

We hope the adventure of the trip will get people's attention, but then we need to demonstrate with good science that we're approaching a critical time for the health of our oceans."
– Mark Schrader

Around the Americas

Sailing Adventure with a Mission

by Jeffrey D. Briggs



Dr. Kris Ludwig is the oceanographer and project manager of Around the Americas for the Pacific Science Center.



The crew of Ocean Watch for the Around the Americas project: L-R, David Lee Logan, first mate; David Thoreson; Captain Mark Schrader; and Herb McCormick.

The oceans are changing. Polar ice caps are disappearing at an unprecedented rate. Coral reefs are dying. A rising sea level imperils shorelines and coastal regions. Acidity levels are getting dangerously high, threatening marine life both above and below the surface. Changes in the marine environment have been heavily influenced by human activity, endangering much of what sailors hold near and dear.

Now, a group of sailors have set out to do something about it. Sailors for the Sea, an East Coast nonprofit organization, has launched an ambitious campaign called Around the Americas to build awareness about the precipitous decline of the oceans and to educate the public about what actions may be taken to protect these fragile waters.

Led by Northwest sailor and veteran circumnavigator Mark Schrader, a crew of six people will depart Seattle aboard *Ocean Watch*, a 64-foot steel cutter, at the end of May '09, for a 13-month circumnavigation of North and South America, treating the two continents as one large island surrounded by an endangered ocean. The expedition first heads north, sailing across the top of North America, through the formerly icebound Northwest Passage, then continues south along the coast of the Americas before rounding Cape Horn and beginning the return voyage home.

When they arrive back in Seattle in the spring of 2010, they will have covered nearly 25,000 nautical miles, made ports-of-call in 31 cities and visited 11 countries.

Mark Schrader, the Stanwood, Washington resident who has thousands of bluewater miles under his belt, knows well the perilous conditions of the oceans. He is a veteran of two single-handed circumnavigations, and was the first American to circumnavigate the world via the five southern capes. Now the project director of Around the Americas, he is hoping to add another first to his sailing credentials: the first person ever to circumnavigate the two Americas. In the process, he plans to raise awareness and bring a full educational curriculum to thousands of people.

"The world's oceans are at risk," he explained. "Around the Americas is unlike any sailing adventure I've ever captained, as we'll utilize its dramatic nature to bring public attention to something so utterly important. This voyage will bring audiences throughout many parts of the world in direct contact with the health of our oceans through scientific observation and evaluation. Our goal is to provide a platform for scientists, researchers and educators to bring the urgency of the issues into the forefront of the general public.

"I wanted to sail the Northwest

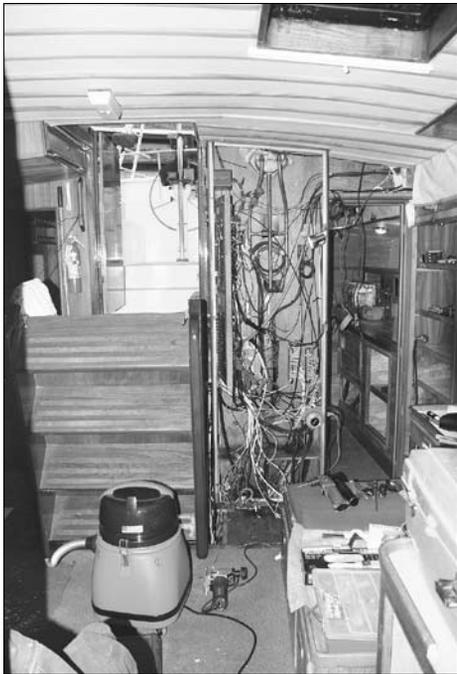
Passage when I did my first circumnavigation," he said of his record setting trip in 1982-83. "But with the Arctic ice pack, it wasn't possible at the time. In the past 100 years, only about 100 boats have made the passage, most of them Coast Guard ice breakers. Now, the conditions have changed dramatically. We need to make people aware of what's happening in the oceans before we lose the Arctic ice pack all together, before conditions become irreversible. Fortunately, some other people shared my vision for the trip."

