of a boat at Menemsha Harbor. As the vessel hums slowly into view, we make out a few recognizable faces amid many more unfamiliar ones. We apprehensively exchange timid half-smiles and waves. The Tioga, a research vessel belonging to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, docks in the Harbor and we board it, joining those who over the next week will grow into peers and friends, the bright young minds with whom we will share our ambitions and dreams, our common hopes for our collective future. Saturday is the first day of the 11th Annual Youth Leadership Summit on Sustainable Development.



It is the day youth delegates from different islands are nervously in each other's presence for the first time and everyone begins to, at their own pace, break the ice in preparation for the days to come. It is also a day of grounding and gathering. Each participant contemplates their purpose for being at the Summit and takes a moment to internalize the fact that they are instrumental in a global movement generations in the making to alter the way we view, interact with, and value the living systems with which our earth allows us to cohabitate.

Given that the 2015 Summit revolved around oceans, youth delegates were treated to a special marine excursion. In two groups, the 40 Summit delegates, from Martha's Vineyard and two Hawaiian Islands, Hawai'i and O'ahu pulled out from Menemsha Harbor in Chilmark.



Proceeding through the gentle waves past the striking red-painted clay of the Aquinnah cliffs, our hour-long journey brought us to an unmarked location in the lightly eddying, cobalt sea. Rocking in the currents of what seemed to be any other patch of ocean, we learned that we were in the middle of a Hope Spot.



This meant little to us at the time, but as we became more familiar with the term, the idea of a Hope Spot gained import in our minds and hearts as we recognized both the weighty energy and opportunity for reflection such places and the reality of their designations hold.



We must protect the environments that have sustained us since time immemorial and shift our practices away from an agenda of exclusive self-interest to one of restoring a sense of balance between meeting our needs and those of the environments into which we have imposed ourselves. This undeniably means an exercise in soul-searching, a redefinition of what our needs truly are, and an understanding that none of our actions have independent effects. That, like ocean currents, the effects of what we do in our environment radiate and pulse outwards on a grand scale, underlining the interconnectivity of our lives and our world.

Makana Tavares
Junior, Brown University
Waimea, Hawaii Island Emerging Leader



Born out of Dr. Sylvia Earle's non-profit Mission Blue, Hope Spots are essentially marine protected areas selected as key zones for such reasons as maintaining biodiversity, generating oxygen, and preserving critical habitats. Commercial fishing and other damaging activities that have and continue to jeopardize our fragile ecosystems are prohibited in Hope Spots, as marine advocates partner with governments to take steps in protecting and preserving the oceans that are our planet's lifeblood. As islanders each participant bore a strong sense of identification with the waters that connect rather than divide our spheres of life; regardless of whether that personal link was to the Atlantic or the Pacific. Visiting a Hope Spot solidified in our minds the necessity of an alteration in thinking and acting on the part of the global population.



Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative
www.shvli.org
Stone Soup Leadership Institute
www.soup4worldinstitute.com