

USD7 Million XPRIZE Competition to Improve Ocean Exploration



At a keynote address during the American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting in San Francisco, Dr. Peter H. Diamandis, chairman and CEO of XPRIZE, announced the launch of the USD7 million Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE, a three-year global competition challenging teams to advance ocean technologies for rapid and unmanned ocean exploration. As part of the total USD7 million prize purse, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is offering a USD1 million bonus prize to teams that demonstrate their technology can 'sniff out' a specified object in the ocean through biological and chemical signals.

David Schewitz, Shell vice president of geophysics for the Americas, and Richard Spinrad, chief scientist at NOAA, joined Diamandis on stage to launch the [new](#)

[competition](#). According to Diamandis, our oceans cover two-thirds of our planet's surface and are a crucial global source of food, energy, economic security, and even the air we breathe, yet 95 percent of the deep sea remains a mystery to us. "In fact, we have better maps of the surface of Mars than we do of our own seafloor. The Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE will address a critical ocean challenge by accelerating innovation to further explore one of our greatest unexplored frontiers."

Making Bathymetric Maps in Each Round

The three-year competition includes nine months for team registration, 12 months for initial solution development and 18 months to complete two rounds of testing and judging by an expert panel. In each round, teams will complete a series of tasks, including making a bathymetric map, producing high-resolution images of a specific object, and identifying archeological, biological or geological features. Teams also must show resiliency and durability by proving they can operate their technologies, deployed from the shore or air, at a depth of up to 4,000 metres.

Demonstration of High Resolution Seafloor Mapping

A USD4M Grand Prize and USD1M Second Place Prize will be awarded to the two teams that receive the top scores for demonstrating the highest resolution seafloor mapping, after meeting all minimum requirements for speed, autonomy and depth. Up to 10 teams that proceed to Round 2 will split a USD1M milestone prize purse. And the USD1M NOAA bonus prize will be awarded to the team that can trace a chemical or biological signal to its source.

The goal of the USD1M NOAA bonus prize is to identify technology that can aid in detecting sources of pollution, enable rapid response to leaks and spills, identify hydrothermal vents and methane seeps, as well as track marine life for scientific research and conservation efforts.

The Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE is part of the 10-year XPRIZE Ocean Initiative – a commitment made to launch five multi-million dollar prizes by 2020 to address critical ocean challenges and make the oceans healthy, valued and understood. XPRIZE awarded the Wendy Schmidt Oil Cleanup XCHALLENGE in 2011 and the Wendy Schmidt Ocean Health XPRIZE in July 2015.



<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/news/usd7-million-xprize-competition-to-improve-ocean-exploration>
