



THE MALTA MANIFESTO

A CALL TO ACTION ON POTENTIALLY POLLUTING WRECKS

OUR SHARED OCEAN. OUR SHARED CHALLENGE.

A global, toxic legacy of shipwrecks containing vast quantities of oil and hazardous materials, including munitions, has been left by two World Wars. We know that these wrecks are deteriorating – a process accelerated by climate change impacts. Many are becoming unstable and unsafe. Some are leaking and causing harm now.

We know that illegal salvage has torn apart hull structures, disturbed cargoes, damaged cultural heritage and released oil. We know that many of these wrecks lie close to vulnerable coastal communities, vital fishing grounds, fragile ecosystems in protected areas and world heritage sites.

We are entering a decade of severely heightened risk of catastrophic damage caused by leaking oil – damage to natural heritage and underwater cultural heritage that cannot be fully remedied. The harm to human wellbeing and the economic cost will be enormous.

The time for concerted, unified action is now. As we approach the 100th anniversary of World War II in 2039, we must commit to resolving this toxic legacy of conflict. People and planet must be protected.

We know how to manage the risk posed by these wrecks. We need urgently to marshal the resources and the collective will to put that knowledge to use – at scale.

OUR VISION.

We envision a world where international cooperation has transformed these environmental and safety hazards into a dynamic inventory of managed sites, where communities and ecosystems vulnerable to these threats are protected through timely assessment, monitoring and intervention.

OUR PRINCIPLES.

- 1 A Precautionary Approach:** Prevention Before Crisis: Proactive intervention costs significantly less than an emergency response to catastrophic pollution events.
- 2 Global Responsibility, Local Agency:** The challenge demands international coordination with locally led decisions. No nation should face these threats alone. Those most affected should have the strongest voice in finding safe solutions.
- 3 Global Expertise, Local Knowledge:** local knowledge, comprehensive data and sound science must guide all actions.
- 4 Equitable Burden-Sharing:** Nations that played no role in creating this crisis face some of the most severe threats. All stakeholders should contribute to solutions. Financial constraints must not prevent action.
- 5 Sustainable Solutions:** Long-term management systems must outlast any single initiative or funding cycle.

OUR CALL TO ACTION



We call upon governments, industry, the research community and civil society to unite in addressing this challenge through these critical pathways:



ADVOCACY

1

Potentially Polluting Wrecks (PPWs) can be safety hazards and at the same time support local biodiversity. They can have significant heritage value and many still contain human remains. Some are considered as war graves. We call for policy solutions at national and international levels that both address this complex reality and assure timely action.



INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND STANDARDS

2

We call for the support of nations and international agencies for the development and adoption of globally recognized assessment protocols and intervention standards that enable necessary action even in disputed areas, and waters beyond national jurisdiction.



RESILIENCE AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

3

We call for the inclusion of PPWs in regional and national planning for resilience and response to oil spills in order to assure maximum permitted use of existing programmes, policy frameworks and resources alongside development of new protocols and capacity.



EMPOWERMENT

4

We call for awareness raising and provision of training, tailored to local needs and circumstances, to enable communities to shape management efforts and participate safely in response activity.



FINANCING AND INVESTMENT IN OCEAN HEALTH

5

International cooperation is central to paying for the management of PPWs. We therefore call for the creation of a PPW Finance Task Force to ensure resources are committed at a level that matches the scale and urgency of the crisis. The Task Force would deliver diversified funding mechanisms by:

- catalysing the creation of targeted multi-lateral finance instruments;
- championing innovative solutions that leverage private sector resources alongside philanthropy;
- advocating for provision for PPW management in standardised due diligence and risk-mitigation processes that safeguard investments in our ocean via mechanisms such as Marine Protected Areas, Blue Bonds and Habitat Restoration projects.



INCREASE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND SURVEY PLATFORMS

6

We call for large-scale access to cost-effective and easily deployable technology for gathering baseline data, assessment monitoring and remediation. We call for collaboration with Research Vessel operators and others to increase data acquisition opportunities. We call for intense collaboration with industry and research sectors to enhance existing capabilities, lead the necessary technology acceleration and democratise solutions.



INCREASE ACCESS TO DATA

7

We call for the widest possible sharing of data and archive material to establish baseline information, enable assessment of vulnerability and increase assurance that appropriate management options will be selected through locally informed, evidence-led decision making.

