

29 December 2012

Dear members and friends,

It is a pleasure to write to you to welcome the new WSA Inc. Management Committee, elected during our Annual General Meeting on December 19. Some members of the Management Committee renewed their commitment to WSA and new members are coming onboard to continue to move WSA forward into 2013. With this new elections, I take the opportunity to thank the past Management and Steering Committees for the impressive work and dedication shown in 2012. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Ainsley Calladine, our webmaster, that continues to provide incredible support to WSA at no cost! Without Ainsley, we would not be able to run WSA operations (meetings, elections, etc) and to keep you updated through our website. I would also like to thank Siti Yaakub for her tremendous work as Treasurer and for increasing the spirit of the network through the blog and other social media. Our most heartfelt thanks Ainsley and Siti!

I would like to thank all of you for renewing your trust to us, the President, Vice-President and Secretary positions remain unchanged and it continues to be a pleasure for us to serve WSA and we sincerely hope to work with as much dedication as possible to improve and strengthen the Association in 2013. In the coming weeks, the new Steering Committee will also be appointed, we are delighted that several people expressed interest in being part of this committee, all members will be notified when this process is completed.

I would also like to commend Joel Creed and the whole ISBW10 organizing committee for hosting another successful international workshop. WSA was pleased and proud to award financial support to enable 7 students from a diversity of countries and regions to attend. I heard from several of you how positive were the outcomes of this meeting, and how much everyone enjoyed the venue. The bi-annual ISBWs remain a key element of the Association, which we continue to support. It is an important event to maintain our network strong and lively. Unfortunately, once again, I must say I could not attend due to a calendar conflict and I deeply regret that. I will ensure that this will not happen in 2014 and that I will be seeing you all in China!

As we approach the end of 2012, I would like to provide a brief overview of what WSA has accomplished this past year:

- WSA new mission and vision. In 2012, we worked towards revisiting our mission and vision to ensure that it fits and represents the Association. As of November 2012, the new mission and vision have been unanimously accepted by our members:

#### **Vision**

*We envision healthy seagrass ecosystems, under conservation and management measures, that provide key ecological functions in the world's oceans and critical services for human well-being.*

## Mission

*The WSA is an international, non-profit organisation dedicated to raise the profile of seagrass ecosystems worldwide. We foster cooperation and promote networking among scientists, conservationists, managers and educators from coastal nations worldwide. By informing and communicating on locally and globally significant seagrass topics, the WSA promotes a culture where thriving seagrass ecosystems are secured for the future.*

- We launched and completed a members questionnaire to help us define WSA roles and priorities and to focus the goals of the Association. The questionnaire was open to members through an online system. 37% of members completed the questionnaire, reflecting the need for a larger membership engagement on WSA issues. The questionnaire results were presented at ISBW in Brazil and a report will be available online shortly. I would like to thank Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria for putting the report together, thanks Sandy!
- We also have several new members to WSA. However, in 2013, we need to place a greater focus on enlarging our membership. Through discussions with several people around the world, we realised that we need a bigger effort in reaching out to younger scientists and managers. The WSA community remains small and this is a weakness we must address. The strength of our network is in its members.
- We have been working to produce a special issue of Marine Pollution Bulletin on "seagrasses and environmental change". Over 10 abstract submissions have been received and manuscripts are currently being prepared.
- We have created a WSA "life achievement award" for members and seagrass fellows with special merits. We are now in the process of finalising the criteria for eligibility and nominations. Stay tuned!
- We established a partnership with Google Ocean Platform. Google Ocean is a platform that is used to communicate to the larger public across the world about marine issues, biodiversity conservation and the importance of marine resources. In 2013, we will begin to create content for Google Ocean to showcase seagrass science, conservation, management etc which will help us to engage a larger number of people worldwide on helping us to protect seagrass ecosystems.
- We made contacts with film producers to develop a seagrass documentary. This will focus on the importance and value of seagrass habitats/ecosystems, the benefits of their ecosystem services, the connectivity with other habitats and coastal communities, and the need to better manage for threats and impacts. This documentary will be for a wider general public to engage them in taking action for seagrass conservation. We hope to be able to develop this idea into a concrete documentary in 2013!
- We boosted our investment on social media (the new WSA blog, facebook page, etc), publishing on our blog stories from the field across the world and keeping members informed about seagrass-related news, curiosities, etc. Social media have been an efficient and rapid way to spread and pass information throughout the global seagrass community. We understand that not all members use social media, but the goal of the Association is to reach out and cater to the diversity of our members and to use tools that involve younger generations of seagrassers. We hope that our blog and facebook page are useful to create links and connections among members across the world and to engage non-members in becoming part of WSA.
- We also produced a 2012 seagrass calendar, featuring one genera for each month. The calendar was free to download for all members (and non-members). We hope to produce a calendar for 2013 as well.

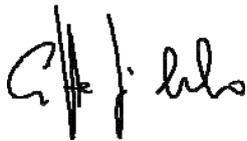
Although WSA remains active and with ambitious goals, we continue to be challenged by our limited resources, both human and financial. We look upon you to lend a hand, to become more involved, to dedicate more time to us. We understand the time limitations that each and every one of us has to face, but we urge you to join our cause, to bring ideas and to make them happen. Without your

involvement, WSA cannot scale up its commitment to raise the profile of seagrass globally and to engage in conservation, science, management issues. Therefore, we renew our invitation to contact us, to come forward and to contribute with ideas and suggestions. The Association is there for members to make us of.

On behalf of the Management Committee, I thank you all again for your renew support to WSA and I wish you a great closure for 2012 and a positive start of 2013.

We look forward to working with you in the next year.

Best Wishes,



Dr. Giuseppe Di Carlo  
*President*  
*World Seagrass Association Inc.*

