



## Off to a Great Start

Congratulations to Kirsten Bennet and Joe Cumming, Discovery Yacht Halo on the successful completion of the first leg of water samplings for the UMT Ocean Monitoring Project. Sailing down the Straits of Malacca from Langkawi Island to Johore, at the southern tip of Malaysia, Kirsten and Joe participated as citizen scientists in this research and monitoring project which is initiated by the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) and in collaboration with the International SeaKeepers Society, Asia.

Kirsten's and Joe's interest in sustainability has increased dramatically since their first passage. They were keen to take steps towards this goal contributing whilst at sea in whichever way they could. So, when the opportunity to collect data that could lead to useful research in understanding ocean health came about - both readily agreed to collect water samples for marine debris analysis such as micro plastics and the abundance of plankton.

In the planning and preparation for their participation, Joe and Kirsten were briefed by Dr James Tan and Dr Poh Seng Chee, Lead Scientists for this project who went through the standard operating procedures and demonstration for collecting the water samples as well as the best way to safely carry out the water collection.

The desired locations for sampling stations with mapping and segments were plotted by the Scientists prior to the voyage starting and based on their planned sailing route. Sampling equipment such as sampling bottles and plankton nets were also provided. As SV Halo sailed the length of the west coast of Malaysia to Kukup Island off Johore, the water sample collection points were planned at intervals of 45 nautical miles subject to the weather, water depth, tide, current and a multitude of other factors.

In total, 15 water samples (250ml each bottle) were collected and are currently undergoing sorting and identification at the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu laboratories.

Data collected throughout the 2-year project period will provide insights into the health condition and comparisons of the Malaysian seas between the east coast and west coast of Peninsular Malaysia and its marine ecosystem which in turn will impact livelihoods of the coastal communities.

Thanks to Kirsten and Joe's involvement and feedback, the learning's from this first leg have served as an indication for the scope, methodology and other support of the project needed.

If you are interested to be part of the ongoing UMT Ocean Monitoring project, please contact [gail.tay@seakeepers.org](mailto:gail.tay@seakeepers.org) for further information.

Special Thanks to our Programme Partners:

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu [www.umt.edu.my](http://www.umt.edu.my)

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