



OCEAN
STEWARDS



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS **OCEAN STEWARDS FELLOWSHIP - 2026 COHORT**

An initiative of WILDTRUST

The **Ocean Stewards Project**, launched in 2015 by WILDOCEANS offers young marine and social science students an experiential journey that will give them unique insights into the practice of marine research and conservation. It aims to inspire a cohort of passionate ocean advocates and encourages the pursuit of careers in marine conservation and community development, with the hopes of ensuring passionate future leaders at the forefront of marine conservation and management.

In 2026 the Ocean Stewards Project is offering this unique opportunity to twelve registered post-graduate level (10 Honours, 2 Masters) students at South African Universities with a passion for the marine environment. All applicants should have a keen interest in marine conservation and/or community development and must be currently studying Marine Science, Geography, Marine Geology, Zoology, Environmental, Community Development/Social postgraduate degrees. Interested students are invited to apply to be considered for the program.

What does the Ocean Stewards Initiative involve?

Ocean Stewards will participate in an experiential process involving the following key elements amongst a variety of other activities and events throughout the year. Students are required to commit to attending (at the very least) the following core activities throughout 2026 (preferentially in person, and will receive support for travel):

- **Introduction day**

Be welcomed into the family and meet the WILDOCEANS Ocean Stewards team and the rest of the 2026 cohort of students.

- **Science Session**

Learn about important global marine conservation initiatives, South Africa's Marine Protected Areas, Citizen Science activities, Ecosystem-based Adaptation, and threatened species. Discuss marine conservation management, threats, and implications for coastal systems and livelihoods. Networking with peers and marine and social scientists and receive career guidance.

- **Science Communication workshop**

Learn to effectively communicate your research as well as the importance of marine conservation for human well-being and sustainable development.

- **Field Trips**

Participate in immersive field-based experiences to Marine Protected Areas and coastal communities. Field trips provide hands-on exposure to conservation in practice, stakeholder engagement, and real-world marine management challenges.

- **Practical research cruise**

Practical boat-based experience, gain exposure to research equipment aboard the research vessel Angra Pequena on a set of research cruises, and meet and assist the research team and crew.

Follow this [link](#) for a short video about the Ocean Stewards Initiative.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Eligible candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be South African citizens between aged 18 – 35.
- Be enrolled for a postgraduate programme (Honours or Masters) in Marine Science, Geography, Marine Geology, Zoology, Environmental, Community Development/Social Studies or related fields.
- Have an average of 60% for their undergraduate (or Hons) degrees.
- Be registered for study at a South African university.

Preference will be given to individuals from marginalised and/or previously disadvantaged groups.

HOW TO APPLY:

Please complete all the required fields and upload all relevant documents using the online application form: [Ocean Stewards Application Form 2026](#)

Please label your documents with your name and document title e.g. Adam Page_Academic Record.

Incomplete submissions will not be considered.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
13th of March 2026 at 16:30 (COB)

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact Kirsten McClean (KirstenM@wildtrust.co.za) or Luyanda Ndaba (LuyaN@wildtrust.co.za)

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- Shortlisted candidates may be called to be interviewed online during the week of the 27th March 2026.
 - WILDTRUST reserves the right to vary the requirements and not to award the placements if suitable candidates cannot be found.

MADE POSSIBLE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Emailed text:

The Ocean Stewards Program, which takes students on an experiential journey through offshore marine research, engagement with Scientists and Practitioners, and ocean- and communication-based skill building, invites all Honours and Masters level students currently studying Marine Science or related postgraduate degrees to a short presentation to introduce the program and invite interested individuals to apply. The program aims to create a growing network of ocean advocates equipped for a career in the marine field and accepts a cohort into the program every year.

The Ocean Stewards Project offers:

- Leadership development beyond the lecture room
- Mentorship from conservation and ocean professionals
- Practical exposure, including research cruises and science-based field trips
- Water-based skills funding to support practical competency development
- Academic top-up funding for Honours and Master's studies
- A national network of emerging ocean leaders

To be considered for the 2026 cohort, applicants must:

- Be South African citizens
- Be between 18-35 years old
- Be BSc Hons or MSc candidates in Marine Science, Geography, Marine Geology, Zoology, Community Development/Social studies (or related).
- Have an average of 60% for their undergraduate (or Honours) degrees.
- Be registered for study at a South African university.

If this is you, please join one of our online info sessions to find out about the program and how to apply:

Time: Wednesday, 4 March and Thursday, 5 March 2025, 6:30 PM to 7:00 PM SAST

Register using this link >>

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/8pDuaxb2Tom4LEEAEiQo_A or scan the QR code on the advert.

If you are unable to attend, the recording will be made available directly afterwards, please email kirstenm@wildtrust.co.za to get it.

JOIN THE NEXT WAVE OF OCEAN LEADERS !

The Ocean Stewards Project supports postgraduate students and early career ocean professionals to strengthen their impact in marine conservation and governance. Through targeted academic support, mentorship, leadership development, and opportunities to engage beyond academia, the project equips emerging ocean leaders to lead with purpose

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Join Us to Find Out How

 Wednesday, 04 & Thursday, 05 March 2026

 18:30 – 19:30

 Zoom [Register for Zoom Link]

Don't miss it!



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