

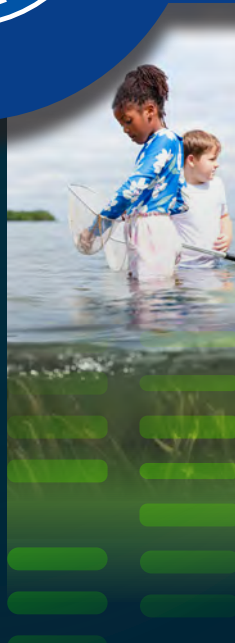


2024

ANNUAL



REPORT



**“WE DON’T NEED HOPE TO SAVE THE OCEAN — WE HAVE SCIENCE.  
DECADES OF MARINE RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION  
ARE DRIVING MOTE’S GLOBAL IMPACT.”**

**— DR. MICHAEL P. CROSBY, MOTE PRESIDENT & CEO**

Mote’s 2024 Annual Report presents accomplishments and finances  
for the 2024 fiscal year, Oct. 1, 2023 – Sept. 30, 2024.

For the digital version of this report,  
scan this QR code or visit: [mote.org/2024AR](https://mote.org/2024AR)





## FROM THE CHAIR

As we reflect on another year of globally significant marine research and science education at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, we must first turn our attention to the impacts of one of the most devastating hurricane seasons ever experienced across our operating areas in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

Following hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton, our local friends, family members, business partners and governments are making great progress on their road to recovery. I am deeply grateful for their strength and deeply aware of Mote’s strong roots in these communities we call home. That’s because I witnessed firsthand as each of those groups turned their attention to Mote in one of our greatest moments of need, as we embarked upon our own road to recovery.

That connection to our community fills me with excitement for the coming year. In 2025, Mote will celebrate our 70th anniversary. I’m proud that, since 1955, Mote has always been guided by the same three core principles, which we’ve so enthusiastically shared with our communities: passion, partnership and philanthropy. Not only have those principles transformed a once fledgling, one-room laboratory into a global powerhouse of marine science and education—they have supported us steadfastly in the most difficult

times. Perhaps most importantly, they have always kept our eyes on what matters most—home.

At Mote, we’ve always been pleased to open our home to you. In the Oct. 20, 1980, edition of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, a headline read “New Mote Center Dedicated to Public.” The article was about the dedication event for Mote’s new Science Center on City Island, which was later renamed Mote Aquarium. Now, 2025 won’t simply mark the 70th anniversary of Mote Marine Laboratory—it will also mark the 45th anniversary of Mote Aquarium. It’s fitting that 2025 will also be the year when we open the doors to our new Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA) at Nathan Benderson Park. I can’t wait to welcome you to Mote SEA, and I look forward to the ribbon cutting when we can, once again, dedicate it to the public.

*Sandi Stuart*

Sandra Stuart  
Chair, Mote Marine Laboratory  
Board of Trustees



## FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Mote is one of the most unique and impactful independent nonprofit marine research and science education institutions in the world. We have grown over the last 69 years on the firm foundational pillars of passion, partnership and philanthropy. We have excelled because resiliency and innovation are infused in the DNA and culture of our Mote family.

At Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, our innovative research now allows us to restore coral reefs with genetically resilient corals, and we’re gearing up to do the same for seagrass meadows. The results of our paradigm changing science transform hope into reality—allowing us to revitalize these ecosystems.

This year will also be remembered for the unparalleled resilience of our Mote family in response to the devastating impacts of hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton. As many in the Mote family were recovering from the aftermath of Debby, our communities in Southwest Florida experienced the overwhelming back-to-back blows of Helene and Milton. During Helene, Mote campuses on City Island and Anna Maria Island experienced unprecedented water intrusion from storm surge.

During recovery and stabilization efforts from the impacts of Helene, Mote pivoted toward preparation and protective measures in advance of the arrival of Milton. Milton destroyed a significant portion of the Anna Maria City Pier walkway and intensified the damage on City Island. The storms required Mote Aquarium to close for two months.

This one-two punch resulted in an approximately \$14 million in remediation and restoration, and might have knocked out some organizations. However, this report includes stories of the incredible resilience of our Mote family to persevere, adapt and bounce back with a renewed passion for our mission. Not for a single day did Mote stop working to address the grand challenges facing our oceans.

Mote continues to lead the effort to restore Florida’s reef with partners, and our scientists continue to set new record firsts. In 2024, Mote outplanted 22,944 corals and reached a milestone of over 240,000 corals outplanted since 2008. Mote’s International Coral Gene Bank successfully crossed cryo-preserved sperm of boulder brain coral with fresh eggs of the same species to create new coral recruits, and our Ocean Technology Research Program used 3-D printing to produce “cradles” (cryo-racks) for these new babies.

We launched the new Florida Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative, led by Mote in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Florida, to develop, test and implement innovative, effective, cost-efficient and environmentally sustainable technologies and approaches for restoring coastal seagrass ecosystems.

With a generous lead gift from the W Dale Brougher Foundation, we launched the Artificial Intelligence Marine Science (AIMS) Center that will be publicly visible at Mote SEA (Science Education Aquarium) when it opens in mid-2025.

Mote’s marine science education programs reached a record 50,984 individuals, and when we combine that with our educational booth events, we reached a total of 66,529 people. We launched a new Apprentice Program that provides year-long opportunities to explore careers in marine science or aquarium biology for students who may or may not be college-bound.

As part of Mote’s international marine science diplomacy initiative that develops and deploys innovative science and technology to help solve the many challenges our oceans face, we signed an MOU to partner and collaborate with researchers in Taiwan. This landmark new international partnership focuses on heat-resilient coral research and restoration, and I am especially pleased that we will also co-train skilled community volunteers to directly engage in science-based coral restoration, and establish joint international high school programs to provide experiential learning opportunities for the next generation.

This annual report shares many stories of Mote continuing to serve as a leader on the front lines of restoring, rescuing and ensuring future resiliency of critical marine and coastal species, habitats and ecosystems with innovative science and technology in 2024. This is an exciting time for Mote, and the future is full of promise.

We envision a future in which tens of millions of visitors will experience the transformative power of discovery and learning at Mote SEA, changing the way they think about our oceans, conservation and sustainable use. After we open Mote SEA in 2025, our attention will turn to the evolution of our City Island campus into a state-of-the-art, International Marine Science & Technology Innovation Park that will change paradigms for safeguarding marine and coastal ecosystems against challenges that are ever increasing in scale and complexity. However, we are only able to serve in this leadership role because of decades of conducting innovative research and the incredible support from our community.

Thank you for being so supportive of our work in 2024. Please continue to join us in building an incredible future of Mote research and science education driving positive impacts for the quality of life in our communities and the health of our oceans around the world.

Cheers!



Dr. Michael P. Crosby  
President & CEO

## STRONGER AFTER THE STORMS

**AT MOTE MARINE LABORATORY & AQUARIUM, WE ADVANCE SCIENCE TO SUPPORT RESILIENT OCEANS—WHERE THRIVING POPULATIONS OF MARINE LIFE CAN ADAPT TO CHANGE AND RECOVER FROM CHALLENGES**

Our mission succeeds because our Mote family is resilient too. We’ve weathered our share of storms—Hurricane Georges, which destroyed our first Florida Keys campus in 1998, Hurricane Irma, which was buffered by our sturdy new Keys facility in 2017, and many storms in between. Each time, the Mote family has come together to prepare, repair and be there for each other and for Mote’s mission of science, conservation, education and wildlife rehabilitation.

In 2024, hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton struck back-to-back at Mote’s Sarasota and Manatee campuses—and the Mote family demonstrated resilience beyond all doubt.

**Top:** Damage from Hurricane Milton at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium on City Island, Sarasota.

