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OCEANGATE AND THE CAPE ELEUTHERA INSTITUTE TO LAUNCH A YEAR-LONG MANNED SUBMERSIBLE EXPEDITION IN THE BAHAMAS TO ASSESS SHARKS AND SEA LIFE HIDDEN DEEP IN THE OCEAN

(June 6, 2017) - OceanGate Expeditions and The Cape Eleuthera Institute are embarking on a Bahamas Deep Sea Survey of the twilight zone of the Exuma Sound using the manned submersible *Cyclops 1*. Beginning in October 2017, with multiple weeks of diving each season over a year, the exploration aims to uncover new details on deep sea sharks and the variety of species that inhabit the waters off the Great Bahama Bank continental shelf.

Stockton Rush, the CEO of OceanGate explains, "We are excited to explore in depth the Exuma Sound in the Bahamas. It's an ideal location for diving, thanks to the year round warm, clear water, and the abundance of natural resources and deep sea organisms. The deep water near the coast makes it a perfect fit for shore-based operation and use of *Ms. Lars*, our mobile subsea launch and recovery system. This is a great opportunity to advance scientific discovery as our *Cyclops 1* can venture far below scuba depth to 500 meters".

OceanGate will provide the submersible and dive crew, while The Cape Eleuthera Institute will share the breadth of scientific knowledge of their content experts, and their excellent facilities in the Bahamas. The submersible will enable repeated visits to rarely explored sites to enhance understanding of habitat association in species and estimates of abundance and diversity of life in the Bahamian Deep Sea; critical information for the future management of these poorly recorded natural resources.

Dr. Edd Brooks, COO at Cape Eleuthera Institute, developed the Shark and Ray research program at CEI and was featured in the CNN series, *New Explorers*. He states, "90% of the ocean is 600 feet or deeper. I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with OceanGate to learn more about the creatures that call the deep ocean home."

Dr. Andrew Gill, Director of the Cape Eleuthera Institute, adds, "We are incredibly fortunate to have these natural resources on our doorstep; having OceanGate's manned submersible at our facility for a whole year will allow us to explore the depths of the Bahamas and collect information about deep sea organisms that are still very much a mystery, as well as observe better known creatures like sharks that are more often studied in the shallows."

The first phase of the deep sea survey in October will be conducted as a series of one-day and three-day missions. Additional phases of the survey are planned in 2018 in January, April and July to better assess resident and transient populations across multiple seasons. In

addition to the crew and content experts, individuals and groups of up to three are invited to join the expedition in the submersible and ashore as mission specialists. They will actively participate in the operation and receive training according to their interests and abilities to support the dive team as observers, photographers, or to help manage communications and subsea navigation on an authentic scientific expedition. The submersible will be made available on a charter basis for researchers to use as part of their specific research projects.

Project website: www.BahamasDeepSeaSurvey.com

About OceanGate Expeditions: OceanGate Expeditions is a team of undersea explorers, scientists, and filmmakers who use manned submersibles to seek discoveries at depths far deeper than can be reached with scuba. The team organizes undersea expeditions to explore and document iconic shipwrecks, hydrothermal vents, deep sea canyons and rare biological events around the world. These expeditions, to depths approaching 4,000 meters (13,124 feet), provide rare opportunities for amateur explorers to personally observe the mysteries of the deep sea and help scientists expand our understanding of the blue planet.

About OceanGate, Inc.: OceanGate, Inc. is a privately held company based in Everett, Washington. Founded in 2009, the company provides manned submersible services for industry, research, and exploration. OceanGate is building Cyclops 2, and currently owns and operates two other 5-man submersibles that provide deep sea access for underwater site survey and inspection, scientific research, technology testing, and film production.

About Cape Eleuthera Institute:

CEI has been pioneering deep water research since 2008 using deep water baited traps, longlines and deep sea video landers (the Medusa and Pegasus) to understand the types of species and their distribution in the Exuma Sound, to depths of 1000m. The research has focused on understanding the occurrence and behavior of deep water sharks and also large crustacea. The findings of the research have contributed to the knowledge for conservation management of deep water biodiversity in Bahamian waters through collaborative initiatives, such as with Dr. Edith Widder, in country collaboration, for example the use of CEI data within marine protected areas initiatives led by the Bahamas National Trust.



Photos: Courtesy of Mackellar Violich, Dr Edith Widder and Medusa