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**Why Saving the Whales Can Save Us:**

**Wilmington Environmental Nonprofit Offers Free Film Screening**

**WILMINGTON, NC-September 7, 2023**— Plastic Ocean Project or *POP*, the Wilmington-based environmental nonprofit, will offer a free screening of their documentary short film *356* on Tuesday, September 12th at the Charlotte Nature and Rec Center. The film’s focus is on the endangered North Atlantic Right whale and how its future is tied to ours. So far, it has been accepted into eight film festivals - including LA’s prestigious Awareness Film Festival and Portugal’s Vila Real film fest.

Bonnie Monteleone, POP’s director will host a brief presentation and Q&A session following the screening. In addition to directing and producing the film, she is also a well-known marine mammal advocate and respected researcher who’s covered 10,000 nautical miles investigating the impacts of plastic pollution throughout four of the five global ocean gyres.

Filmed in November of 2020 off the NC coast, the documentary developed in response to the death of a newborn whale calf whose highly anticipated birth brought the North Atlantic Right whale population up to 356. Three years later, that number has dropped to around 326.

The short film *356*, is a companion piece to the nonprofit’s full-length film project, *If the Ocean Could Talk-A Voice for the North Atlantic*. That film features interviews with world-renowned experts and innovators, who offer viable solutions that everyone can follow to preserve the sea and the marine life in it.

Monteleone reflects, “It is vital that we all become aware that a number of factors including our heavy reliance on plastics is having a seriously detrimental effect on the health of our oceans, especially in the North Atlantic off the coast of North Carolina. It’s also time for the general population to discover the eye-opening role that whales play in counteracting the harm caused by climate change. Through increased awareness and positive action, we can turn this situation around.”

The free screening is open to the public and will take place Tuesday, September 12th. Refreshments begin at 6:15pm followed by the screening and Q&A with Bonnie at 7pm. This event is hosted by Charlotte Wildlife Stewards - North Carolina Wildlife Federation Chapter. The Charlotte Nature and Rec Center is located at Eastway Regional Recreation Center 3150 Eastway Park Drive, Charlotte, NC 28213. To learn more about Plastic Ocean Project and its work or to support these NC-based film projects, please visit: [www.plasticoceanproject.org](http://www.plasticoceanproject.org).