

TECHKNOW
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Talking to Fabien Cousteau from the ocean floor

A deep-sea interview with the legendary marine researcher's grandson

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by [Suzanne Zionts](#) - [@suzietracey](#)

Ocean explorer Fabien Cousteau spoke with "TechKnow" via Skype—while still submerged during a 31-day stay in the undersea lab, Aquarius, in the Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary. Fabien talked about Mission 31—an effort to raise the profile of underwater research—reminisced about growing up on the ocean with his famous grandfather, Jacques Cousteau, and looked at the future of scientific discovery at sea.

The following was adapted from an interview with "TechKnow." It has been edited for length and clarity.

Fabien Cousteau: Aquarius is the world's only undersea laboratory. It's been here for 20 years, and it is crucial for several reasons. First of all, it's in a subtropical environment, which is conducive to working long hours. We are only 9 nautical miles offshore, where there is a lot of human activity both in construction and in general. There's a high population density in the area, which can affect the coral reef. Some of the issues happening here are happening all over the place, including climate change related issues and pollution.

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Aquarius is the best-kept secret in the ocean—maybe not so much after Mission 31.

We want to highlight this amazing habitat as a wonderful scientific platform, as well as an outreach platform to be able to invite the world in on what is happening under the sea. It's like a house or apartment underwater where the six of us are living for a full month. It gives us the luxury of time underwater, which normally you just don't have from the surface. One of our scientists from Florida International University has said that during the two weeks he was down here with us, he was able to do over six months' worth of research because he not relegated topside as a diver.

I think my grandfather would be thrilled by the science and data that we are collecting. As a communicator himself and a storyteller, he would be thrilled at the fact that we are able to talk from underwater. He used to say, if one person for whatever reason gets a chance to lead an extraordinary life, he or she has no right to keep it to themselves. Thanks to the advent of modern technology, I am able to share this. Our team is able to share this experience with the world, by blogging, by posting online with these little devices as soon as we get out from the wet porch, and of course the feature length documentary.

Long term after Mission 31 is over, we will be able to share all the science and data with our partners at FIU, at North Eastern and at MIT so the world can benefit from what we discovered.

It's of paramount importance, because at the end of the day people protect what they love—but how can they protect what they don't understand? If we can give a foray into the STEM education [science, technology, engineering and math], give that as a gift to the world, then I think we will have accomplished our goal at Mission 31. I want to be able to reach at least 331 million people throughout Mission 31 and beyond, and I think we are achieving that.



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