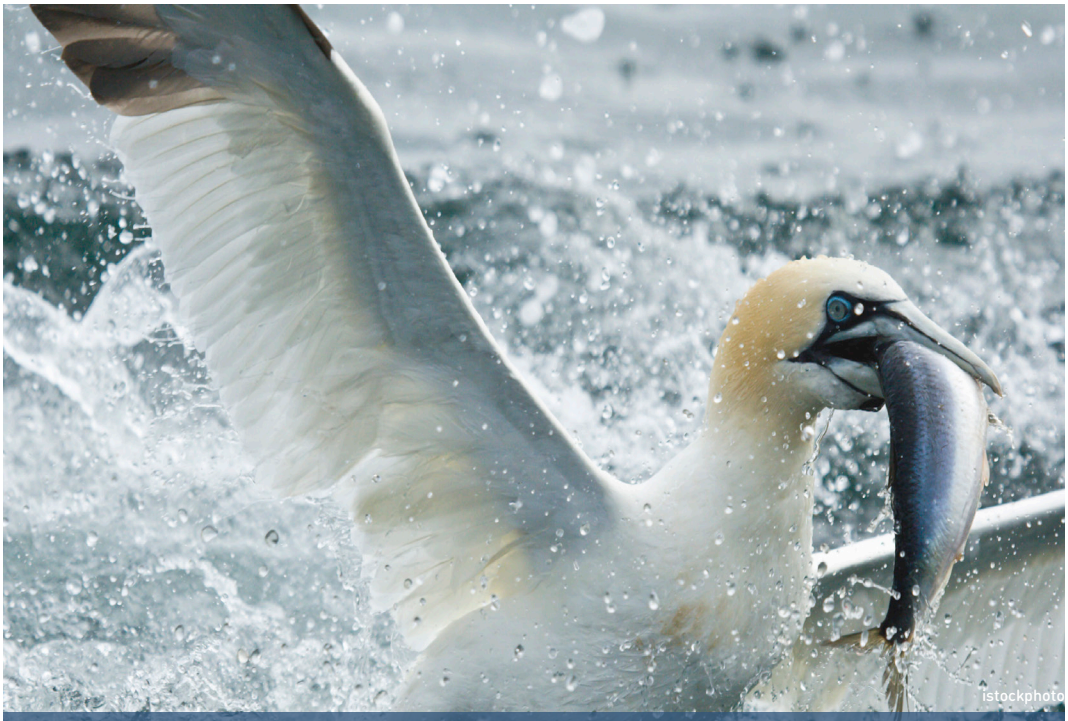
LENFEST OCEAN PROGRAM



THE LENFEST OCEAN PROGRAM: SUPPORTING POLICY-RELEVANT SCIENCE

In more than a decade of grant making, the Lenfest Ocean Program has become a leader in supporting policy-relevant science. Our mission is to fund research projects that address the needs of marine and coastal stakeholders and support grantees to engage with the people most likely to use the results.

ENGAGING TO DESIGN RESEARCH PROJECTS

Stakeholders and decision-makers are more inclined to use scientific information when they have the opportunity to contribute to the research process from the start. To identify potential research projects, the Lenfest team works with coastal communities, ocean industries, marine management agencies, and other stakeholders to better understand their knowledge gaps and decision-making needs and then collaborates with scientific experts to design practical research projects that address those challenges.

By collaborating with both the stakeholders and scientific experts to design projects, we ensure that the proposed research demonstrates clear linkages between challenges facing stakeholders and decision-makers and the research questions and approaches needed to address them.

As a project is developed, stakeholders and decision-makers may serve as project advisors during the research phase to ensure that eventual findings are as useful as possible. For example, a fisheries manager may serve as part of the research team to ensure that the results are relevant to address a specific knowledge gap. Or we may convene an advisory committee of policymakers to support a project team by providing comments that reflect new decision-making landscapes.

Lenfest Ocean Program was established in 2004 by the Lenfest Foundation and is managed by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

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SUSTAINING COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Once a grant is awarded, program staff and the grantees collaborate to identify and engage interested stakeholder communities and to help parties understand the project, raise issues, and identify external factors that may need to be considered. For each supported project, researchers must submit their results to the peer-reviewed literature for independent review.

Collaboration continues even after the research is published, with a focus on communicating research ideas and results to individuals who can use the results. From this foundation, program staff tailors communication products, which may include non-technical summaries of reports and journal articles, information graphics, videos, and social media. In addition, we convene the researchers, decision-makers, and stakeholders with webinars and in-person meetings to promote an exchange of ideas rather than a one-way presentation. This sustained engagement helps ensure relevance throughout the life of our projects.