Debby’s extreme rainfall flooded local homes in August, Helene drove a historic storm surge into the first floor of Mote’s main campus on City Island, Sarasota, in late September, and in early October, we were still recovering from Helene as we pivoted to preparing for Milton—no small feat. Milton struck Mote’s City Island campus with more water and significant wind damage, and it cut off access to Mote’s educational facilities on the historic Anna Maria City Pier.

Through it all, Mote staff displayed unwavering dedication to protecting the animals in our care. Our team successfully relocated two resident manatees to a partner facility and transported endangered sea turtles, an alligator, birds, river otters and other key

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: RESILIENCE

species to Mote Aquaculture Research Park 13 miles inland.

Working around the clock, Mote staff were able to ensure the survival of the overwhelming majority of animals in our care. However, despite the team’s exceptional efforts, the stress of back-to-back hurricanes led to insurmountable health issues for two North American river otters, Huck and Jane, who tragically passed away despite medical intervention.

Amid this heartbreaking loss and the damage to our campuses, Mote staff came together in the spirit of family and resilience, pitching in with cleanup and repair crews and ensuring our animals returned safely. Eight weeks after Hurricane Milton, Mote’s campus repairs were progressing so quickly that Mote Aquarium was able to reopen our doors to visitors from far and wide.

Mote is immensely grateful for our community’s outpouring of support, which greatly accelerated our recovery. And we were pleased to report that our

**Below:** Mote Guest Services Associate Maija Miller paints a new mural in Mote Aquarium during restoration efforts after hurricanes Helene and Milton.



newest campus in development, Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA) in mainland Sarasota County, stood strong throughout hurricane season and remains on track to welcome visitors in 2025.

Despite these storms, Mote’s mission never paused. Mote staff continued rescuing and rehabilitating marine animals, even helping rescue a manatee trapped in a residential canal after storm waters rose and subsided. We continued water sampling and analyses to document the storms’ impacts on water quality. We documented storm impacts to sea turtle nesting beaches and educated the public about how to protect these endangered animals. And we adapted following the storm damage by relocating research labs and staff workstations to continue many other facets of our vital mission.

Mote’s mission focuses on helping the ocean weather its own toughest challenges. For example, Mote is:

- Preserving, breeding and raising corals resilient to major stressors—disease, rising



**Top left:** Hurricane Milton’s destruction of the Anna Maria City Pier. **Above:** Mote Graphic Designer Kevin Toshner and Associate Vice President for Mote Aquarium Evan Barniskis repair storm-damaged exhibits at Mote Aquarium.

temperatures and ocean acidification—to restore depleted coral reefs and help them adapt to their changing environment.

- Advancing new research initiatives to restore depleted seagrasses—ensuring these vital marine plants can rebound from environmental stress and continue providing food for manatees.
- Working with partners around the world to drive science-based conservation for reef sharks and rays.
- Studying how extreme storms affect red tide, sea turtle nesting and other dynamics in coastal ecosystems—with the goal to find better strategies to protect people and wildlife.
- Developing new technologies and harnessing the power of AI for innovation, productivity and progress in our mission to empower conservation and sustainable use of our ocean.

“The remarkable resilience of our Mote family, and our broader community, has allowed us to emerge from this crisis stronger, and with a renewed commitment to our mission—restoring and conserving our shared marine and coastal ecosystems through excellence in research and science education,” said Mote President & CEO Dr. Michael P. Crosby.

**Below:** Mote’s Senior Manager of Creative Services Alexis Crabtree helps replace Aquarium exhibit signs.



# MOTE'S NEXT WAVE OF INNOVATION

MOTE MARINE LABORATORY HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN FOR PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF MARINE SCIENCE.

Mote's founding director, Dr. Eugenie Clark, earned the nickname "Shark Lady" for her groundbreaking research that revolutionized our understanding of sharks. Dr. Clark established a legacy of innovation that continues at Mote today.

Now, our changing world requires a new level of innovation. Mote is developing novel, science-based solutions for the grand challenges affecting our oceans and society—red tides, plastic pollution, loss of coral reefs and seagrass, and other hurdles for the ocean and human health that require us to process growing amounts of data more efficiently. Using cutting-edge technologies, we advance research to support conservation and sustainable use of ocean ecosystems, healthy blue economies and an improved quality of life for communities worldwide.

"We must boldly embrace the challenges of creating a healthier ocean and society, using Mote's signature ingenuity to transform our science into actionable solutions," said Mote's President & CEO Dr. Michael P. Crosby.

Here's a glance at some of our groundbreaking innovations this year:

## MOTE AIMS FOR THE FUTURE

This year, Mote laid the groundwork for one of the world's first artificial intelligence (AI) centers exclusively for marine research and science education. The Mote AI Marine Science Center (AIMS Center), to be located at Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA), will focus on integrating AI into marine research, providing training and fostering collaboration both within Mote and with external partners. By doing so, Mote will enhance productivity, drive scientific discovery, ensure data security and ethical standards, and support AI-focused education and outreach. The AIMS Center at Mote SEA was established with generous support from the W Dale Brougner Foundation.

## PIONEERING RED TIDE MITIGATION

The Florida Red Tide Mitigation & Technology Development Initiative, led by Mote in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), has transformed the fight against red tide and its severe impacts on Florida's environment and economy.

As of 2024, following years of laboratory research and rigorous efforts to ensure regulatory compliance,

Mote has launched field tests for three out of more than a dozen new mitigation methods for Florida's red tide algae, *Karenia brevis*, including:

- **OZONIX®**: A cutting-edge water-treatment technology currently used to address cyanobacterial (blue-green algae) blooms, contaminated water sources, and agricultural waste.
- **CLEAR**: A natural, plant-derived product approved and registered with the State of Florida as a biocide specifically for red tide blooms.
- **Xtreme**: A natural compound with proven applications in agriculture and freshwater algal treatments.

The Initiative has been so successful that, this year, the State of Florida chose to continue supporting it beyond its original six-year timeline.

## SMALL PLASTICS WITH BIG IMPACTS

Global plastic production is expected to quadruple by 2050, worsening the dangers of plastic pollution. Tiny micro- and nanoplastics can harm wildlife and people through ingestion and toxin exposure. Nanoplastics can even cross the blood-brain barrier and impact neurological health. Mote's Center for Research and Policy on Nanoplastic Pollution aims to better understand nanoplastic risks in the ocean and help industry and policy leaders address them. This year, Mote scientists and partners studied nanoplastics' effects on spotted sea trout, analyzing brain, liver and muscle tissues for nanoplastic accumulation, oxidative stress—an imbalance between antioxidants and unstable molecules called free radicals—and changes to development and metabolism.

## EXPLORING THE PHARMA-SEA

Mote scientists know that ocean health supports human health. We've uncovered cancer-fighting compounds from shark immune systems and other promising resources for biomedical advancement. This year, Mote scientists published new research on the potential medicinal properties of stingray venom.

We also expanded the Mote Microbial Library, a living collection of cryopreserved marine microbes (e.g., bacteria and fungi) that we screen for disease-fighting traits. Mote gathered microbial isolates from Gulf of Mexico deep-sea sediments and sponge microbiomes in Puerto Rico. This year, we added 454 microbial isolates and screened 272 against a panel of pathogens.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Mote's innovations don't stay in the lab. Our research generates intellectual property and business collaborations to power "blue economy" growth. We aim to drive expansion in Florida's science and technology sector, with benefits beyond state lines. In the years ahead, Mote's City Island campus will transform into an International Marine Science & Technology Innovation Park. This evolution will more than double research infrastructure, vastly expand Mote's team of 45 Ph.D. scientists and catalyze development of a "Silicon Valley" of marine science and technology in southwest Florida.

**Top left to bottom right:** Mote Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr. Kirstie Francis prepares microbial isolates for preservation. Mote scientists test OZONIX® tech in Sarasota Bay. Mote Senior Chemist Dr. Chris Sibley with sample from red tide mitigation study.



