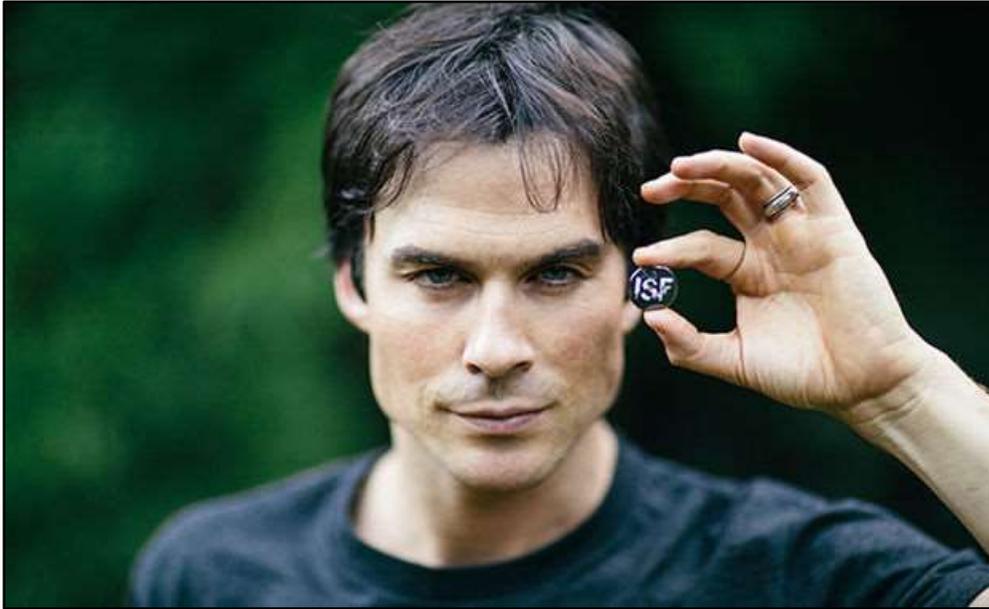


Actor and Environmentalist Ian Somerhalder's Call for Sustainability

UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador Ian Somerhalder has been connected to nature his whole life. He spent his childhood in Louisiana exploring the outdoors and wanted to be a marine biologist. Today, he uses his platform to spread the importance of sustainability.



Ian Somerhalder's parents taught him everything he knows about giving back to the environment. "It definitely set a tone for my life," he says.

Somerhalder, who started modeling at 10 and acting as a teen, has never lost his passion for the environment. Now 40, the humanitarian, who's known from his work on the TV series, "The Vampire Diaries, is founder and president of the Ian Somerhalder Foundation (ISF), which he started eight years ago to empower and educate people to care for animals and build compassion in the community. His wife, actress Nikki Reed, is vice president of the foundation.

Investing in youth

"Ultimately, our young people are our greatest untapped natural resource," says Somerhalder, whose goal is to build a sustainable farm to teach children about soil, air and water.

The recent fires in Northern and Southern California are on Somerhalder's mind, as well as fires he saw in Northern Ontario and British Columbia, Canada when he was filming over the summer.

Quoting his friend and mentor Deepak Chopra, the actor says, "We are not separate from the environment, we are literally the environment."

He compares trees to human lungs and water systems to our cardiovascular system.

“I want to raise my children, simply be happy and be a really, really positive beacon of not just light, but of real quantifiable change.”

“Well if you cut and burn all of the trees, you’re taking away the world’s lungs,” he says. “And if you dam, pollute and destroy the river systems and water systems, you are preventing the organism from using those systems to push around all the vital nutrients the organism needs to live. What’s going to happen? The organism starts to die.”

He calls on millennials and Gen Z to demand environmental responsibility and live mindful, green lives.

“I think it’s time for sweeping, massive change,” says Somerhalder, who encourages youth to become conscious consumers and vote with their money by only buying sustainable products.

Beacon of change

Somerhalder has many entrepreneurial projects. He’s launching a wine brand as well as a chemical-free, organic nutraceuticals line, both in China, where he has a large fan base. Plus, he’s in post-production as a director and executive producer on V-Wars, a vampire drama series for Netflix.

Despite that packed schedule, family comes first.

“Being a dad is really important,” says Somerhalder, who with Reed, has a toddler daughter. “I want to raise my children, simply be happy and be a really, really positive beacon of not just light, but of real quantifiable change.”

Written by: Kristen Castillo

Photo courtesy of: Glass Jar Photography