

---For Immediate Release---

Successful Expedition Provides Glimpse of Deep Coral Reefs researchers gather imagery and data to depths in excess of 400 feet using advanced manned diving techniques in the Bahamas

November 28, 2010

Providence, RI & Andros, Bahamas

Ocean Opportunity, a Rhode Island based not for profit organization, is proud to announce the successful return from an expedition to explore and document the 'Tongue of the Ocean (TOTO)' to depths in excess of 400 feet. The expedition took place from November 12 through 22.

The project included collaborators from Ocean Opportunity, the University of Connecticut, and local support on the island of Andros, Bahamas where the expedition was staged.

The deep diving team (including Jeff Godfrey of UConn and Michael Lombardi of Ocean Opportunity) used advanced manned diving techniques to allow direct, hands-on access to the deep coral reef environment – at depths more than three times range of conventional SCUBA diving. The study site provides a vertical 'wall' and direct physical linkage from the shallows to more than 2000 feet. The team conducted six dives deeper than 300 feet, with two deeper than 400 feet. Exploration diver Jeff Godfrey described the dives as "being like diving the Grand Canyon".

Lombardi commented, "data gathered throughout the expedition will be analyzed to evaluate the in-water biomechanics and efficiency of humans working at depths considered the 'twilight zone' or 'innerspace' (200-500 feet) in remote locations. This will have significant implications in the scientific diving community."

More than 500 high resolution images were taken of this environment. Scientific data acquired from these images will be analyzed to better understand the biodiversity, natural history, and transitional function of the deep reefs as a gateway from the shallow coral reef to the abyss. Previous related work at these depths has resulted in the discovery of numerous new species, never before described for science.

This project is supported by the National Geographic Society/Waitt Grants Program, Ocean Opportunity Inc., the University of Connecticut, Shearwater Research, Molecular Products, Small Hope Bay Lodge, Hugyfot, and several individual donors. The team also carried the prestigious Explorer's Club Flag #172 throughout the journey. More information can be found at www.oceanopportunity.com/BahamaDeep.html.

About the University of Connecticut Scientific Diving Program

The University of Connecticut maintains an active research diving program at its Avery Point Campus. The university is an institutional member of the [American Academy of Underwater Sciences](http://www.aau.edu). The program serves the research needs of the Dept. of Marine Sciences and the [National Undersea Research Center](http://www.nurc.edu). The program is managed by its Diving Safety Officer, Jeff Godfrey, who is a primary collaborator in this expedition. To learn more, visit <http://www.marinesciences.uconn.edu/MSTC/diving.html>.

About Ocean Opportunity

Through exploration, Ocean Opportunity achieves its mission to sponsor, endorse, and facilitate projects and programs in the marine science and technology communities that will foster a new global appreciation for a developing ocean literate society, therefore improving the quality of life on Earth. Ocean Opportunity was founded by author, environmentalist and explorer Michael Lombardi - this expedition's organizer and field team leader. To learn more visit www.oceanopportunity.com.

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