

# VANITY FAIR

## THE GREEN ISSUE



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## OCEAN'S 9

**F**or millennia, humans have sought out the oceans for the restoration of mind, body, and spirit. Alas, as the 300,000 members of Oceana, an international conservation group ([oceana.org](http://oceana.org)), understand well, this is what's known as a one-sided relationship. Each year, commercial fishing fleets catch an estimated 16 billion pounds of unwanted fish—and they throw back this bycatch, dead or dying. As a result of this and other human practices, 90 percent of our big predator fish are gone and about 30 marine species are now en-

dangered. Meanwhile, the ocean has become an out-of-sight dumping ground—for sewage, oil, and mercury from industrial plants. “On the surface, everything looks great,” says board member Ted Danson, who has been a devoted ocean conservationist since the 80s, when he was better known for starring in the TV series *Cheers*. “You have to look below the surface. Then you see. You see why scientists believe that the oceans are headed towards a collapse.”

But it's not just sea life that's at risk, it's human life, too. Some small-scale fishing communities are going hungry, and the high levels of

### TURNING THE TIDE

Left to right, Oceana members Keith Addis, Ted Danson, Mary Steenburgen, Dr. Daniel Pauly, and Amber Valletta in the Pacific; Andrew Sharpless, María Eugenia Girón, César Gaviria, and Sam Waterston in the Atlantic.





mercury have made many fish dangerous for developing fetuses.

For the members of Oceana, it's not about wearing a talking T-shirt and communing with the surf. Since the group's inception, seven years ago, these scientists, actors, businesspeople, politicians, and advocates have zeroed in on the worst culprits and come away with astonishing victories. Among the group's achievements: convincing fishery managers to protect a total of 1.2 million square miles of ocean from bottom trawling, a practice that causes more damage to marine-life habitats than

any other human activity; successfully pressuring the E.U. to establish new regulations to enforce penalties for the illegal discharge of oil from ships; persuading some of the worst chlorine plants to cease using outdated, mercury-producing technology; and helping shape laws that protect dolphins, sea turtles, and sharks. It's now time for the public groundswell, notes Danson. "We've proven we can make change happen. We just need more people to get involved so we can really turn things around before it's too late."

—EVGENIA PERETZ

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CHARLES'S, GAVIN'S, AND WATERSTON'S GROOMING BY MIKKI WANG. GIRON'S HAIR AND MAKEUP BY CHARLENE BURRIS. FOR DETAILS, SEE CREDITS PAGE

