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17th Annual International Ocean Film Festival Postponed
Out of "Abundance of caution" in light of COVID-19

Event Originally Scheduled March 12 - 15 in San Francisco

4 March 2020 - San Francisco, CA: The International Ocean Film Festival (www.intloceanfilmfest.org), often called “The Sundance of Ocean Films” and host of the largest gathering of its type in the world, has announced a postponement of this year's 17th annual event, originally slated for March 12 - 15 at San Francisco's Cowell Theatre and other venues throughout the Bay Area.

“Out of an abundance of caution, and in light of the still developing situation with COVID-19, we have decided to postpone this year's festival until all travel restrictions for visiting filmmakers have been lifted, and most importantly, out of respect for our audiences,” said Ana Blanco, Executive Director for the Festival.

Large public gatherings can accelerate the spread of infectious diseases, and San Francisco has already declared a state of emergency because of the spread of COVID-19. In light of an unknown, but growing number of cases in Northern California, the International Ocean Film Festival board made the difficult decision to postpone the organization's cornerstone event.

“With more than 5000 people expected to attend, we know this is the proper response so that when we do reschedule the festival will be a joyful and relaxing experience, and not pose any additional risks or inconvenience to our audience and partners,” said Blanco.

Over the next few weeks, working in concert with filmmakers and venues, the International Ocean Film Festival will announce a new series of dates, likely for mid- to late summer.

For 17 years, San Francisco’s International Ocean Film Festival has been pursuing its ocean conservation mission through film: Saving Our Oceans - One Film at a Time. This year's Festival selection comprised 56 films from 15 countries including four world premieres, six United States premieres, nine West Coast premieres and six Bay Area Premieres.

“This is easily the most diverse group of films we’ve ever had, with the greatest international participation to date,” said Blanco.

For the 2020 Festival, 160 submissions were received from around the world, including films from the USA, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, Turkey, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, South Korea, Madagascar and South Africa. The list includes films of all genres – documentaries,
narratives, shorts, and animation films of all lengths. As always, the Festival focuses on all ocean centric themes including but not limited to: ocean exploration, wildlife, environmental, conservation, oceanography, seafaring adventures, maritime issues, ocean sports and coastal cultures.

In order to fulfill its conservation mission, and in addition to screening films, the International Ocean Film Festival has aligned itself with the Ocean Unite's #Love30x30 initiative to bring more awareness to this global effort. #Love30x30 is a call to action to safeguard at least 30% of the world's ocean by 2030 through a network of highly protected marine areas where no destructive or extractive activities like fishing or mining can take place.

Since its launch in 2004, the San Francisco-based International Ocean Film Festival has attracted thousands of spectators of all ages from around the world, including film enthusiasts, sea athletes, educators, and environmental activists. Since then, the Festival has presented over 600 films from 50 different countries and featured post-film Q&A sessions with visiting filmmakers, special panel discussions with content experts, and the Annual Free Student Education Program. It was the first event of its kind in North America, inspired by the well-established ocean festival in Toulon, France, which has continued to draw large audiences for more than 40 years.

Current sponsors for the 17th Annual International Ocean Film Festival include National Marine Sanctuary, BigBus of San Francisco, Gray Line Tours, SSA, Alcatraz Cruises, the Port of San Francisco, the Consul General of Canada, Blue and Gold Ferry, RBC Wealth Management, Heidrick & Struggles and Pacific Gas & Electric.

The International Ocean Film Festival encourages its patrons, supporters and partners to follow the most current advice from the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization for preventing the further spread of the COVID-19 in Northern California and beyond, and to stay tuned for announcements about International Ocean Film Festival events once the threat level is reduced.