# IMPACTS: 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... BATTLE BLOOMS OF HARMFUL ALGAE

**+300 TECHNOLOGIES** and compounds examined by the Mote-led Florida Red Tide Mitigation & Technology Development Initiative through **+40 PROJECTS** completed or underway focused on reducing the abundance and toxicity of red tides caused by *Karenia brevis* algae.

**22 TECHNOLOGIES FOR RED TIDE MITIGATION** and improved detection are in the **FIELD-TESTING STAGE** or even further along in the Mote-led Florida Red Tide Mitigation & Technology Development Initiative. Of those, several are in the process of regulatory approval and / or examining field deployment options.

**EARLY WARNING:** Mote and partners deployed a new bottom-mounted sensor offshore to detect the nutrient nitrate, temperature and salinity every hour and provide early warnings of **UPWELLING NUTRIENTS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO RED TIDE FORMATION.**

**23,862 WATER SAMPLES** ANALYZED FOR RED TIDE ALGAE by Mote-FWC\* Cooperative Red Tide Research Program this year—a key part of a statewide monitoring network.

**+100,000 WATER SAMPLES** analyzed by Mote scientists from Sarasota and the Florida Keys to help understand seawater chemistry changes and their possible impacts on marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems.

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... LOOK OUT FOR OUR OCEANS

**+50 PROJECTS** by external partners funded by Mote's Red Tide Mitigation & Technology Development Initiative as of this year.

**500 MICROBIAL EXTRACTS** per year can be screened for activity against the harmful algae *Alexandrium monilatum* using a high-throughput assay developed this year at Mote Marine Laboratory. Screening will ramp up during 2025.

**\$3.2 MILLION AWARDED TO MOTE** and partners from Florida's Department of Environmental Protection to combat harmful algal blooms.

**NANOPLASTICS IN FISH:** Mote scientists found nanoplastics in the livers of sea trout exposed to these tiny plastic particles in the lab. This research supports a better understanding of nanoplastic impacts in the environment.

**120 YEARS:** AGE OF SOME HUMPBACK WHALES ESTIMATED BY MOTE SCIENTISTS. Mote analyzed signs of aging in **28 WHALE EYES** from Alaska and Hawaii to get essential data for conservation of this protected species. The aging technique—assessing amino acid racemization in the lens nucleus—has never been used with humpbacks.

**93% OF LOGGERHEAD TURTLE NESTS ON SARASOTA COUNTY BEACHES ARE WARM ENOUGH TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE HATCHLINGS.** Mote scientists reported in 2024 based on their surveys since 2021 of nest temperature, which determines sex. **A SKEWED RATIO OF FEMALES VS. MALES CAN POSE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES.** This year Mote placed weather stations to assess how ambient temperature and rainfall affect nests.

**131 DAYS OF ROBOTIC GLIDER SURVEYS** led by Mote to monitor ocean conditions relevant to red tide research.

**AI-POWERED MANATEE IDENTIFICATION** project launched by Mote and partners. The team will use artificial intelligence (AI) to identify individual manatees from photos more efficiently—enhancing vital data for manatee conservation.

**24 SAMPLES PER DAY** can be collected by the SeapHOx instrument deployed by Mote in the Lower Florida Keys to monitor oxygen, salinity, temperature and pH hourly, **HELPING REVEAL ACIDIFICATION AND IMPACTS TO CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEMS.**

**3 SPECIES OF STINGRAYS** studied for peer-reviewed paper published this year exploring the bioactivity of their venom extracts, which show potential for biomedical and pharmacological applications.

**4 ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHINS** TAGGED WITH POLE-MOUNTED DEVICE from the Mote-based SDRP\* scientists and WHOI\* partners. The device could transform conservation-focused research on offshore bow-riding dolphins by allowing **TAGGING WITHOUT CAPTURE.**

**+103,000 SNOOK RELEASED** by Mote scientists in partnership with FWC\* from 1997 through 2024 to develop fisheries enhancement strategies that will benefit Florida's ecosystems.

**850 COMMON SNOOK RELEASED** this year by Mote to help identify the best release times, locations and approaches for fisheries enhancement.

**59 COMMERCIAL FISHING TRIPS** documented this year through Mote's efforts to improve data for Gulf of Mexico fisheries management. Since 2016, Mote's CFEMM\* has documented **665 TRIPS WITH +230,000 CATCH EVENTS.**

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... SOLVE PROBLEMS WITH TECHNOLOGY

**454 STRAINS OF MICROSCOPIC LIFE ISOLATED** from deep-sea sediments and marine species added to the Mote Microbial Library. Mote scientists mine these microbial isolates for **NEW POTENTIAL SOURCES OF MEDICINE.**

**NEW WEB APP DEVELOPED BY MOTE SCIENTISTS** will help fishers document unwanted interactions with sharks and marine mammals to support conservation and efficient fishing. The app will be used by Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fishers and charter fishers in 2025.

**1,255 POUNDS OF UNDERSIZED GROUPER** were documented from 5 commercial fishing trips with Mote's electronic monitoring systems under a NOAA Exempted Fishing Permit, testing "Optimized Retention"—a strategy to efficiently harvest certain undersized fish that are at greater risk of perishing if discarded.

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... STABILIZE FISHERIES

\*SARASOTA DOLPHIN RESEARCH PROGRAM, A BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH MOTE • WOODS HOLE OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTION

\*CENTER FOR FISHERIES ELECTRONIC MONITORING AT MOTE • FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION • NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



## THE (SEA) GRASS IS GREENER AT MOTE

### THIS YEAR MARKED THE LAUNCH OF MOTE MARINE LABORATORY'S GROUNDBREAKING FLORIDA SEAGRASS RESTORATION TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The new Initiative is a bold step forward in addressing one of Florida's most pressing ecological challenges. Under a contract from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Mote leads this state-funded, 5-year effort to develop innovative and environmentally sustainable technologies needed to restore coastal seagrass ecosystems and create a 10-year Florida restoration plan to implement these technologies.

Seagrasses provide essential habitat for marine life and food for manatees and other iconic species. They also stabilize sediments and improve water quality by filtering excess nutrients. In addition, these underwater meadows combat climate change by capturing and storing carbon dioxide, a process known as carbon sequestration. However, seagrass habitats are vanishing at an alarming rate—approximately 7% per year globally—due to negative human activities and natural stressors.

Recognizing the urgent need for innovative restoration methods, Mote's Initiative was modeled after the success of Mote's genetic resilience-based coral restoration and the Red Tide Mitigation & Technology Development Initiative, a first-of-its-kind partnership between Mote and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. The new Seagrass Restoration Initiative brings together public and private research entities to develop and test cutting-edge technologies and approaches for restoring seagrass ecosystems across Florida.

To support this ambitious program, Mote completed construction of a state-of-the-art greenhouse in 2024. This facility is a cornerstone for seagrass research, enabling scientists to simulate real-world stressors such as warming waters, reduced salinity

and increased turbidity (cloudiness of the water). By identifying and cultivating seagrass genotypes resilient to these challenges, Mote is laying the foundation for large-scale restoration success.

In summer 2024, Mote contracted eight pioneering projects designed to explore innovative solutions for seagrass restoration. Building on this momentum, Mote released a second Request for Proposals in December 2024, inviting more groundbreaking ideas from researchers around the globe.

A central element of this Initiative is the creation of Florida's primary seagrass genetic library. Managed by Mote, this hub will facilitate statewide collaboration and support the development of genetically resilient seagrass capable of natural reproduction in both land-based and in-water nurseries.

"Mote has long been a leader in science-based restoration and conservation," said Dr. Michael P. Crosby, President & CEO of Mote. "The Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative represents a monumental leap forward in protecting Florida's coastal ecosystems and ensuring their sustainability for generations to come."