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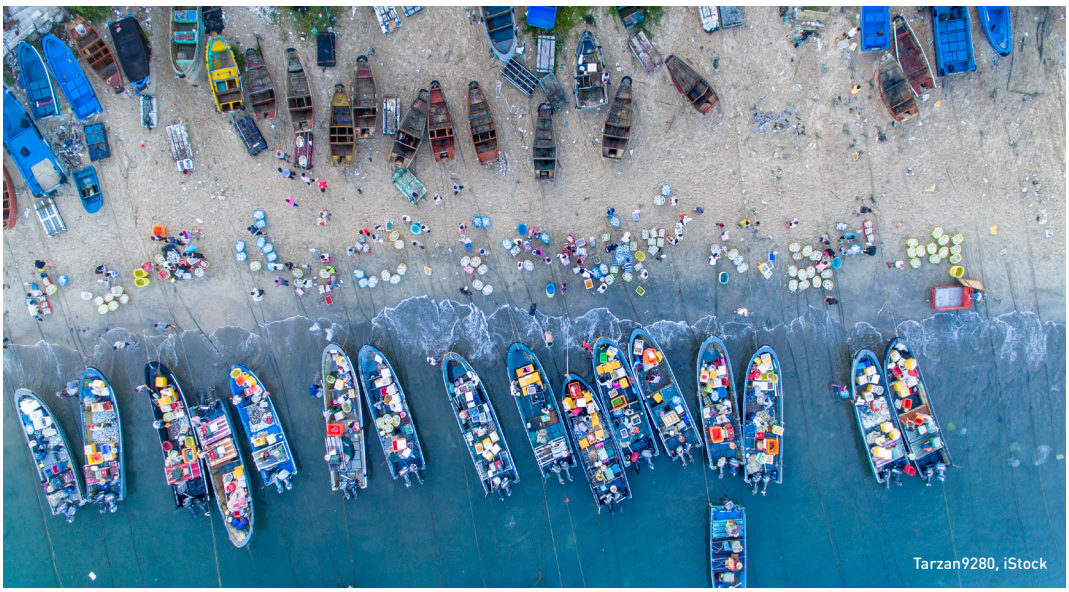
LEARNING THROUGH GRANTMAKING

Learning from our projects is part of our process. We collect and assess a set of metrics for each project to understand if the information produced was considered or used by our target audience and why. We also evaluate a project's effectiveness in advancing the understanding of scientific questions, building relationships between researchers and decision-makers, or creating a scientific foundation for emerging issues. We occasionally draft case studies to explain research results and capture the Lenfest model in practice.

There remains much to learn about linking science with policy and management. By sharing our approach, we hope to shed light on this growing field, connect with organizations doing similar work, and help more scientists and decision-makers engage productively with one another. If you share our interest in increasing the use of scientific knowledge in decision-making, please contact us.



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EXAMPLE PROJECT: THE LENFEST FISHERY ECOSYSTEM TASK FORCE

Worldwide, about 3 billion people rely on fish as a significant source of protein. But most fisheries are managed without directly accounting for how fishing affects, and is affected by, the ocean environment and other marine species, which can lead to unintended consequences, such as the crash of a fish population.

One potential solution is ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM), which considers factors such as habitat and predator-prey interactions, to more accurately predict future changes in fish populations. Although the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is working to implement EBFM in the United States, the approach has not yet been widely adopted.

Program staff held conversations with more than 80 scientists, decision-makers, and other stakeholders to understand what types of information managers who want to adopt EBFM needed. Many of them noted the lack of a clear process for putting EBFM into practice and tailoring it to local and regional context.

To address this challenge, the program convened the Lenfest Fishery Ecosystem Task Force—an interdisciplinary team of 14 scientists chaired by Drs. Tim Essington and Phil Levin in 2015. Their primary approach was to outline how managers could build EBFM into existing management processes.

The task force held discussions with stakeholders in four regions around the country to gather input from individuals who might use the project results. An international advisory panel of current and former fishery managers and scientists from marine resource agencies provided feedback to the task force on how to make their work relevant and useful to current management discussions.

In 2016, the task force published a report that outlined a path to implement EBFM and then set out to communicate the findings with interested parties.

Lenfest staff organized in-person briefings at seven of the eight U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils, Congress, NOAA, and several other international decision-making bodies for task force members to present their results and discuss how to apply them with managers and policymakers.

Fisheries managers in at least four regions are now discussing implementing the results in their management. Managers said the task force's direct engagement with them was important in building acceptance for the EBFM approach.

References

To learn more about the Lenfest Ocean Program and its practices, see:

1. Bednarek, A.T., Shouse, B., Hudson, C.G., & Goldburg, R. (2016). Science-policy intermediaries from a practitioner's perspective: The Lenfest Ocean Program experience. Science and Public Policy. https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scv008
2. Bednarek, A.T., Wyborn, C., Cvitanovic, C., Meyer, R., Colvin, R.M., Addison, P.F.E., Close, S.L., Curran, K., Farooque, M., Goldman, E., Hart, D., Mannix, H., McGreavy, B., Parris, A., Posner, S., Robinson, C., Ryan, M., and Leith, P. (2018). Boundary spanning at the science-policy interface: The practitioners' perspectives. Sustainability Science. http://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0550-9

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