One of those people was noted sailor, philanthropist and member of the Pew Ocean Commission, David Rockefeller, Jr., who has been active in ocean conservation for nearly two decades. Together with David Treadway, Rockefeller founded the Boston-based Sailors for the Sea in 2004 as a way to involve sailors directly with creating a healthier ocean. In 2006 Schrader pitched the idea of Around the Americas to Rockefeller in the Mediterranean, where Rockefeller was leading a marine environment awareness campaign. Together, Schrader, Rockefeller and Treadway fine-tuned the project over wine in Naples, Italy.

"North and South America are surrounded by a large, complex, and frighteningly fragile ocean environment – and these oceans are



“Ocean Watch,” with its former name “Danzante III” still visible on the bow, is going through a major refit inside the shed at Seaview East, in Seattle’s Ballard neighborhood. The 64-foot Bruce Roberts-designed steel cutter, is scheduled to leave Seattle in late May 2009 for a 25,000-mile circumnavigation of North and South America.



The interior of Ocean Watch has been almost completely gutted so it can be refit to accommodate the crew and scientific equipment needed for the 13-month voyage.

changing in large part as a result of human activity,” Rockefeller said. “The goal of this expedition is to build broad awareness among everyday citizens of the precipitous changes occurring throughout the world’s oceans and the impact these changes have on various ecosystems and human life.”

The Around the Americas project gave Sailors for the Sea a larger focus across a great expanse of the planet than the nonprofit organization had ever had before. Rockefeller recognized the need to expand the network of partners for it to be a successful venture. He said, “We realized right away we needed a scientific partner, and the project had to be paired with an advocacy for education.”

“We found the perfect partner in the Pacific Science Center,” Schrader said. “Its mission is to make science – its language, its ideas, its complexity – accessible to the general public – you and me. We hope the adventure of the trip will get people’s attention, but then we need to demonstrate with good

science that we’re approaching a critical time for the health of our oceans.”

The Seattle-based Pacific Science Center, a nationally recognized leader in informal science and environment education, will provide direct access to the project’s progress through educational feeds to classrooms, after-school programs and homes. Media events at key ports of call will feature scientific experts discussing the relationship between larger patterns of global climate change and the impact on local ocean environments. Leaders at the Pacific Science Center were instrumental in getting the University of Washington’s Applied Physics Lab, and the Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean involved in the project.

Dr. Kris Ludwig is an oceanographer and the project manager of Around the Americas for the Pacific Science Center. She is passionate about sharing ocean science with the public. It’s something that’s not often taught in the classroom, something she hopes the Around the Americas project can help remedy.

“We’re developing a formal K-8 curriculum for the classroom with a grant we received from Tiffany & Co.,” Ludwig said. “We’ll have a full-time educator on the boat during its entire voyage, and we’ll be providing constant updates along the way. The research being done underway will help drive the educational themes in the classroom.

“We’ll also have an informal educator’s toolkit for use in museums and after school enrichment programs,” she added. “We want to avoid the doom-and-gloom tone that is so prevalent today, but we also want to show with good science that the oceans are in trouble.”

For now, Schrader is consumed with a myriad of details in getting the project underway. The boat sits in the shed at Seaview East, where crews are busy dismantling most of its systems and putting in new ones. The project hasn’t reached its financial goals yet, so he and Rockefeller are busy fundraising. Schrader’s involved with everything from web site development to educational curriculum, from recruiting partners in the project to being the primary spokesperson to the press. He flips easily between

directing winch placement on the boat to coordinating a weekend luncheon with Rockefeller.

"Fortunately, I've got a great team helping me with all the details," Schrader said. "Otherwise we would never be able to get the project launched."

One of the crew members is his long-time friend and veteran ocean sailor David Logan, who's in charge of preparing the Bruce Roberts-designed *Ocean Watch* for a cruise which will see it approach the ice floes along the Northwest Passage and sail into the teeth of the winds south of Cape Horn. It must be refit to carry six full-time crew members and occasional guests. It will be outfitted with sophisticated scientific equipment for monitoring ocean and atmospheric conditions. Not only does Logan, who will serve as first mate on the voyage, have to oversee all the installation, he must also provide onboard maintenance and repairs.