**Top left:** Seagrass samples about to be cryopreserved by Mote scientists.

**Below, left to right:** The Ron & Marla Wolf Seagrass Restoration Center for Ocean Sustainability. Seagrass being grown by Mote.

Leading the charge within this Initiative is Mote's Seagrass Ecosystem Restoration Research Program (SERRP), established to tackle restoration challenges by blending advanced genetic science with practical techniques. Dr. Dominique Gallery, an expert in population genetics and marine conservation, was recruited as a Mote Postdoctoral Research Fellow to lead this effort, applying cutting-edge genetic methods previously used in coral restoration to the emerging field of seagrass restoration.

"Seagrasses are among the least protected marine ecosystems globally, yet they are vital to marine life and human livelihoods," said Dr. Gallery. "It's an honor to work with Mote to pioneer solutions that will help restore these critical habitats."


Through the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative, Mote is driving innovation and collaboration to restore one of Florida's most vital ecosystems. By combining advanced science, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to sustainability, Mote is proving that solutions to the global seagrass crisis are within reach.



# IMPACTS: 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO BE... SEA TURTLES' NEST FRIEND

### 4,369 SEA TURTLE NESTS


 **documented by Mote** on Longboat Key through Venice, Florida—the 4th highest loggerhead nesting season recorded in Mote's 43 years of turtle conservation & research.

### 2 LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE NESTS

 hatched on Mote-patrolled nesting beaches for the **1st time** in Mote's history.

 **3 DOLPHINS** (2 Atlantic spotted and 1 bottlenose) tagged offshore over the West Florida Shelf by SDRP\* with support from the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program grant administered through Mote.

### 50 MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs)

 and controlled fishing sites are being re-surveyed by the Mote-led initiative Global FinPrint starting this year, to examine if MPAs are allowing reef shark populations to recover and thrive.

### 4,000 SMALL SHARK FINS

 from Hong Kong markets had their DNA analyzed for a new peer-reviewed study by Mote and partners. Their findings: small coastal species are much more common in the international fin trade than previously thought and there is a burgeoning market for juveniles of large species.

STUDY BY MOTE, FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, MIAMI UNIVERSITY AND OTHER PARTNERS AROUND THE GLOBE.

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... KEEP TABS ON MARINE LIFE

### 1,018 SEA TURTLE HATCHLINGS

 were treated by Mote's Hatchling Hospital and **52 sea turtles** were treated at Mote's Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Hospital this year.


### 5,300 SEA TURTLE HATCHLINGS

were collected and released from **+100 nests** in Sarasota County for Mote's conservation-focused research this year.

### 496 DISTINCTIVE MANATEES

 **photo-documented by Mote** this year. Of these, **109 manatees** have been observed repeatedly and 2 have been known for as long as **40 years**.

### x2 THE CONSERVATION BENEFITS


 to reef sharks can be achieved when marine protected areas are established in nations that also have catch limits or gear restrictions for shark fishing, according to Mote co-authors of a new peer-reviewed study.

STUDY LED BY CURTIN UNIVERSITY.

### 1 NEW SHARK SPECIES

 discovered by Mote scientists and partners at Florida International University. *Sphyrna alleni* is closely related to the bonnethead shark (*Sphyrna tiburo*).

### 1ST ULTRASOUND of a wild, pregnant spotted eagle ray

 conducted by Mote, revealing 4 ray fetuses. Such techniques provide critical insights into reproduction of endangered animals like these rays.

ULTRASOUND PROBE SUPPORTED BY GRANT FROM THE NAUSICAA ENDOWMENT FUND. RESEARCH BY MOTE AND FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

### 135 HOURS

 of manatee aerial survey time over **29 flights**. These surveys were conducted in Sarasota, Hillsborough, Brevard, Lee and Palm Beach Counties, as well as Chatham County, Georgia. Additionally, **214 manatees** observed on June 5, the **3rd highest count in 39 years**.

\*SARASOTA DOLPHIN RESEARCH PROGRAM, BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH MOTE • U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS • FLORIDA CORAL RESCUE CENTER • U.S. COAST GUARD


**345 NEW GENOTYPES** of 10 coral species arrived this year at Mote's International Gene Bank, which is designed to preserve coral species and genetic diversity for future research, propagation and restoration.

GENOTYPES PROVIDED BY: FCRC\*, GEORGIA AQUARIUM, OMAHA'S HENRY DOORLY ZOO & AQUARIUM, RESCUES FROM THE USCG\* DOCK IN KEY WEST, BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK, REEF RENEWAL, DRY TORTUGAS NATIONAL PARK, MOTE MARINE LABORATORY, AND NOAA\*.

### +100,000 CORAL FRAGMENTS

 of +20 species produced by Mote this year for upcoming reef restoration.


### 500 ELKHORN CORAL SITES

 surveyed in 11 weeks at Buck Island Reef National Monument in St. Croix, USVI\* to quantify population health in collaboration with the National Park Service. Mote scientists presented their findings to **+100 local community members**.

### 137,000 CORAL LARVAE

were acquired by Mote scientists from our partners this year for gene banking and restoration, 24,000 were produced by parent corals from Mote's Gene Bank, and 1,492 corals produced in 2023 continued to grow there in our care.

### +\$400,000 AWARDED

 by Mote's Protect Our Reefs grant program this year for research, restoration and education projects on Florida's Coral Reef.

### 13,760 JUVENILE CARIBBEAN KING CRABS

 produced across 150 hatches by Mote's Crab Hatchery.

### 19 DOLPHINS


 examined during health assessments of resident Sarasota Bay dolphins in May by Mote-based SDRP\* scientists. During the process, 2 young dolphins were rescued from life-threatening entanglements in marine debris.

 **NEW RESCUE TRUCK** funded for Mote to assist in manatee response efforts throughout the state.


\*NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... CONSERVE CRITICAL CORAL REEFS


### +26,000 CORALS PLANTED

 by Mote scientists this year to restore Florida's Coral Reef, with **65% surviving two heat waves**—a win for Mote's resilience-focused restoration. **1,000 of these corals** were outplanted off Higgs Beach, Florida, by Mote scientists in collaboration with participants from the Combat Wounded Veteran Challenge. **Since 2008, Mote has restored +240,000 corals.**

### 1ST USE OF CRYOPRESERVED GAMETES

 at Mote's International Gene Bank for coral breeding. Cryopreservation—deep freezing to preserve materials—allows Mote scientists to breed resilient coral parents together selectively and enhance genetic diversity and resilience in wild coral populations.

### 2 MESOPHOTIC CORAL SPECIES

—low-light corals—were added to Mote's International Coral Gene Bank, allowing scientists to study and preserve the genotypes of each species. Within months of arrival, both species began spawning and produced hundreds of babies that are now in Mote's care.

 **1ST AND ONLY INSTITUTION to successfully produce Caribbean king crabs for coral reef restoration is Mote.** Mote is also poised to become the 1st to release these crabs onto U.S. reefs.

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... LEND A HELPING HAND



# FULL STEM AHEAD!

## MOTE LAUNCHES NEW MARINE STEM EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM

For 70 years, Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium has advanced research to understand, restore, sustainably use and conserve ocean ecosystems. This year, we strengthened our commitment to our newest research focus: STEM education.

People of all ages are drawn to Mote for informal science education, from in-water summer camps to immersive research internships. In turn, many of these programs have become valuable sources of scientific data—sparking new Mote research on how best to engage, recruit and support students from diverse backgrounds in career paths focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

This year, these efforts gave rise to Mote’s new Marine STEM Education Research Program.

“As an independent marine research institution with longstanding culture of science education, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to understand the impacts of our programs and optimize them through rigorous, peer-reviewed research,” said Mote’s Associate Vice President for Education Dr. Aly Busse, who earned her Ph.D. in Education Measurement and Research from the University of South Florida and serves as manager of the new Research Program.

