

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ribbon Cutting & Open House for Local Nonprofit's New Headquarters

WILMINGTON, NC-February 3, 2023-Plastic Ocean Project-aka POP, the Wilmington-based environmental nonprofit, has moved to the MARBIONC facility, which is part of the UNCW CREST Research Park. Those in marine research and biotech fields regard MARBIONC as the optimal environment for developing cutting edge products, solutions and technologies that pertain to the ocean.

Technically a development program, MARBIONC's vision statement is, "...to position North Carolina's marine biotechnology industry as a key component in reaching workforce, economic, and environmental solutions on a global scale." This vision aligns quite well with Plastic Ocean Project's mission of solving the problems of plastic pollution.

When asked about this exciting big step, POP's director, Bonnie Monteleone responded, "**According to the United Nations Environment Program, plastic pollution is second to climate change.** Now, more than ever, we need to expand our efforts. The decision to join the research community at MARBIONC will provide more opportunities for local and worldwide collaboration to expedite solutions to plastic pollution. We could not do the work that benefits nature and mankind without the kind support of our POP community."

Area residents may already be familiar with the nonprofit's educational outreach programs and ongoing cleanups. In 2022, POP volunteers collected nearly 6 tons of trash and earned 471 trees through the Trees4Trash initiative. This effort began in 2019 in an effort to mitigate the damage caused by Hurricane Florence.

POP also operates a busy research lab which collaborates with numerous universities, other environmental nonprofits and all 15 of NC's Riverkeepers. Last year, over 120 samples were analyzed including some from as far away as Alaska. POP's research team views meticulous, long-term monitoring of coastlines and waterways as the key to finding real solutions to the problems of plastic pollution. In addition to tripling its lab space, the move has other benefits. Lab director, Kayla West explained, "Moving to MARBIONC has allowed POP to foster new relationships amongst researchers in other fields and collaborate with them on our projects. I'm extremely appreciative of their willingness to share their expertise."

The public is cordially invited to the ribbon cutting and open house, which will be conducted by the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, February 9th, from 5-8 pm. Mayor Saffo, representatives from MARBIONC, POP's staff and members of its board of directors will also be on hand.

The address is: 5598 Marvin K. Moss Lane/Suite #2009, which is off of Masonboro Loop Rd.

For more information please visit: www.plasticoceanproject.org

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