He also recognizes the scope of the project still facing the team. "Getting the boat ready is critical, of course," Logan said, "but it's not the most complicated part of the whole mission. This is a fabulous opportunity to raise awareness about the critical state of the oceans. I'm glad I only have to focus on have just getting the boat ready because I'm daunted by the magnitude of the entire project."

And he's getting help from many unexpected sources. "The maritime community in Ballard has just been fantastic," Logan said. "It's like they've taken on this project as their own. Everyone's pitched in to help us out. Seaveiw East, Sure Marine, Canvas Supply, Northern Lights and so many others have contributed time and materials and equipment to get the boat ready. Fisheries Supply has been great. There wouldn't be an Around the Americas cruise without all of them."

The launch date for *Ocean Watch* is set for March 31. Then Logan has two months to finish outfitting before the voyage heads north at the end of May. The two other permanent crew members – journalist Herb McCormick and the first American sailor to transit the Northwest Passage, David Thoreson – arrive in May. Schrader is using his broad contacts in the international sailing community to fill in legs of the

trip with additional crew.

"Robin Knox Johnson and Isabelle Autissier are just two examples of people who have signed up to join us along the way," Schrader said. "This allows us to expand our message to Europe and other regions of the globe. The oceans are all connected. The problems we're facing in the Americas are the same problems facing other countries."

One leg he won't have to fill with additional crew is the passage around Cape Horn. Rockefeller has already

committed to the 1,100-mile trip from Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, to Puerto Williams, Chile.

"By staying involved and actively participating in the voyage, I'll be better able to recruit other people to get involved," Rockefeller said. "The issues are huge and threatening the population of all the people in the Americas. This is something we all need to be concerned about. We must change how we're treating the oceans or very soon it will be too late."

48° N

ABOUT SAILORS FOR THE SEA

In 2004, David Rockefeller, Jr., had just finished a three-year position on the Pew Ocean Commission, a comprehensive study which made it dramatically apparent that the oceans were being severely threatened. The Pew Oceans Commission and a second study, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, identified three main threats: serious pollutants that degrade coastal ecosystems, a dramatic decline of fish stocks, and bureaucratic chaos in ocean management.

"We all came away from the Pew Ocean Commission with the pledge to make good on the commissions reports and recommendations," Rockefeller said. "I noticed that other groups had organized around improving our ocean's health. Surfers, fishermen, birders, they all had become stewards of the oceans. But there was no group involving sailors to help increase environmental awareness and to leverage the awareness with action towards improving the health of our oceans. Sailors for the Sea was our attempt to include sailors in an organization that educates and embraces the need to protect and restore our oceans waters'."

With colleague David Treadway, Rockefeller started the Boston-based nonprofit in 2004. A long-time sailor, with thousands of ocean miles under many different keels in many different countries, Rockefeller knew first-hand that sailors needed the ocean and the ocean needed sailors. Sailors for the Sea proposed becoming the sailor's voice for ocean advocacy.

"Once sailors understand the vulnerability of our oceans' health, I believe they will insist upon becoming stewards for change," Rockefeller said. "Sailors for the Sea allows them the forum and the opportunity to get involved in one of the critical issue of our day."

Some of the accomplishments for Sailors for the Sea include:

- Sponsorship of the Around the Americas campaign.
- A national model program, called Clean Regattas, targeting yacht clubs other sailing programs, designed to encourage marine conservation and to raise awareness of marine environmental issues.
- A curriculum on marine environment issues designed for young sailors and boaters.
- The production of "A Sea Change," a film supported in part by Sfs that builds on the impact and awareness of Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," to bring to the public the serious issues of ocean acidification and the impact of CO2 on ocean health.

For More Information

Sailors for the Sea
56 Commercial Wharf East
Boston, MA 02110
Phone: 617.248.9966
Fax: 617.248.9955
Email: info@sailorsforthesea.org
Website: www.sailorsforthesea.org