

PRESS RELEASE
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Interface, Inc. and the Zoological Society of London pilot in the Philippines hailed a success

Innovative cross-disciplinary partnership establishes community-based supply chain for discarded fishing nets

Global carpet tile manufacturer Interface, Inc. and conservation charity the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) are celebrating the successful completion of a pilot project and the start of a commercial venture with both conservation and socio-economic benefits. The innovative collaboration, called Net-Works™, has been created to tackle the growing environmental problem of discarded fishing nets in some of the world's poorest coastal communities.

By establishing a community-based supply chain for discarded nets, Net-Works aims to improve the livelihood of local fishers, while providing Interface with an innovative source of recycled materials for its carpet tiles. Discarded nets on the beaches or in the sea have a detrimental effect on the environment and marine life as they can persist for centuries. But, most nylon from these fishing nets is the same material used to make carpet yarn.

The viability of the collaboration was proven between June and October 2012. After conducting research and working closely with local communities and NGOs, Net-Works established the infrastructure to collect the fishing nets, gathering one tonne (1,000 kg) of nets in the first month -and substantially cleaning up the beaches in four local communities near Danajon Bank, a threatened coral reef in the Philippines. Operations are now scaling up, with the intention of developing commercial carpet tiles incorporating the collected nets later this year.

Collection systems will now be set up in at least 15 local villages, involving more than 280 impoverished households (equivalent of 1,400 people based on an average household size of five). The goal is to collect 20 tonnes of nets by the end of April—a significant amount that will generate funds directly for communities and make a positive difference, given that family incomes in the area are typically less than £100 a month.

Nigel Stansfield, Chief Innovation Officer at Interface says, “It is really gratifying to see that the concept we’ve developed with ZSL works and promises so much. At Interface, we are designing for a higher purpose—and feel a sense of responsibility beyond the products we sell. The collected fishing nets have a nylon that can be recycled directly back into our carpet tiles, which will help us reduce our use of virgin raw materials and, critically, create livelihood opportunities for local communities. We are now looking forward to expanding operations and delivering the first carpet tiles from our collaboration.”

Dr. Nick Hill from ZSL says, “Net-Works has been greeted with a huge amount of enthusiasm and interest from the local communities around Danajon Bank. This was clearly seen by the number of people interested in participating in the project and turning out to clear the beaches of discarded nets. Nets are very light, and we always knew our target of collecting one tonne of nets from such a small number of communities was going to be a challenge – so we’re delighted that we have been able to achieve this. It is still early and we will be monitoring both the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project over the coming year, but the signs are there that these impacts will be positive.”

During 2013, Interface and ZSL will explore opportunities to expand their partnership to other parts of the world. They also plan to develop a toolkit to help other groups and organisations establish Net-Works supply hubs.

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Notes for editors:

About Interface

Interface is a global leader in the design and production of carpet tiles. Its products combine beauty and innovation with functionality and environmental credentials to help customers bring their design vision to life.

Interface was one of the first companies to publicly commit to sustainability, when it made a pledge in the mid-nineties to eliminate its impact on the environment by 2020. Known as Mission Zero®, it influences every aspect of the business and inspires the company to continually push the boundaries in order to achieve its goal.

Interface is now more than half way to reaching Mission Zero and has been widely recognised for its achievements to date. Its products have also achieved several awards, specifically for design and innovation, the most recent being The Athenaeum Good Design Award for World Textiles.

About the Zoological Society of London

Founded in 1826, the ZSL is an international scientific, conservation and educational charity: the key role is the conservation of animals and their habitats. The Society runs ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, carries out scientific research in the Institute of Zoology and is actively involved in field conservation in 50 countries worldwide. For further information please visit www.zsl.org

About Danajon Bank

The Philippines is the global centre of marine shore fish biodiversity, but it faces some of the greatest levels of threat of all marine areas globally. Danajon Bank is a double barrier reef in the centre of the Philippines, and one of the most degraded coral reefs in the world. The area has high population densities as well as high levels of poverty. The island villages are highly dependent on marine resources, mainly fishing and seaweed farming.

For more information, high-resolution images or to arrange an interview with a Net-Works spokesperson, please contact

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