



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GEBCO-NF Alumni Team progress to semi-final of \$7 Million Dollar Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE

The GEBCO-NF Alumni Team is one of up to 21 teams that will compete in Round 1 field tests of the \$7 Million Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE competition in October and November this year; the competition's semi-final stage. The Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE is a global competition with the aim of advancing deep-sea technologies for autonomous, fast and high-resolution ocean exploration.

The GEBCO-NF Alumni Team is led by alumni of the Nippon Foundation / General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Postgraduate Certificate in Ocean Bathymetry Training Programme, now in its thirteenth year, run at the Centre for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the University of New Hampshire. GEBCO is the only organisation with a mandate to map the entirety of the world's ocean floors.

The Team is made up of alumni from Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Poland, Russia, South Africa, USA, and the Philippines, as well as technical advisers from Canada, New Zealand, Norway, the UK, and the USA. All alumni hold positions in their own countries' maritime industries, including within government, research organizations and hydrographic offices, and benefit from a range of professional backgrounds including engineering, software development, physics and offshore project management. Industry partners and suppliers include Hushcraft Ltd., Kongsberg Maritime, Ocean Floor Geophysics and Teledyne CARIS.

Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of the Nippon Foundation, used his acceptance speech at the "Oceans 8" awards ceremony, held at the UN Oceans Conference in New York earlier this

month, to launch NF-GEBCO Seabed 2030; a challenging target to map the world's ocean floors by the year 2030. The pillars of the Seabed 2030 project are to compile and aggregate existing data into a digital database, making it easier for researchers to coordinate their efforts; to use this data to create maps of the world's ocean floors; and to identify previously unexplored areas, enabling the prioritisation of future survey operations in these regions.

The Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE was identified as an opportunity to address ocean challenges and help make the oceans healthy, valued and understood. The GEBCO-NF team was formed last year to respond to this initiative, and The Nippon Foundation agreed to provide more than 3 million US dollars to assist concept development and the design of new technology to be utilised in the semi-finals. This XPRIZE project addresses the technological innovation aspect of the Seabed 2030 partnership and the innovation required to explore the unexplored.

The Team's proposed solution leverages existing state-of-the-art ocean floor mapping technology with new innovations in offshore logistics, backed by industry leading companies, to collect high-resolution bathymetric data through autonomous means. Among the goals of the Team is to develop SEA-KIT, a ground-breaking unmanned multipurpose transoceanic survey vessel capable of deploying and recovering an AUV. The surface vessel will also serve as a data repeater station facilitating autonomous and remote operations in the maritime environment. SEA-KIT, currently being built, by Hush Craft Ltd, based in Essex, UK, has been designed to succeed in the Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE competition, but also with long-term Seabed 2030 goals in mind. Kongsberg Maritime, one of the world's leading sonar and AUV manufacturers, is developing the required autonomous guidance system that the Team will use in the semi-final. Ocean Floor Geophysics is working with the Team to push the limits of their AUV technology in order to collect the required data and images for XPRIZE.

SEA-KIT has excited industry experts with its wide range of planned capabilities. Potential usage reaches far beyond bathymetric mapping, with a range of oceanographic observational and data collection functions, equipment deployment and real-time monitoring of marine environments. "Innovative new technologies will help contribute to a better understanding of the world's oceans, for the benefit of all human and marine life on earth", commented Rochelle Wigley, Director of the GEBCO-NF Alumni Programme at UNH, USA.

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About GEBCO:

GEBCO (The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans) is a joint project of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO – the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. It has its origins in the GEBCO chart series initiated in 1903 by Prince Albert I of Monaco. GEBCO is the only international project with a mandate to map the floors of the global oceans.

The **Nippon Foundation**, a private, non-profit foundation, was established in 1962 for the purpose of carrying out philanthropic activities, using revenue from motorboat racing. The Foundation's overall objectives include social innovation, assistance for humanitarian activities and global ocean management. Its philanthropic ideals embrace social development and self-sufficiency, and it pursues these principles by working to improve public health and education, alleviate poverty, eliminate hunger and help the disabled.

