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Winning the Ocean Oscar

Recognized for his work on sustainable fisheries around the world, UC Santa Barbara's Chris Costello, a professor of resource economics at the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management, has won a prestigious Peter Benchley Ocean Award.

Often referred to as the "Academy Awards for the ocean," the Peter Benchley Ocean Awards for 2016 honor Costello and seven other ocean leaders, including the president of the island nation of Palau, a New York Times investigative journalist, a French sailing expedition and the mayor of a border town in San Diego County.

Costello is the recipient in the award's "Excellence in Solutions" category, which singles out an individual who "helps find or create a practical solution to one of the many environmental challenges confronting our seas."

Of Costello's selection, the Benchley Awards committee wrote: "Environmental economist Chris Costello is a co-founder of the Sustainable Fisheries Group, which combines economics and marine science to implement effective strategies for restoring the world's depleted fisheries. Working with academic and advocacy partners, he has developed ways to align marine reserves and sustainable local fishing in tropical coastal nations including Indonesia, the Philippines, Belize, Brazil and Mozambique. He has also worked with the World Bank and others to promote '50 in 10,' a bold initiative to restore half of the world's commercial fisheries to ecologically sustainable levels over the next decade. This effort is part of Costello's practical vision that includes healthy wild fisheries, a healthy ocean, healthy coasts

and healthy communities whose economies and environment depend on them.”

The Peter Benchley Ocean Awards are the world’s preeminent ocean awards and are unique in acknowledging outstanding achievement across many sectors of society leading to the protection of oceans, coasts and the communities that depend on them. Co-founded by Wendy Benchley and David Helvarg, and named in honor of Peter Benchley, author of Jaws, the award celebrates the life and legacy of a man who spent more than 40 years educating the public and expanding awareness of the importance of protecting sharks and ocean ecosystems.

Past winners have included four heads of state, U.S. secretaries of state and defense, senators, journalists, explorers, youth leaders, citizen activists and leading marine scientists. Bren School Dean Steve Gaines received the award in 2014, for “Excellence in Science.”

The 2016 Benchley winners represent an array of marine expertise across many sectors of society. They will attend the 9th annual awards ceremony on May 20 at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California, where they will receive award statues designed by acclaimed marine artist Wyland.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.