

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

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Back To The Sea!

The PCRf voyage continues, this time with a new sailing vessel breathing life into their valiant cause. Here are the latest updates by **Abigail Alling**, President PCRf.

The Planetary Coral Reef Foundation (PCRf) has just acquired a new sailing vessel to continue its work with offshore marine conservation and island community outreach projects in Southeast Asia! The ship is up on dry dock at Bezzina Shipyard in Malta with nine volunteers getting her hull ready to head out to sea. Everyday we bounce out to the dockyard in an old grey van from our flat in the bustling Mediterranean port of Gzira – a lovely harbour surrounded by Malta's stone fortress capital of Valletta.

Sailing vessel (SV) *Mir* is named after the space station that orbited earth for 15 years. *Mir* was a historic project that pioneered space exploration and advanced human life support systems – an extraordinary ship that accommodated cosmonauts in space for more than a year at a time. *Mir* is also a Russian word that has a double meaning of world and peace; highly

appropriate for PCRf's ocean-going ship.

SV Mir is a 114' ketch that was built in 1910 by the owner of Werf Gusto Shipyard in Schiedam, Holland, as his private yacht. She was rebuilt in 1962, and then dismantled again in 2006 when her new owner launched a project to restore the ship back to her original state. Finally in 2008, the economic downturn derailed his enthusiasm and we became the proud owners of *SV Mir* as well as the team now in charge of completing her third reconstruction. We plan to retrofit her as an ideal ship for PCRf's science and educational programmes.

During the next six months, we will be based in Malta, working daily at the dockyard under Mark Van Thillo's supervision, until our departure date on 1 April for Singapore. We look forward to this voyage:

Red Sea coral reef diving, Indian Ocean Southwest Monsoon sailing, and Bay of Bengal filming of blue and sperm whales! Above all, we joyfully await our return to "home port" – Raffles Marina – in September 2010. *SV Mir* will be both the headquarters for our "Studio of the Sea" film programme in Singapore as well as our expedition ship for Southeast Asia.

This is indeed a special time for all of us at PCRf and we wish to thank all the corporations that have helped us get back out to sea. In particular, Raffles Marina, DeepBlue, Jastrum Engineering, Samson Ropes, Seagull Marine, Dirk Davidse, Brunel, Hayward, Fasco, Jotun, Interlux, Viking, Miller/ITW Welding, Mooreast, Mercury Marine, Xantrex, Parker Hannifin, Bauer, Dickinson Marine, APL & Griffin Kinetic & Venus Express and others! Thank you all!

Please continue to join our voyage at www.pcrf.org

