

Media Backgrounder and Fact Sheet

Ministry of Environment
Government of British Columbia

THE OCEAN – B.C.’s UNDERWATER WORLD

Approximately 71% of the Earth’s surface is covered by ocean - a massive, mysterious, and thriving body of water filled with diverse forms of marine life. British Columbia is Canada’s only Pacific coastal province, and the B.C. Government is committed to preserving and protecting our marine habitats and heritage for future generations. The Pacific Ocean also offers an exciting “playground” opportunity for tourists and locals alike – both underwater (scuba diving) and over water (surfing). Find out why people come from around the world to check out our oceanic playground!

- B.C. is the most active of all the Canadian provinces in the establishment of Marine Protected Areas - areas legally established to protect all or a portion of the sea surface, water column, seabed, and/or associated flora, fauna and recreational, scientific, cultural and historical features.
- The first marine waters were protected in 1911 as part of Strathcona Provincial Park. B.C. now celebrates an amazing 182 provincially-designated Marine Protected Areas.
- The B.C. Government is committed to the sustainable management and development of B.C.’s ocean resources and marine fisheries in a manner that protects the health of the environment, and supports a thriving economy and healthy communities.
- B.C.’s coastal waters offer some of the best diving sites in the world, where the marine life is some of the most varied and colourful in all of North America. The North Pacific waters are home to more than 5,000 species of invertebrates, about 400 species of fish, and a great abundance of algae and kelp. Divers can spot remarkable marine life, including dungeness crabs, prawns, lingcod and large octopuses.
- Tofino (Long Beach) offers the best surfing in Canada. Long Beach is a beautiful 20-km stretch of beach between Ucluelet and Tofino on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The Tofino area provides waves year-round, sometimes boasting world-class waves – swelling up to 12 feet!
- B.C.’s coastal communities are well known for world-renowned whale watching opportunities, and many eco-tourism companies provide first-rate whale watching experiences. Although whales are the most popular, there are many other marine animals found in these waters such as dolphins, porpoises, seals, sea lions and sea otters.
- Seafood (captured and cultured) production generates a wholesale value of \$1.3 billion and constitutes the fourth largest primary industry in B.C. after forestry, mining and agriculture. Food safety, traceability, and sustainability practices are the cornerstones of the industry, and have earned B.C. an international reputation for safe, reliable and top-quality seafood products.
- The commercial capture fisheries in B.C. harvest more than 90 species of fish, shellfish and marine plants from the open waters of the northern Pacific Ocean and throughout the

more sheltered straits and sounds of the coast. Capture fishing generates \$170 million a year in GDP.

- B.C. is recognized as a world-class sport fishing destination for the diversity and quality of angling opportunities. Sport fishing generates \$288 million a year in GDP, and is a major tourist attraction. The sector supports about 7,700 jobs.

CONTACTS

Al Martin

Director of Oceans and Marine Fisheries

Ministry of Environment

Phone: 250-953-3417

Al.Martin@gov.bc.ca

The Director is responsible for all programs delivered by the Oceans and Marine Fisheries Branch and with the development of the Provincial Ocean policy.

Jenny Stewart

Founder of Surf Sister/ surfing champion

Phone: 250-725-4456

info@surfsister.com

Jenny Stewart, a long-time Tofino surfer and Canadian women's surfing champion, founded Surf Sister in 1999. Dedicated to promoting women's surfing in Tofino and worldwide, Surf Sister's goal is to make sure that women feel included when trying surfing in Tofino for the first time.

Sepp Bruhwiler

Director of Westside Surf School/ professional surfer

Phone: 250-725-2404

Westside Surf School is at the cutting edge of surf instruction, utilizing the most advanced techniques acquired over a decade of teaching by director Sepp Bruhwiler, Canada's internationally known professional surfer.

David Roberts

Victoria Sales and Operations, Prince of Whales

Phone: 250-896-4884

david@princeofwhales.com

Prince of Whales is the largest year round whale watching and eco-adventure company in Victoria and Vancouver.

VISUAL RESOURCES

- Photographs/ images of ocean and marine life – contact Barron Carswell, Ministry of Environment, at 250-387-4519 or Barron.Carswell@gov.bc.ca

WEB RESOURCES

- Ocean and Marine Fisheries Branch – Ministry of Environment
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/about.html>
- British Columbia Seafood – features a database of all BC processors and distributors and access to information on BC industry by company, species, and product types.
www.bcseafood.ca
- Sport Fishing Institute of BC – information on marine tidal sport fishing in BC.
www.sportfishing.bc.ca
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO provides member states of the United Nations with an essential mechanism for global co-operation in the study of the ocean.
<http://ioc-unesco.org/>
- The Ocean Management Research Network aims to create and share knowledge for the application of critical thinking and best practices to oceans management in Canada.
<http://www.omrn-rrgo.ca/index.php?action=home.index>
- Harbour Authority Association of British Columbia provides on-going networking, information sharing, workshops, and annual conferences. <http://www.haa.bc.ca/index.php>
- The Ocean Renewable Energy Group (OREG) aligns industry, academia and government to ensure that Canada is a leader in providing ocean energy solutions to a world market.
<http://www.oreg.ca/about.html>

MEDIA COVERAGE

Tofino will host huge surfing contest

The Canadian Press, October 3, 2009

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/10/03/bc-tofino-surfing-contest.html>

Harbour seals rebound on coast, Vancouver Sun, Page A05, 03-Mar-2009

<http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/harbour+seals+thrive+under+protection/1345764/story.html>

Watching whales at play, The Province, Page A18, 03-Mar-2009

<http://www.theprovince.com/travel/Watching+whales+play/1370371/story.html#>

- 30 -

For assistance or more information:

Dan Gilmore

Communications Manager

Ministry of Environment

250-356-0202

Dan.Gilmore@gov.bc.ca