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Responsibility

# The Nature Conservancy announces unique giant kelp forest restoration project in Tasmania

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

## First-of-its-kind partnership to restore and 'future-proof' giant kelp forests

The Nature Conservancy Australia (TNC) has announced a new collaborative project to help expand giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) restoration efforts in Tasmania. The project will create habitat, re-establish lost ground and support job creation in regional coastal areas, supplementing the developing urchin fishery as a control method allowing their recovery.

"In recent decades, most of Tasmania's giant kelp forests have disappeared, mostly due to a combination of knock-downs by increasingly frequent heatwaves, overgrazing by an explosion of sea urchins and now competition with other warm-tolerant seaweeds, limiting the potential recovery of giant kelp forests," said Dr. Scott Ling, associate professor at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania (IMAS-UTAS).

The partnership includes TNC, IMAS-UTAS, Natural Resource Management South (NRM South) and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia's national science agency. With funding from Google's philanthropic arm, Google.org, the James N Kirby Foundation and



Dr. Anusuya Willis and Dr. Cintia Iha from CSIRO's Australian National Algae Culture Collection are working on a collaborative giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) restoration project in Tasmania. Photo courtesy of CSIRO.

the J and M Wright Foundation, the giant kelp forest restoration project will be rolled out in several phases. The first will include site selection for restoration, growth of juvenile kelps in local hatcheries, and testing site suitability by out-planting these juvenile kelps at a number of sites along the east coast of Tasmania.

"We're using population genetics to select robust Giant Kelp parents for restoration projects and developing a giant kelp biobank to future-proof the giant kelp forests," said Dr. Anusuya Willis, a research scientist at CSIRO's Australian National Algae Culture Collection.

A banner for 'Seafood from Scotland' featuring a dark teal background with white wavy lines at the bottom. On the left, the text 'SEAFOOD FROM SCOTLAND' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. To the right of this text, the phrase 'See you in St. John!' is written in a larger, white, sans-serif font. On the far right, there is a circular inset image showing several fresh fish, likely salmon, arranged on a white plate.

(<https://events.seafoodfromscotland.org/>).



## Can ranching ‘zombie urchins’ boost uni, save kelp forests?

With Norwegian knowledge and a partnership with Mitsubishi, Urchinomics aims to turn worthless empty urchins into valuable seafood while restoring kelp forests and creating jobs.



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As the project progresses, the restored *Macrocystis pyrifera* will be monitored and the lessons learned shared nationally and globally to help inform restoration efforts in other locations where the species has been lost, including the coasts of Victoria and South Australia.

“The Giant Kelp Restoration Project is the first of its kind in Tasmania, where partners have teamed up to support giant kelp forest restoration, with the vast amount of knowledge gained over time being leveraged to help recover giant kelp forests at ecologically meaningful scales,” said Paul Tompkins, TNC’s Kelp Restoration Coordinator. “The project will benefit all Tasmanians and visitors by contributing to the recovery of one of the state’s most productive and iconic marine ecosystems and supporting marine biodiversity in the region.”

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