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## Nonprofit Spotlight 1: The Hydrous

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## Nonprofit Spotlight 1

### The Hydrous



**HQ:** San Francisco, CA

**Operating In:** State of California, USA

#### Mission

The mission of the Hydrous is to create “open access oceans” so that all people may explore, understand, and engage with marine environments, which are severely threatened by climate change and human impacts.

#### Program

We offer ocean science engagement and education by providing open access digital content (e.g., 3D coral models, immersive virtual reality ocean experiences) and hands-on ocean science curriculum. Our target audience is U.S.-based youth (10 to 18 years old) and the ripple effects of our impact has reached a global audience of all ages.

#### Partnerships

Hydrous partners with many organizations outside the community:

- National Geographic Education: to reach a broader audience of learners,
- The Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University: to conduct research on the effects of immersive virtual experiences on ocean science learning,
- Meridian Treehouse: to produce synchronized virtual dive events,
- Meta: to support technological innovation for immersive education,

- Adobe: to use 3D art and augmented reality to connect learners to coral reefs,
- The Smithsonian (National Museum of Natural History & Digitization Program Office) to digitize and curate open access collections of back-of-house marine specimens,

#### Current Project

Coral Reefs: a Hydrous Learning Expedition

The Decade of Ocean Empathy (an official program partner of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science)



#### Current Needs

Assistance with fundraising

#### Our Story

Now is a crucial time for our ocean health, which is declining rapidly from the combined effects of climate change and direct human impacts. Experiential learning is key to bridging barriers, and extended reality (XR) technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have the potential to “bring” people to places they can’t go—whether it’s the ocean or outer space—due to constraints like distance, cost, safety, or feasibility.

Scalable technologies like immersive VR might increase engagement, presence, and empathy and decrease psychological distance between people and the ocean. By triggering presence and empathy, evidence suggests these tools offer a way for people who cannot swim, dive, or travel to coastlines to have vivid experiences of marine

habitats. However, ocean-related content and research into XR for marine education remains scarce, despite a global push to restore the health of the ocean.



A core goal of our work at The Hydrous is to improve global ocean literacy. To sustainably manage ocean ecosystems, it is essential that the general public is ocean literate, meaning they understand the ocean's influence on us and our influence on the ocean. Further, marine science is not prioritized in formal learning settings and ocean literacy levels are low around the world, as many people have limited marine understanding, hold misconceptions about the ocean, or know little about marine protection.

In addition to raising rates of ocean literacy, we seek to generate more ocean empathy, or human connections, to the ocean. This work is aligned with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which launched in 2021. The 10th and final challenge for collective impact of the Ocean Decade is to "Change humanity's relationship with the ocean." By overcoming this challenge, we "ensure that the multiple values and services of the ocean for human wellbeing, culture, and sustainable development are widely understood, and identify and overcome barriers to behavior change required for a step change in humanity's relationship with the ocean." Further, the 7th (out of 7) target Outcomes of the Ocean Decade is to create "An inspiring and engaging ocean where society understands and values the ocean in relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development."

The Hydrous is leading an official program of the UN Decade of Ocean Science, The Decade of Ocean Empathy, which addresses Challenge 10

and Outcome 7 through immersive experiences and science-based storytelling. Our theory of change is that vivid ocean experiences increase engagement, reduce psychological distance, and increase human connection and ocean literacy, which leads to ocean conservation and sustainable management of marine resources.

### **Innovation**

Work by The Hydrous incorporates proven methodologies in marine science education with immersive technologies to foster the next generation of ocean champions. Led by a marine biologist, The Hydrous uses cutting-edge science and immersive media to increase ocean literacy, ocean empathy, and desire for marine protection among a broad audience.

**Visit:** <https://thehydro.us/>

### **WikiCharities Profile:**

<https://www.wikicharities.org/nonprofit/USA/46-5112972>



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