

**Tuesday 23 November 14:00 NZDT**

**ENVIRONMENTALIST AND ANTI-WHALING CAMPAIGNER, PETE BETHUNE, ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF NEW ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP**

New Zealand environmentalist and anti-whaling campaigner, Pete Bethune, has announced the formation of a new environmental action group that will focus on marine conservation.

It will be named 'Earthrace Conservation' in honour of Bethune's original vessel, Earthrace ([www.earthrace.net](http://www.earthrace.net)) that in 2008, broke the global circumnavigation speed record for a powerboat using 100% sustainable biofuel in order to raise awareness of the use of renewable fuels.

Bethune remains passionate about the environment and the fight against whaling in particular. However, he has formed the new organisation to address not only whaling but the wider issues that affect all marine life, from overfishing to habitat destruction and pollution.

Bethune said, "We'll be taking action all over the world, wherever we see environmentally damaging activities taking place. I'm not setting up in competition with any other groups - it's not as though there's a shortage of bad things happening. My goal is to see Earthrace Conservation work both independently, and alongside existing organisations wherever and whenever they'd like our help."

2010 has already been a busy year for Bethune. In January, Earthrace – by then renamed 'Ady Gil' - was cut in half after a collision with a Japanese whaler in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary; in February, he was taken to Japan and held in prison for five months after boarding the vessel that collided with his to demand recompense from the Japanese captain; in July he was released and later there was a very public split from the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Only last week, a report from Maritime NZ into the collision confirmed that Bethune's boat had right of way in the incident that resulted in the loss of Earthrace/Ady Gil.

Explaining the rationale behind setting up his own organisation, Bethune said, "Whether it's a good or a bad thing, everything that has happened this year has given me a profile. I'd rather use that to help ensure the future of our seas and oceans by getting out there and doing something positive than by getting a job behind a desk.

"There's been an incredible amount of support already from all over the world and we are looking to form chapters in Africa and South America where we already have several campaigns in development already. I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't believe we could make an impact."

Currently, the new organisation isn't in possession of a vessel to replace Earthrace, but designs for a larger vessel are being drawn up by Lomocean in New Zealand, the same team that designed the original, and Bethune and his supporters hope to raise the funds to launch it in two years time.

In the meantime, land-based campaigns are in the planning stages, including taking a group of volunteers to the Faroe Islands in the summer of 2011 to address the slaughter (or 'grindagrap') of pilot whales which takes place annually in the Danish constituency. A carefully considered board of directors for Earthrace Conservation will be announced in due course.

The announcement was made via a live TV chat on <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/an-hour-with-pete-bethune>.

**ENDS**

For further interviews with Pete in New Zealand, further information or photographs please contact:

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<http://www.earthrace.net>

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pete.bethune>