



In 2007, the PACA Region established "At the School of the Sea," an educational program designed for

children from preschool through elementary school to raise awareness of the need to preserve the coastal

and marine environments. Here, children use all their senses to discover the beach with an activity led

by Sterren Jaffrelot, the Atelier bleu's Education Director.

# At the School of the Sea Observe – Understand – Take Action

The purpose of the "Book of Resources" at the School of the Sea is to guide teachers and educators and provide a tool for non-profit groups and local governments committed to the future of the Mediterranean coast. The project receives support from the Veolia Environnement Foundation.

The Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur (PACA) region is located on the Mediterranean coast in southeastern France. The population totals 4.8 million and 35 million tourists visit the area every year. The explanation is simple—the area offers plenty of

sunshine (2,800 hours/year) and a coastline with a unique landscape and geography, featuring a remarkable diversity of plants and animals. However, this interest has consequences for coastal environmental management. Protecting the coast requires specific actions—even on the part of

young children, as the "School of the Sea" demonstrates. The goal of this ambitious program, initiated by regional authorities in 2007, is to educate and raise awareness about preservation and sustainable management of the marine environment and the coast among schoolchildren from



After the beach, the children head to the Parc du Muguel. Using a set of photos assembled by Sterren Jaffrelot, the children must find an ant, a pebble, a bird, a gate, a goldfish, a tree and so on. Next, they must decide for each item whether water is vital for survival or whether it is not necessary. The workshop is intended to introduce children to the importance of water to the earth.



••• preschool through primary school. Three regional departments—the Alpes-Maritime, the Bouches-du-Rhône and the Var—and 12 educational organizations working in the area of sustainable development are involved. Approximately 250 classes have participated to date.

#### Initiating change...

The initiative's leaders envisioned producing a compilation of these best practices, a "Book of Resources" that would include information on all aspects of coastal and marine preservation, to be distributed to the greatest number possible. *Atelier bleu* (see opposite), a 25 year-old non-profit and the leading regional organization on these issues, was the obvious choice to lead the project. "The writing began in 2009 and was intended to be a collaborative process," says Carole Danfossy, who is responsible for the wiki site<sup>1</sup> created for this project – an inherently collaborative undertaking. "We wanted it to be participatory so that everyone

involved could present their ideas, while still retaining each writer's style. It wasn't always easy and required a period of adaptation so that everyone could become comfortable with the computer tools and attend our web conference meetings." In addition to Danfossy, three other members of the *Atelier bleu* team helped ensure that the process ran smoothly: Jean-Louis Baude, Director and the Resource Book's Editor-in-chief, and Éric Jourdan and Sterren Jaffrelot, who were in charge of the thematic and pedagogical sections, respectively. In an effort to avoid dividing the material into subject areas like biodiversity or waste, the environmental topics were organized into five chapters<sup>2</sup>, presenting a homogeneous pedagogical approach that made more sense to the educators and teachers.

#### ... rather than being subjected to change

"Basically, it involves assembling, in a single document, the educational resources related to the problems specific to the Mediterranean

environment and encouraging project development by providing examples of actions, tools and methods," says Jourdan. "In a way, it means initiating change rather than being subjected to it." The first print edition of the publication is scheduled to appear in September 2010, with financial support from the Veolia Environnement Foundation. The document will also be available on line. "The Foundation's support grows out of the four-year partnership between Veolia Environmental Services and *Atelier bleu*, which was forged through the 'Éco-gestes' program (see opposite) and the company's involvement in coastline and marine environment protection," says François Brianchon, the project sponsor working with the Foundation. ■

1- <http://www.site-coop.org/ecoledelamer/wikka.php?wikip=PagePrincipale>  
 2- Land-sea-air links – Practices – Coastal economic development – Ports – Humans in the environment.

## Éco Gestes Méditerranée

In 2006, as part of its involvement in marine environmental protection and to expand public awareness, Veolia Environmental Services joined forces with the *Atelier bleu* in the *Éco Gestes Méditerranée* campaign<sup>1)</sup>, which develops ocean and coastline preservation programs targeting pleasure boaters. In 2009, the *Atelier bleu* staff boarded 834 boats in the coastal area where it is active. Individuals on board nearly 600 of those boats agreed to be interviewed and nearly all pledged to take appropriate action to protect the sea by following the advice in the eco-action practical guide. Who can top that?

1- *Éco Gestes Méditerranée* and *Inf'eau mer*, its counterpart on the beach, are the two awareness campaigns that PACA Réseau Mer (PACA Ocean Network) has created since 2002. The campaigns involve 19 entities (including non-profit organizations, municipalities and environmental managers) and 70 ambassadors are working on these issues and have provided 400 days of service per year in approximately 30 coastal communities.

## Atelier bleu

This well-known environmental education group promotes sustainable development in coastal and marine environments. It is the leading organization in France taking an approach to the environment that is based on aquatic and underwater activities. Since 1995, the organization has been based in a country house located in the Parc du Mugel in La Ciotat. *Atelier bleu* is part of the CPIE (Committee for Environmental Initiatives) representing the Côte Provençale and thus belongs to a network of 56 permanent environmental initiative centers. Membership is limited to organizations with a strong regional base. For more information, visit [www.atelierbleu.fr](http://www.atelierbleu.fr)

## Key numbers for the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur coastal region

- 7—9% of the world's marine biodiversity (estimate).
- 17% of the world's marine pollution.
- 2,900 environmental actions along the regional coastline every year.
- Over 112,000 people informed about marine life each year.
- €80,000 to organize information campaigns.