This Program aims to: make STEM fields more accessible to individuals from across the broad range of communities in the U.S.; develop and disseminate evidence-based practices to improve STEM learning at all grade levels; help mentors create safe, effective and responsive learning environments for students; enhance research and contribute knowledge to support students’

**Left:** Students from a local community center enjoy an educational field trip to Mote, where they observe and learn about marine organisms with Mote educator Michelle Marinangel. **Center below:** Mote REU intern Valentina Gomez presents her summer research findings to Mote Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr. Kirstie Francis.

success in STEM; and inform STEM education and research best practices in fields beyond marine science.

The Program grew from a five-year, Mote-led, National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded effort called MarSci-LACE\*, which has investigated how marine research internships with specially trained mentors and support systems affect student learning, psychosocial factors, career aspirations and more. Now in its fifth year, MarSci-LACE is analyzing some promising, preliminary results. For example, there is a significant increase in students’ sense of belonging to science following their internships, which is a factor that has been shown to increase retention in STEM and academic success.

“Students’ sense of belonging, their science identity and their sense of self efficacy are all important traits for keeping them on the path to STEM careers,” Busse said. “This is true for most students, and it can be especially important for students from many communities that lack opportunities for experiential learning in fields related to marine science.”

Through MarSci-LACE, Mote and partners have identified education and training gaps that can be better addressed to recruit a broader array of students.

For example, students who started out learning about technology in a community college might have had limited exposure to marine science internship opportunities, but they might bring other valuable strengths to the field. With such students in mind, Mote launched a new program offering undergraduates one week of residential research experience so they are better prepared to compete for internships, like

NSF-funded Research Experiences for Undergraduates at Mote and beyond.

## STEM & SEA

Mote’s Marine STEM Education Research Program is just getting started with its NSF grants, however. Mote staff are writing proposals and building collaborations for new projects—for example, studies of augmented and virtual reality use in STEM education—and preparing to engage with Mote’s exciting new education hub set to open in 2025: Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA).



At Mote SEA, students from the southwest Florida schools will have access to three STEM Teaching Labs and five STEM Workforce Training Labs. Public programs will welcome people of all ages, and Mote researchers will have new opportunities to

evaluate STEM education program impacts—especially for longer-term programs like continuing education, afterschool programs and high school partnerships.

Mote SEA will also house Mote’s Artificial Intelligence Marine Science (AIMS) Center. Busse said: “One possibility we’re excited to explore is creating a training or certification program on AI and big data analytics in marine science and geoscience—skills that are hugely important and that will help prepare students for the STEM workforce.”

**Below:** Mote SEA’s STEM Teaching Labs under construction.



\*MARINE SCIENCE LABORATORY ALLIANCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

# IMPACTS: 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... PRESENT BIG IDEAS

**38 BRIEFINGS**  
for legislative and other government officials provided by Mote President & CEO Dr. Michael P. Crosby this year.

**7 MOTE SCIENTISTS**  
presented their research through 5 posters and talks at the November 2023 **International Conference on Harmful Algae in Japan**.

**NEW MOTE WEBSITE**  
launched this year at [mote.org](https://mote.org) with exciting new features such as Mote's **Animal Encyclopedia** and a **Research Map** showing where Mote works around the world.

**13,950 MENTIONS OF MOTE**  
on social media and in news media stories allowed us to share our science, education, our outreach through Mote Aquarium and other highlights from our mission this year.



**+42,000 NEW FOLLOWERS**  
gained on **Instagram**, after sharing the rescue, rehab and release story of 2 loggerhead turtles, Artemis and Local. Their story amassed **12 million views & +500,000 likes**.

**GLOBAL RECOGNITION**  
achieved on April 24, 2024, as Mote Marine Laboratory was featured on PBS/BBC series "Changing Planet."

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... EXTEND OUR REACH

**EGYPT PRESENTATION:**  
Mote's Library & Archives Director presented about Mote's custom digital asset management system at the 50<sup>th</sup> annual conference for the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers in Alexandria, Egypt.

**NEW DISCOVERIES**  
and expert perspectives were presented by Mote scientists during Capitol Hill Oceans Week (coral reef resilience), the Society of Environmental Toxicologists and Chemists Annual Meeting and the Alaska Marine Science Symposium (contaminants and polar bear health), the 50th Anniversary celebration for the U.S. Endangered Species Act (Mote's role in the discovery of the Rice's whale) and multiple conferences emphasizing ecotoxicology, harmful algal blooms and more.

**+155 MILLION**  
combined impressions across social media pages and profiles (the total number of times content appeared on screens, including posts, check-ins, ads, feed stories, and more.)

**NEW MARINE STEM EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM**  
established at Mote to grow our peer-reviewed research on the impacts of STEM education. STEM IS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH.

**18,801 UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS**  
served by Mote's education programs.

**92 LOCATIONS IN 9 STATES**  
are now monitored by Mote's Beach Conditions Reporting System ([visitbeaches.org](https://visitbeaches.org)), including **24 new sites added this year**. GEORGIA, LOUISIANA, AND OHIO SITES INCLUDED THROUGH COLLABORATIONS WITH GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR WATER AND HEALTH, TYBEE ISLAND MARINE SCIENCE CENTER, TYBEE ISLAND MARITIME ACADEMY, LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES, BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM, OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND OLD WOMAN CREEK NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE.

**#1 REVENUE-GENERATING**  
cultural nonprofit organization in the entire Tampa Bay region as recognized by the Tampa Bay Business Journal.

**349,000 VISITORS**  
came to Mote Aquarium during just 10 months\* this year to learn about the oceans & Mote's groundbreaking marine science.

**9 OFF-SITE AQUARIUMS**  
maintained by Mote as of late 2024.

**10,000 MEMBER HOUSEHOLDS**  
supported Mote's mission this year.

**AWARD WINNER:**  
Mote debuted its Mystery Reef exhibit this year and invited guests to become coral-saving detectives. The exhibit wowed Mote Aquarium visitors and won a Platinum Hermes Creative Award.

**+100 TEACHERS**  
attended Mote's inaugural Toast to Teachers event, celebrating teachers from Sarasota and Manatee counties.

**362 VOLUNTEERS**  
were honored this year during Mote's Volunteer Awards Ceremony celebrating milestones in their service to Mote.

**1,537 VOLUNTEERS**  
gave **160,410 hours** of their time to Mote's mission & our oceans this fiscal year.

**172 INTERNS**  
contributed **82,560 hours** to Mote this year. 10 RESEARCH EXPERIENCES FOR UNDERGRADUATES INTERNS SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION, 25 MOTE UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCES INTERNS, 2 RESEARCH EXPERIENCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS INTERNS, 132 COLLEGE AND 3 HIGH SCHOOL INTERNS.

**8<sup>TH</sup> SNOOK RELEASE**  
with Riverview High School students took place this year. Mote educated these local students on aquaculture, snook rearing and tagging, and sustainable fisheries enhancement and monitoring.

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

**334 SPECIES**  
of marine life resided in Mote Aquarium this year and served as ambassadors for the ocean.

**200 PARTICIPANTS**  
attended our **first** Family Science Night, an event designed to provide free STEM education to families from Title 1 schools at the Aquarium.

**\$35 MILLION DONATED**  
by **130 new donors** this year for the creation of Mote Science Education Aquarium.

**1,099 RUNNERS**  
registered for **Mote's Run for the Turtles**, providing support for Mote's Sea Turtle Conservation & Research Program.

**\$20,584,785 DONATED**  
to Mote's mission by **4,578 donors** who made **8524 generous gifts** in the past year.

**66,529 PEOPLE**  
joined Mote for education programs and booth events this year, setting a new Mote record! These included **15,000 school program participants** from local, regional and out-of-state schools, **1,130 participants** in Mote camp programs and other people of all ages joining Mote's 64 types of programs (49 in person, 15 virtual).

