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OceanLove Innovation Awards 2026 Open Applications Following Huge Success in 2025

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The OceanLove Innovation Awards, presented by the global non-profit initiative OceanLove, returns for its third year. Under the slogan “Because you protect what you love,” the Awards encourage all creative minds worldwide to submit ideas for new products, tools, campaigns, or initiatives that can measurably help conserve the ocean, seas, marine resources, and ecosystems. Aligned with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water), the Awards recognize individuals, start-ups, community initiatives, schools, universities, NGOs, and other organizations whose solutions advance ocean health and resilience.

Applications are open from **April 1 to August 31, 2026**, with submissions accepted through the OceanLove website (www.oceanlove.news). Winners will be revealed on **October 11, 2026**, during the third OceanLove Innovation Awards Ceremony which will take place in AltaSea’s venue, at the harbor of Los Angeles, USA.

In 2026, the Awards feature three distinct categories, each celebrating innovation in a key area of ocean sustainability:

- **The Wavemakers Award:** Educators, youth, and movements spreading awareness and hope. Submissions should include innovative methods that encourage change beyond lesson plans.
- **The Living Sea Award:** Innovations that protect and restore marine life, biodiversity, and marine ecosystems — including kelp forests, mangroves, plankton, corals, dolphins, turtles, and other marine species.
- **The Blue Circle Award:** Circular economy and cleanup innovations or initiatives restoring the ocean’s balance and pushing back all kinds of pollution. Submissions involving only clean-ups are not considered innovative.

Up to thirty of the most promising applicants will be selected to join an online bootcamp in mid-September, where they will be provided with support to make their ideas more impactful, scalable, and feasible. After the bootcamp, the Team of Judges, comprising globally esteemed scientists, activists, and established social entrepreneurs, will evaluate all submissions and select the winners who will receive **‘seed money’ of 10,000 USD**.

In 2025, the Awards attracted 260 applications from 64 countries, more than three times as many applicants as in 2024, 80% coming from Global South innovators, making it the largest and most inclusive ocean conservation awards program worldwide. Building on this momentum, the 2026 edition continues to expand its global reach, championing early-stage, impact-driven ideas that protect and restore ocean and marine ecosystems.

"With the OceanLove Innovation Awards, we want to give these ideas a platform, connect them with partners, and provide the support they need to grow. Our third year is about scaling impact and making sure good ideas don't stay on paper," said Ilco van der Linde, Dutch OceanLove founder.

The OceanLove Innovation Awards are endorsed by the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development as well as leading global ambassadors: **Dr. Sylvia Earle**, the world-renowned marine biologist, oceanographer, and founder of Mission Blue, celebrated for her lifelong dedication to ocean exploration and protection, and **Paul Polman**, the globally recognized business leader, sustainability champion, investor, and philanthropist, known for advancing responsible business and driving transformative action for people; and **Tatiana Mendes**, the French-Cape Verdean–American athlete and freediver, holder of multiple national records, 2024 African Female Vice Champion, Sea Shepherd diver, and ocean advocate whose work brings a powerful voice for ocean protection across the Global South. As Dr. Sylvia Earle captures the urgency of this mission in her powerful message, 'People need to participate as if their lives depend on it — because they do.'

OceanLove collaborates with a growing network of international partners and supporters, including the Marine Biological Association (UK), ECHT Community, BrightVibes and Impact2Day (Netherlands), Mission Blue, AltaSea and Doer Marine (USA), AfriLabs and KMT House (Egypt), Sea Sense (Tanzania), Perempuan Indonesia Maju (Indonesia), and the MasterPeace Global Network.

About OceanLove

OceanLove was launched in 2021 by Dutch social entrepreneur and Divemaster **Ilco van der Linde** and is managed by Egyptian free diver **Raghda Ezzeldin**. Its global network of ambassadors, judges, advisors, photographers, scientists, and activists brings expertise to promote ocean conservation. Funded by **Stichting Nieuwe Waarde**, and the **OOF Foundation**, the Awards continue to grow each year, mobilizing more participants, more creativity, and more solutions for a healthier ocean.

The **OceanLove Innovation Awards Ceremony** travels across continents each year, symbolizing the global unity needed to protect our oceans. Following the first ceremony in **The Hague (2024)** and the second in **Barcelona (2025)**, the Awards Ceremony will be held in **Los Angeles (2026)**, followed by **Cairo (2027)**.

Watch & Share the Launch Video

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Diwky-PKhK4?si=cYgbJg1fEovnDlr->

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