

**G**OODMAN RESEARCH GROUP, INC.  
Program Evaluation • Consultation • Market Research

*Journey to Planet Earth:  
The State of the  
Ocean's Animals*  
**Summative Evaluation  
Executive Summary**

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**SUBMITTED TO**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007, Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) conducted summative evaluation of the *Journey to Planet Earth: The State of the Ocean's Animals* project for Screenscope, Inc. and American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Overall, the broader *Journey to Planet Earth* project, which includes ten programs (three of which were funded by the current National Science Foundation Grant), seeks to:

- 1) Help citizens, young and old, better understand and use environmental science information in a meaningful manner, and
- 2) Assist informal science centers in providing opportunities for people to become actively involved in local environmental issues.

The full evaluation report describes GRG's assessment of the overall influence of the television program and associated outreach initiative on their intended audiences. Specifically, GRG evaluated the influence of the *State of the Ocean's Animals* program on a sample of TV viewers and the scope and impact of the outreach programs conducted by the museums and science centers.

## METHODS

GRG used a multi-method approach to evaluate *Journey to Planet Earth: The State of the Ocean's Animals*. For the evaluation of the TV program, 47 participants representing a range of geographic locations and demographic characteristics participated in a viewer study. More than half of participants regularly watched science-related television programs. They viewed *The State of the Ocean's Animals* and completed three web-based surveys: one before viewing, a second survey within two days after viewing, and the third survey two weeks after viewing. Surveys were designed to obtain baseline information and to assess appeal of and learning from the program.

For the evaluation of the outreach initiative, GRG administered a web-based survey to staff at the sites participating in the outreach initiative in one or both of the project years (N = 17 survey participants). The survey was designed to learn more about the range and scope of programs implemented in conjunction with Screenscope/AAAS project. Additionally, GRG reviewed the proposals and year-end reports each site sent to AAAS, conducted brief telephone interviews with staff members at five sites, and visited two of the sites.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE VIEWER STUDY

### Overall Assessments of the Program Were Overwhelmingly Positive

- Responses to the JPE program, both overall and to the individual segments, were extremely positive; 94% rated the program as *excellent* or *very good*, and participants were particularly impressed by the cinematography and overall visual appeal of the program.

- Participants found the program easy to understand, informative, and engaging and believed it should be shown to wider audiences. Some noted that school groups, in particular, would benefit (though should be advised of graphic content).
- Participants particularly more thoroughly enjoyed those segments from which they learned new information.
- Participants favored segments featuring animals they connected to or found “fun” or “cute,” for instance, the sea otters.

### **After Viewing, Participants Planned to Pay More Attention to Environmental Science Issues**

- After watching the program, participants were more likely to seek out information on environmental issues than they were prior to viewing. Specifically, participants reported being increasingly likely to plan to visit a museum, attend a lecture/presentation about environmental issues, watch a television program, or visit Web sites featuring environmental issues.
- Participants reported they would be more likely to pay attention to the topics presented in the program after having watched it than they were before viewing. Over 95% participants post-viewing reported that they would be likely to pay attention to a story about over-fishing, hunting of ocean animals, threats to migration patterns of ocean animals, effects of global warming on ocean animals, extinction of ocean animals, and returning ocean animals to their habitats.
- Viewers described that the program was extremely effective at convincing them that there are significant threats to ocean animals.

### **Knowledge about Environmental Issues Increased After Viewing**

- Prior to viewing the program, most participants were interested in learning more about climate change, sea level rise, and the conditions of ocean animals.
- Because participants had more prior knowledge about effects of climate change than about hunting of ocean animals and effects of pop culture on ocean animals, they reported post-viewing having learned more about the latter topics.
- After watching the program, participants reported both being more knowledgeable about and having more interest in the living conditions and threats to survival of ocean animals.
- After watching the program, over 80% of participants reported increases in their motivation to learn about sea level rise and climate change.

## **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

Staff from outreach sites reported on 23 different programs conducted as a result of the JPE/AAAS project. Across these programs, there was wide variation in size and scope, including the types of activities conducted, target audiences, numbers of attendees.

- Participants in the various programs varied widely and included teachers, parents, students of all ages (e.g., school and home-school students and

- summer campers), general museum visitors and members, community members, scientists, environmentalists, and museum staff and volunteers.
- On average, there were roughly 400 visitors per program, and attendance ranged from an estimated 15 attendees to several thousand participants.
  - Fifteen of the programs included staff training components, and between one and 50 staff members participated in each program.
  - Activities ranged from one-time offerings to year-round programs.

All sites promoted the *Journey to Planet Earth* series and JPE/AAAS outreach program through print media. All but the Miami Museum of Science also promoted the series and outreach program online.

Overall, site staff believed that their program goals were met. In follow-up interviews after they completed the survey, key staff at the sites expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this program and interest in future participation in similar projects.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the results of the viewer study and evaluation of the outreach initiative, GRG offers the following recommendations for Screenscope and AAAS to consider in future work:

- Continue to use video media formats (e.g. TV documentaries) to educate audiences about environmental science and consider venues through which to promote wider viewership.
- Wider dissemination of the program may help to reach potential viewers who may be less informed, and even less convinced, about the threats of climate change and sea level rise.
- In future programs, consider focusing more explicitly on topics about which there is less extant knowledge among target viewers. Programs that educate about the specific effects of climate change – and that viewers see as personally relevant – can continue to meet an important need.
- Continue to include stories of hope amid the stories with more bleak endings.
- Consider including a content advisory to warn viewers of the graphic images in future programs.
- Providing each outreach site with a report template will help in obtaining a more complete and consistent picture of the outreach activities created through similar national community-based programs.
- Initiate evaluation activities at the time outreach programming commences, so that evaluation data may be more thorough and obtained during program implementation.