**11 STUDENT-DRIVEN**  
projects were supported by data collected through Mote's sea turtle research.

## IT'S IN MOTE'S DNA TO... PASS THE TORCH TO YOUNGER GENERATIONS

\*MOTE AQUARIUM WAS CLOSED FOR TWO MONTHS DUE TO HURRICANE DAMAGE.

SUPPORTING OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST

Mote is dedicated to nurturing the best and the brightest minds in marine science and technology fields—a key priority in our *Beyond 2020 Vision & Strategic Plan*. Mote offers the following awards and fellowships—made possible by philanthropic support—to deserving members of its research staff. Below each award is a list of this year’s recipients.

MOTE POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS ▼

These three-year fellowships provide 100% salary support, research start-up, supplies, equipment and mentorship to postdoctoral scientists conducting outstanding work early in their careers.

- 

**DR. KIRSTIE FRANCIS**  
Marine Molecular Microbiology Research Program
- 

**DR. JENNIFER TOYODA**  
Ecotoxicology Research Program
- 

**DR. ERIC RAMOS**  
Manatee Conservation Research Program
- 

**DR. DOMINIQUE GALLERY**  
Seagrass Restoration Research Program

MOTE EMINENT SCHOLAR AWARDS ▼

These three-year awards provide 50% salary coverage to Mote senior scientists with great potential to significantly advance or develop a research initiative consistent with Mote’s *Beyond 2020 Vision* that will help ensure the long-term prosperity of Mote’s research enterprise.


- 


**DR. ERINN MULLER**, Associate Vice President for Research, Coral Health & Disease Research Program Manager
- 


**DR. CYNTHIA HEIL**, Director of the Red Tide Institute at Mote, Harmful Algal Bloom Mitigation & Ecology Research Program Manager


MOTE SCHOLARLY & SERVICE AWARDS ▼

These two-year awards provide 25% salary support for scholarly and service activities that further Mote’s mission, consistent with Mote’s *Beyond 2020 Vision*.


- 


**DR. SUMIT CHAKRABORTY** Phytoplankton Ecology Research Program Staff Scientist
- 


**DR. JAKE LASALA** Sea Turtle Conservation Research Program Manager
- 


**DR. RYAN SCHLOESSER** Fisheries Ecology & Enhancement Research Program Manager
- 


**DR. JASON SPADARO** Coral Reef Restoration Research Program Manager
- 


**DR. NATE BRENNAN** Fisheries Ecology & Enhancement Research Program Staff Scientist
- 


**DR. EMILY HALL** Ocean Acidification Research Program and Chemical & Physical Ecology Research Program Manager
- 


**JOHN LANGAN** Ocean Technology Research Program Manager
- 

**DR. JIM LOCASCIO** Fisheries Habitat Ecology & Acoustics Research Program Manager
- 

**DR. VINCE LOVKO** Phytoplankton Ecology Research Program Manager
- 

**DR. NICOLE RHODY** Marine & Freshwater Aquaculture Research Program Manager
- 

**DR. TRACY SHERWOOD** Environmental Laboratory for Forensics Research Program Staff Scientist
- 

**DR. CATHY WALSH** Marine Immunology Research Program and Manatee Conservation Research Program Manager
- 

**DR. DANA WETZEL** Environmental Laboratory for Forensics Research Program Manager

SAFEGUARDING FLORIDA’S CORAL REEF

MILESTONES FROM MOTE’S INTERNATIONAL CORAL GENE BANK

Above: Smooth flower coral

This year, Mote Marine Laboratory’s International Coral Gene Bank (ICGB) achieved remarkable advancements in coral preservation and marine conservation, furthering our commitment to restoring and protecting Florida’s Coral Reef for future generations.

Mote’s ICGB is a cornerstone of the State of Florida’s Coral Reef Restoration and Recovery Initiative, focused on safeguarding the genetic diversity of coral reefs and other marine life to ensure their survival amidst escalating threats such as thermal stress, ocean acidification and disease. Through innovative science, groundbreaking partnerships and strategic investments, the ICGB addresses both the urgent restoration needs and long-term conservation goals of our marine ecosystems.

LEVERAGING CUTTING-EDGE SCIENCE FOR CORAL PRESERVATION

Mote is one of the few institutions in the world pioneering cryopreservation technology to create a genetic “time capsule” for coral species. This method, developed through training with Dr. Mary Hagedorn of the Smithsonian Institution, allows for the long-term storage of coral genetic material, potentially preserving it for decades or even centuries.

“Preserving genetic diversity is fundamental to the resilience of marine ecosystems,” said Dr. Erinn Muller, Director of the Mote International Coral Gene Bank and Associate Vice President for Research. “The Gene Bank is invaluable in our

efforts to protect the future of coral reefs and other vital marine species.”

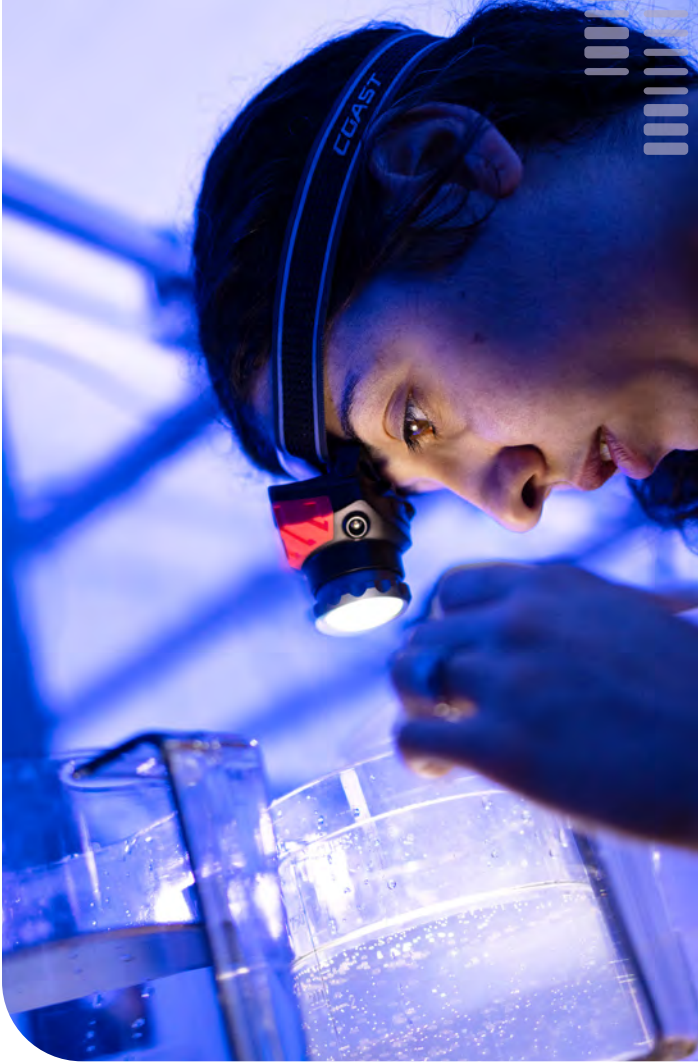
Cryopreservation offers the ability to combine gametes from corals separated by geography or reproductive timing, significantly increasing genetic diversity. This diversity bolsters coral populations’ ability to adapt to changing conditions, improving their chances of long-term success.

### EXPANDING CORAL DIVERSITY: BREAKTHROUGH WITH SMOOTH FLOWER CORAL

In a remarkable advancement for coral conservation, Mote successfully achieved the spawning of *Eusmilia fastigiata*, commonly known as smooth flower coral, with parent colonies settled just 22 months prior under managed care.

The original corals were received in March 2022 as part of the Florida Reef Tract Rescue Project, a network focused on rescuing and conserving corals affected by stony coral tissue loss disease. Mote raised the coral and facilitated the spawning of a second generation, a notable challenge due to the species’ selective settlement and specific conditions required for reproduction.

