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Contact: Lisa Andree

Plastic Ocean Project

910-431-8852

[lisa@plasticoceanproject.org](mailto:lisa@plasticoceanproject.org)

### **Wilmington Nonprofit Takes Its Message On the Road**

WILMINGTON, NC-April 19, 2023-The Wilmington-based environmental nonprofit, Plastic Ocean Project, aka "POP," is taking its message on the road with *Operation 356*. The mobile eco-education campaign was inspired by the nonprofit's short documentary film "356," that's already been accepted into eight film festivals. It focuses on the endangered North Atlantic Right whale and why its survival is key to ours. The awareness campaign will reveal the significance of the number 356, whales' connection to improving the impacts of climate change and why it's imperative to act now.

In the months to come, *Operation 356* will make stops throughout coastal NC. Bonnie Monteleone, director of both POP and the film, notes, "The facts are clear: the health of our oceans and all of the life in them, directly impacts the health of the entire planet." Over a three-year span, while on several research expeditions, Monteleone covered 10,000 nautical miles through four of the five global oceanic gyres. In 2012, this work led to the creation of Plastic Ocean Project and Monteleone's commitment to finding solutions for plastic pollution.

The coastal town of Belhaven was chosen as the official kick off site for *Operation 356* due to its historical significance for the boating, fishing and oystering industries. Belhaven is also where in 1928-the last section of the Intracoastal Waterway that connects nearby Beaufort to Boston was completed.

Belhaven organizers, Dawn Forrest and Jennifer Skvarla, were extremely inspired by the film when they saw it in 2022 and wanted to help spread its positive message. Skvarla commented, "It's absolutely amazing how the entire community of Belhaven has galvanized for this effort! Friday night's *For the Ocean Gala* is already sold out and the school kids are getting out early on Friday for a community-wide cleanup!"

The gala is part of Belhaven's two-day Earth Day Spring Fling. There will be two screenings of "356" on Saturday at Belhaven's Town Hall at 11:00 am & 1:00 pm and Monteleone will be also on hand with her "If the Ocean Could Talk" presentation.

Operation 356 and POP info here: [www.plasticoceanproject.org](http://www.plasticoceanproject.org)

List of activities for Belhaven's Earth Day Spring Fling here:

<https://www.visitbelhavennc.com/events-1>

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