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Local Film on Plight of North Atlantic Right Whale Accepted Into 7 Film Festivals

WILMINGTON, NC-September 28, 2022-The nonprofit, *Plastic Ocean Project (POP)* is receiving recognition for its short film “356.” It’s been accepted into five major film festivals, including LA’s prestigious *Awareness Film Festival*-which features environmental nonprofits.

The film project began off the NC coast in November of 2020 when *POP* and local production company, *Boot Scrap*, set out to document the migration of the severely endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. Instead, they discovered a deceased whale, just days old. According to *NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*, the highly anticipated birth of this healthy newborn calf brought the North Atlantic Right Whale’s population up to 356. Today, nearly two years later, that number is down to 326. Furthermore, less than one quarter of the existing right whale population is female which is another huge concern. Now *POP* is seeking solutions as to how the situation can be improved.

In addition, “356” shares how saving these whales can help save the planet from the impacts of climate change.

Ralph Chami, an assistant director in the *International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) Institute for Capacity Development*, puts it this way: “When it comes to saving the planet, one whale is worth thousands of trees.”

Here’s why:

-In their lifetime whales accumulate carbon in their bodies and when they die, they sink to the bottom of the ocean, sequestering an average of 33 tons of CO₂ and taking that carbon out of the atmosphere for centuries. A tree, meanwhile, absorbs only up to 48 pounds of CO₂ a year. (*IMF*)

-Whale poop is vital to the growth of phytoplankton, the food source for all marine food chains in the world’s oceans, which cover 70% of the planet. Phytoplankton produces 50% of the world’s oxygen supply and absorbs an estimated 40% of all carbon dioxide produced or four times the amount captured by the Amazon rainforest. (*National Geographic*)

-When whales die and sink, their carcasses take tons of carbon from the surface to the ocean floor to decompose over time providing a concentrated food and nutrient source for a variety of marine life. (NOAA)

The goal of *POP*'s short film, "356", is to create awareness that will lead to sweeping action towards saving these majestic creatures-not surprising given that the nonprofit's ultimate goal is "to create a more sustainable world for future generations."

POP's director Bonnie Monteleone urgently explains, "In 1990 the number of right whales dropped to 270 but new protections and increased awareness brought their population back up to 500 by 2010. It can be done again!"

A special benefit screening of "356" will take place at *the Blockade Runner Resort* at Wrightsville Beach on Sunday October 9th from 5-7 pm. This event will include family-friendly activities, eco-education stations, music and food. Details here: <https://www.plasticoceanproject.org/>

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