Smooth flower coral’s accelerated reproductive cycle—spawning within two years compared to a decade for many other species—marks a critical step for coral research and restoration efforts. This faster cycle could enhance adaptation to rapidly changing conditions like rising ocean temperatures and increasing disease prevalence.



“Given the increasingly stressful conditions on Florida’s Coral Reef, it is imperative that we successfully care for corals within a safe haven such as the Gene Bank,” said Dr. Erinn Muller. “The fact that we can create multiple generations of smooth flower coral within such a short period of time provides another novel avenue to utilize for coral conservation and restoration efforts.”

This success demonstrates the capacity of Mote’s ICGB to preserve endangered coral species and contribute to restoration, improving the resilience of reef ecosystems.

### COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR MESOPHOTIC & DEEP BENTHIC COMMUNITIES

Mote is also driving solutions for mesophotic and deep benthic communities in collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of the Interior. Supported by a \$28-million, eight-year project, this initiative focuses on restoring coral habitats in the Gulf of Mexico that were devastated by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The ICGB has cultivated and spawned key coral species affected by the spill, producing hundreds of offspring now undergoing feeding experiments to assess growth and sustainability. This effort combines field testing, lab-based coral cultivation, and innovative techniques such as coral fragmentation and transplantation to scale restoration efforts for these vital habitats.

### PRESERVING ENDANGERED CORAL SURVIVORS

Following Florida’s record-breaking 2023 bleaching event, Mote partnered with Shedd Aquarium to safeguard the genetic material of the last known

staghorn coral survivors in the Dry Tortugas. These fragments now reside at the ICGB, where they are cared for under advanced life support systems to ensure their survival and genetic propagation.

### EXPANDING INFRASTRUCTURE WITH DEP SUPPORT

Mote’s critical role in coral restoration received a boost this year with funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This support will expand Mote’s ICGB infrastructure, enhancing its capacity to hold and propagate genetic material from priority coral species, including mountainous star coral (*Orbicella faveolata*) and grooved brain coral (*Diploria labyrinthiformis*).

“At Mote Marine Laboratory, advancing the science of coral restoration and conservation is about protecting biodiversity and ensuring the resilience of ecosystems foundational to so many species,” said Dr. Michael P. Crosby, President & CEO of Mote. “With DEP’s support, we can enhance the capabilities of our Gene Bank to further Florida’s coral restoration efforts and contribute to a more sustainable future for our oceans.”

**Top left:** International Coral Gene Bank Reproduction Biologist II Ashlee Hylton collects coral spawn, one key step in Mote’s efforts to breed resilient and genetically diverse corals for reef restoration. **Below:** Coral Reproduction Senior Biologist Cody Engelsma cryopreserves coral sperm.





## FARM TO FILLET

Mote welcomed 400 guests to savor sustainable seafood at Farm to Fillet 2024. The blackened red drum, braised greens and other delicious dishes featured ingredients raised in Mote's innovative, marine aquaponics systems or through a Beginning Farmer Education Program right on site at Mote Aquaculture Research Park (MAP).

Presented by: Community Foundation of Sarasota County and 1st Source Bank Wealth Advisory Services

- 1 Mote Director of Foundation Relations Karen Stults, Merry Moore and Mote Trustee Elizabeth Moore;
- 2 Mote Senior Biologist Michael Nystrom speaks to guests about Mote's aquaponics system;
- 3 Guests set out to tour MAP;
- 4 Candace Teuber, Barry Finn and Jeanne Leszczynski;
- 5 Chef Paul Mattison, Mote President & CEO Dr. Michael P. Crosby, Megan Sorby and Dr. Nicole Rhody;
- 6 Mote Marine & Freshwater Aquaculture Research Program Manager Dr. Nicole Rhody speaks to attendees;
- 7 Mote Trustee Barbara Brizdle and Susan McLeod;
- 8 Mote Staff Biologist Nick McMahon introduces guests to Mote's International Coral Gene Bank facility at MAP.



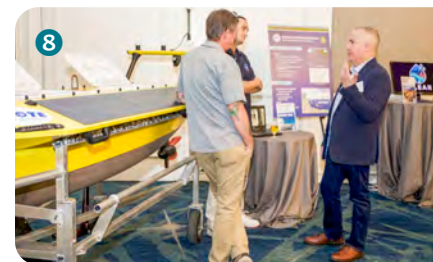
PHOTOS BY: EMMA MCINTYRE & ROD MILLINGTON

## GUARDIANS OF THE SEA

At Mote's Guardians of the Sea reception, 300 philanthropic supporters joined Mote President & CEO Dr. Michael P. Crosby, Mote's Board of Trustees Chair Sandi Stuart, and Mote scientists excited to share their discoveries and heartfelt thanks for supporting Mote's mission.

Presented by: Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Fiduciary Wealth Advisors and Ed Howard Lincoln

- 1 Sharon van Wyk and Elaine Keating;
- 2 Mote Tech Transfer Specialist Jake Siciliano speaks with Bob Frank and Vicki Landry;
- 3 Peter Rice and Mote Trustee LTC Frances Presley Rice;
- 4 Mote President & CEO Dr. Michael P. Crosby outlines Mote's vision;
- 5 Mote Philanthropy Officer Laura Biersmith with Betty and Rich Ritter and Bill and Becky Wilferth;
- 6 Mote Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr. Jennifer Toyoda speaks to a guest about Mote's Ecotoxicology Research Program;
- 7 Laurie Ying and Mote Senior Biologist Tom Waldrop;
- 8 Mote Ocean Technology Research Program Manager John Langan and Instrumentation Specialist Will Ayers discuss autonomous vehicles with Todd Fiorille.



PHOTOS BY: KAREN STULTS

# WE ARE MOTE

TO DOWNLOAD MOTE'S  
FULL STRATEGIC PLAN, SCAN  
THIS QR CODE OR GO ONLINE TO:  
MOTE.ORG/BEYOND2020



GENIE PHOTO BY: DAVID DOUBILET

## 5 ANNUAL GOALS MET OR SURPASSED BEYOND 2020 VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN

316 MOTE STAFF  
INCLUDING: 45 DOCTORAL-LEVEL STAFF

73 AQUARIUM STAFF

131 RESEARCH STAFF

31 EDUCATION STAFF

+ \$20,584,785 DONATED TO MOTE  
VIA 8,524 DONATIONS FROM 4,578 GENEROUS DONORS

+ 10,000 MEMBERS  
287 CORPORATE DONORS

### 38 PROGRAMS & CENTERS IN MOTE'S GLOBAL RESEARCH ENTERPRISE:

#### 22 MOTE RESEARCH PROGRAMS

- Benthic Ecology Research
- Chemical & Physical Ecology Research
- Coral Health & Disease Research
- Coral Reef Restoration Research
- Ecotoxicology Research
- Environmental Laboratory for Forensics
- Fisheries Ecology & Enhancement Research
- Fisheries Habitat Ecology & Acoustics Research
- Harmful Algal Bloom Mitigation & Ecology Research
- Manatee Conservation Research
- Marine & Freshwater Aquaculture Research
- Marine Biomedical Research
- Marine Immunology Research
- Marine Molecular Microbiology Research

- Marine STEM Education Research
- Ocean Acidification Research
- Ocean Technology Research
- Phytoplankton Ecology Research
- Sea Turtle Conservation Research
- Seagrass Ecosystems Restoration Research
- Sharks & Rays Conservation Research
- Stranding Investigations Research

#### 2 MOTE TECHNICAL PROGRAMS

- Mote's Beach Conditions Reporting System (BCRS)
- Mote's Sea Turtle & Marine Mammal Hospitals

#### 1 MOTE-AFFILIATED RESEARCH PROGRAM

- Sarasota Dolphin Research Program (SDRP)