THE COST OF FAILING TO ACT DECISIVELY

If we do not act with urgency and ambition, the inevitable costs are multifaceted and severe:

- Destruction of coastal livelihoods, fishing grounds and other food sources leading to long-term hardship and reduced resilience.
- Destruction of tourism with deeply damaging impacts on local employment and national economies.
- Disproportionate impacts on vulnerable coastal communities with limited emergency response capacity.
- Contamination of sensitive ecosystems and marine protected areas causing profound harm to biodiversity and the health of our oceans.
- Toxic leakage into marine food chains with broad human health implications.
- Increased costs for clean-up and severe health risks to people involved in clean-up operations where training and safety equipment is inadequate.
- International disputes over responsibility and reparations, complicating diplomatic relations.

WE KNOW HOW TO AVOID THESE DEVASTATING OUTCOMES.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Join us in committing to build upon the knowledge and expertise already highlighted by Project Tangaroa; to lead and inspire, marshalling the resources required to put that knowledge to use at scale and to make substantial progress towards comprehensive, global, PPW management by 2039.

By acting now we can avoid immense harm to people and to nature. We can honour our obligation to heal historical environmental wounds and our responsibility to future generations, who deserve safe and healthy oceans – free from the toxic legacies of past conflicts.

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND TO THE MALTA MANIFESTO

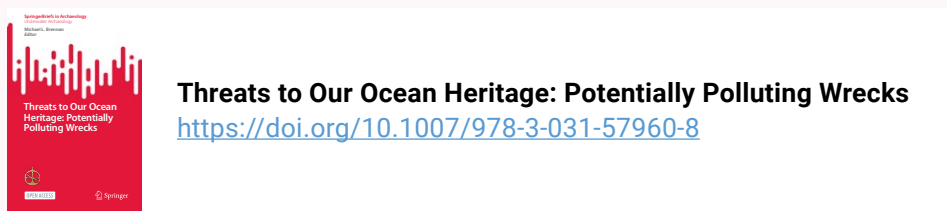
THE PROJECT TANGAROA WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

In 2023, Lloyd’s Register Foundation provided funding to The Ocean Foundation and Waves Group Ltd. to convene an international community of experts to develop an International Standard and protocols for potentially polluting wreck (PPW) assessment and intervention. This grant, and the resulting community of practice, is known as [Project Tangaroa](#).

The principle aim was to accelerate a move away from costly and sub-optimal emergency response

activity towards a more strategic approach. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the ICOMOS International Committee for the Underwater Cultural Heritage were also partners in this work.

The first project output, in 2024, was an open-access volume published by Springer which synthesised current knowledge on PPW management efforts:



Taking this resource as a baseline, a series of international workshops were convened, engaging a wide range of stakeholders to initiate action in the following areas:

- Development of an International Standard and protocols.
- Identification of options for strategic assessment programmes.
- Production of a technology roadmap to support optimised assessments and interventions.
- Development of a supporting data and archive strategy.

The workshops involved government agencies, regulators, international bodies and foundations, marine industry contractors, finance providers, practitioners and researchers engaged in the PPW domain and those involved in heritage management. These stakeholders were drawn from a broad range of geographies affected by the PPW issue, including Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific.

The insights produced directly contributed to the formulation of the Malta Manifesto.

Workshop	Date	Location	Objectives	Attendees
Workshop 1: Governance and Management	4-5 April 2024	London, United Kingdom	Understanding the scope of the problem; who are the ‘wreck owners’; the gaps and hurdles; possible solutions.	87
Workshop 2: Technology and Methodologies for Assessment and Intervention	9-11 September 2024	Helsinki, Finland	Identifying environmental risks; oil volume assessments; technology challenges; wreck monitoring and spill responses.	98
South America Online Workshop	15 January 2025	Online	Raising awareness among stakeholders on the coasts of South America, and Mexico.	104
Workshop 3: Data and Archives	4-6 March 2025	Valletta, Malta	Understanding challenges of historic data; data storage; other challenges and barriers.	129

We are very grateful for the support of the workshop hosts, including Dr Juha Flinkman and Tommi Kontto at the [Finish Environment Institute](#) and Prof Timmy Gambin and the [Heritage Malta](#) team.