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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AltaSea Joins The Longest Swim As Ben Lecomte Prepares to Cross Pacific Ocean

Record Holder's Initiative to Highlight Plastics Pollution, Generate Ocean and Human Research Data
Will Appear at Sept. 16th AltaSea Open House in San Pedro

LOS ANGELES - With training support from AltaSea at the Port of Los Angeles, the first person to swim across the Atlantic Ocean will attempt to swim across the Pacific Ocean to highlight the burgeoning problem of plastic pollution. Throughout the six-month swim, Ben Lecomte's support team also will gather important research data on the condition of the ocean and its impact on humans and sea life.

"We're proud to support The Longest Swim, providing facilities and other resources for Ben's team and ship as he prepares to bring worldwide attention to the plastics and other contaminants polluting our oceans," said AltaSea Executive Director Jenny Krusoe. "His project is an example of what we're building here, bringing together ocean-focused science, education and sustainable business incubation. We're convening passionate, smart people and organizations dedicated to making our planet better. Ben's project is a natural fit."

Throughout The Longest Swim, the team will collect and store thousands of samples of ocean water and biometric data about Lecomte for use in multiple research projects by NASA and other major science organizations. After their stay at AltaSea facilities, the Discoverer and crew will embark on a five-week trip to Tokyo this winter, ahead of a spring start to Lecomte's swim.

The Longest Swim support ship, the Discoverer, is already docked at AltaSea's facilities in the Port of Los Angeles. This fall, Lecomte's support team will be based at AltaSea, preparing the 67-foot sail boat that will be home for them all during his 5,500-mile swim from Tokyo to San Francisco.

To kick off pre-swim preparations, Lecomte will be featured at AltaSea's quarterly open house, which begins at 10 am, Sept. 16, at AltaSea in Berth 58, at 2456 S. Signal St. in San Pedro, Calif.

The event is open to the public, but reservations are required. Email RSVP@altasea.org.



Lecomte will be joined by Matthew Mulrennan, director of the Ocean Initiative for XPRIZE Foundation, a Lecomte sponsor, and Capt. Charles Moore, founder and research director of Algalita Marine Research and Education. Moore has spent two decades researching the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a dead zone filled with countless tons of pulverized plastic particles and other flotsam left by humans around the planet.

“It’s an amazing thing they’re offering: to have a (dock for our) boat and a space to work, and to work with people who have the same goal in mind,” said Lecomte, 50. “That’s a great asset for us to help us prepare to have a successful expedition.”

In 1998, Lecomte became the first person to swim solo across the Atlantic Ocean, a journey of 3,500 miles. The swim, conducted not long after his father’s death from cancer, raised awareness about the disease.

Even then, Lecomte considered embarking on a similar swim across the Pacific, but life and family intervened. Now, two decades later and working as an architecture consultant in Austin, Texas, Lecomte said he’s been inspired to swim again to draw attention to another important issue affecting those he loves, in this case the state of the world’s oceans.

“Now that I have children, it’s where my motivation is,” Lecomte said. “I’m using what I like to do and creating a platform that maybe can make a little difference. I’m swimming across the ocean to give attention to the problems facing our oceans, so that our kids can maybe have a better future.”

Lecomte’s planned route will take him across an area of the Northern Pacific called the Great Garbage Patch. His team will gather thousands of samples of ocean water, checking temperature, acidity and other factors as part of multiple research grants that will help finance the project.

The path of The Longest Swim also will largely follow the currents that have spread radioactive contaminants from the [2011 Fukushima nuclear plant accident](#). To help measure the spread of



those contaminants, Lecomte will wear a “RadBand” sampling device. Other researchers will use samples from The Longest Swim to investigate the effects of giant phytoplankton on nutrient availability at the ocean’s surface.

Lecomte’s own body also will be subject to significant testing throughout the swim, so scientists can track the impacts of extreme exercise on his “biome,” the universe of bacteria in and on his body.

Researchers also will measure The Longest Swim’s impact on Lecomte’s bones and vision (caused by long-term exposure to the low gravity of the buoyant ocean), as well as possible effects on his heart and emotions.

Lecomte’s research partners include NASA, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the Marine Biological Laboratory, Sea Education Association, the University of Texas at Austin, UT Southwestern, the University of Montana, and the University of Chicago. Project sponsors include the XPRIZE Foundation, TYR, Progea, GoPro, Shotz Natural Energy, LifeProof, Equanimity, DMS Service, the Exploration Institute and the Waitt Foundation.

Lecomte is continuing to seek sponsors and raise funds for the project. For more information, go to <http://thelongestswim.com>.

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About AltaSea at the Port of Los Angeles

AltaSea at the Port of Los Angeles is a cutting-edge marine research institute dedicated to using the ocean to solve some of the world’s most pressing problems, including energy supply, food security and climate change. The non-profit organization based in San Pedro, Calif., is remaking 35 acres in one of the oldest parts of the Port of Los Angeles into a hub for research, STEM education and sustainable business incubation.

Details:

For more information, visit <http://www.altasea.org>

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