### 64 SCIENCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING :

- Alfred Goldstein Institute for Climate Change Studies • Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring at Mote • Center for Research & Policy on Nanoplastic Pollution • Center for Shark Research • Florida Red Tide Mitigation & Technology Development Initiative • International Coral Gene Bank • Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation: Marine Science Laboratory Alliance Center of Excellence • Marine Policy Institute • Mote's Artificial Intelligence Marine Science Center • Red Tide Institute • Ron & Marla Wolf Seagrass Restoration Center for Ocean Sustainability • Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative • U.S. Harmful Algal Bloom Control Technologies Incubator (US HAB-CTI)
- Animal Encounters • Breakfast with the Sharks • Camp programs • College internships & National Science Foundation-supported Research Experiences for Undergraduates • Community engagement & outreach programs • Endless Oceans adult learning program • Family programs & events • Florida Keys programs for school groups and the public • Florida Master Naturalist Program • Homeschool programs • Junior Educators in Training • Kayaking programs • Project Nature Bridge • Professional development programs • School programs: field trips, classroom kits and outreach • Scout programs • SEA Trek and other virtual learning programs • Special needs programs • Shark Pups & Growns • Youth Ocean Conservation Summit

Mote's *Beyond 2020 Vision & Strategic Plan*, endorsed by our Board of Trustees, charts a course for the success of Mote's mission. Below are the annual strategic goals met or exceeded by our hardworking Mote family this year.

INCREASE THE LEVEL OF FUNDING FROM ALL SOURCES FOR ANNUAL RESEARCH OPERATIONS TO APPROXIMATELY \$27 MILLION IN 2030.



EXPAND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MOTE PH.D.-LEVEL RESEARCHERS TO 45 IN 2030.



INCREASE PERCENTAGE OF HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED AND UNDER-SERVED POPULATION PARTICIPANTS IN PROGRAMS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THESE POPULATIONS TO 50% OF TOTAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY 2030.



INCREASE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONAL (I.E., UNIVERSITY, AGENCY, NGO, CORPORATION) RESEARCH AND/OR COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS TO 30 BY 2030.



INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS SERVED BY MOTE'S STRUCTURED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (I.E., DIGITAL LEARNING, FIELD TRIPS, CAMPUS PROGRAMS) TO APPROXIMATELY 60,000 IN 2030.



**363,382 SQUARE FEET**  
TOTAL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

**58**   
PEER-REVIEWED  
PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS  
& CHAPTERS\*

\*From January 1 through  
December 31, 2024

**9 PATENTS**  
HELD BY MOTE, WITH TWELVE  
APPLICATIONS PENDING  
this year thanks to Mote's  
innovative science.



**FACILITIES & ADMINISTRATION**  
\$2,909,245

**\$39,876,922\***  
OPERATING BUDGET

\*DOES NOT INCLUDE BENEFICIAL INTEREST  
IN MOTE MARINE FOUNDATION

WE GO TOGETHER

CLOWNFISH AND ANEMONES. SCIENCE AND EDUCATION. MOTE AND YOU. SOME PAIRS ARE JUST MEANT TO BE!

Supporters like you power our mission at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium. In the past year, we made an ocean of difference thanks to our 28 trustees, 1,537 volunteers, 4,578 donors, more than 10,000 members, and countless other friends and advisors.

Mote’s donors have been heroes this year, whether you helped Mote recover from the devastating 2024 hurricane season, aided our world-changing research and conservation, helped us rehabilitate sick and injured marine life, or served as a champion for marine science education by moving us closer to the finish line of our \$130 million campaign for Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA), opening in 2025.

Volunteers, including our dedicated trustees, championed Mote’s growth this year by advancing high-priority initiatives and embracing exciting new roles.

Our volunteers:

- Reached amazing milestones in their service to Mote. Some volunteers celebrated 30 or 35 years of service, and others received the President’s Lifetime Service Award for contributing more than 4,000 hours.
- Began training for their roles at Mote SEA,

learning new interpretive skills and facts about animals that will debut there.

- Embraced new roles in more locations beyond Mote’s home campus on City Island, Sarasota. These volunteers:
  - Assisted Mote’s coral and crab-hatchery staff at Mote Aquaculture Research Park in eastern Sarasota County.
  - Remotely assisted Mote’s Ocean Technology Research Program from as far away as Maine and Northern Ireland.
  - Expanded Mote’s Florida Keys volunteer program to more than 60 participants.

This year also showed us that Mote members matter more than ever. By continuing to renew your memberships this summer, fall and into 2025, you have helped ensure Mote’s recovery from a devastating hurricane season, enabling us to continue saving marine animals in distress, tackling the ocean’s toughest problems with science, and educating and inspiring our communities.

We invite you to make memories at Mote Aquarium in spring 2025, continue to be part of our critical mission, and be among the first to join us later this year at Mote SEA!

2024 VOLUNTEER AWARD RECIPIENTS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

15 YEARS

Jim Ericson

7 YEARS

Sandi Stuart

3 YEARS

Dr. Andrew Economos  
Barbara Jennings  
Harris Silverman

1 YEAR

Jonathan Mitchell

ALL OTHER VOLUNTEER AWARDEES

35 YEARS

Bert Taylor

30 YEARS

Doris Anne Prieur

25 YEARS

Brenda Jameson  
Betty Linke  
Jim Linke

20 YEARS

Tamara Eddy  
Bradley Goddard  
Peg Magee  
Rick Magee  
Ann Tannen  
Rosemary Treonis

15 YEARS

Carol Arscott  
Maggie Gat  
Dolores Giles  
Nicholas Gladding  
John Harrison  
Michael McCarthy  
Linda Pine  
Linda Powers

10 YEARS

Camille Attisano  
Vincent Attisano  
Michael Barbour  
Diane Dahlberg  
Sam DiGiammarino  
Erica Downs  
Jeffrey Driver  
Terri Driver  
Henry Gesek  
Linda Gesek  
Cassandra Gonzmart-Hill  
Douglass Grosso  
Frankie Grover  
Paul Jaffe  
Molly Keels  
Vicki Marinangel  
Mary Ann McCandless  
Rick McCandless  
Martha Michals  
Lavette Mullinix  
Julie Odenweller  
Karen Petrin  
Larry Prohs  
Melissa Rankin  
Hilory Seaton  
Jolena Sloane  
Max Streibel  
Robert Turffs  
Ava Waltz

VOLUNTEER EMERITUS INDUCTEES

Bruce Camardo  
Patricia Carr  
Donna Drapatin  
Janet Gurskis  
Mike Love  
Martha Noyes  
Cindy Taliaferro  
Jim Tolley  
Lanny Weintraub  
Elaine Wheeler-Brickner

Top Left: Susan Featherman and Mote Trustee Don Featherman  
PHOTO BY: LORI SAX

MOTE TRUSTEES & ADVISORS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OFFICERS

- Sandra Stuart, *Chair*
- Hobart (Skip) Swan,  
*Vice Chairman*
- R. Scott Collins, *Treasurer*
- Dr. Andrew Economos,  
*Secretary*
- Dr. Michael P. Crosby,  
*President & CEO*

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- Barbara Jennings
- Penelope Kingman
- Jonathan Mitchell
- Susan Molinari
- Elizabeth Moore
- LTC Frances Presley Rice
- Alan Rose
- Dr. Howard (Sam) Seider,  
*Chairman Emeritus*
- Dr. Harris Silverman
- Jeanie Stevenson

TRUSTEES

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*Chairman Emeritus*
- Barbara Brizzle
- Robert E. Carter,  
*Chairman Emeritus*
- Maurice (Mo) Cuniffe,  
*Immediate Past Chairman*
- Frederick M. Derr, P.E.,  
*Chairman Emeritus*
- Richard O. Donegan,  
*Trustee at Large*
- Dean H. Eisner
- James D. Ericson
- Robert A. Essner,  
*Chairman Emeritus*
- Donald Featherman
- Susan C. Gilmore
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