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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture and Food

### **New program protects B.C.'s ocean, coastal communities**

VICTORIA – A new program will focus on preventing the effects of climate change on B.C.'s oceans and watersheds, and protecting seafood and marine life.

“The impacts of climate change are affecting our province’s coastal waters, and we are working closely with Indigenous communities, the federal government and conservation organizations to look at long-term goals to combat ocean acidification,” said Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food. “The Climate Ready BC Seafood Program will provide us with insight to adapt to and mitigate this immediate challenge as we continue working together to ensure sustainable B.C. fisheries for decades to come.”

The Province recently completed the British Columbia Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (BC OAH) Action Plan in response to a preliminary assessment that identified ocean acidification as a significant climate-change risk to B.C.'s seafood sector.

The Climate Ready BC Seafood Program will target funding toward high-priority actions identified in the BC OAH Action Plan, such as:

- research and scientific understanding of acidification and hypoxia;
- marine carbon removal technologies; and
- development and testing of acidification and hypoxia mitigation and adaptation strategies.

“Our government is deeply committed to protecting B.C.'s oceans and watersheds as it’s essential to the economy, to the province and to First Nations in B.C.,” said Michele Babchuk, MLA for North Island. “The Climate Ready BC Seafood Program will support B.C.'s remote, coastal communities and the thousands of jobs the seafood sector provides for British Columbians.”

The Ocean Decade Collaborative Centre, a division of the Campbell-River-based Tula Foundation, is receiving as much as \$2 million to deliver the Climate Ready BC Seafood Program.

“We are encouraged by the Government of B.C.'s commitment to support coastal communities in taking actions that address the effects of climate change on ecosystems and livelihoods,” said Eric Peterson, co-founder and director, Tula Foundation. “As the lead organization supporting delivery of the Climate Ready BC Seafood Program, we will mobilize resources to generate collaborative knowledge and understanding of ocean acidification and hypoxia, and solutions that support the resilience and well-being of ecosystems and people in British Columbia.”

The Climate Ready BC Seafood Program will be available for project applications in summer 2023. Eligible applicants will include Indigenous organizations, research institutions, industry associations, aquaculture producers, commercial fishing industry and non-governmental organizations.

The Climate Ready BC Seafood Program and the BC OAH Action Plan support the CleanBC Roadmap to 2030, Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy: Actions for 2022-2025, and the Coastal Marine Strategy.

**Quick Facts:**

- The BC OAH Action Plan identifies five goals, 15 objectives and 62 actions to address ocean acidification and hypoxia.
- Ocean acidity and hypoxia occur when carbon dioxide traps heat in the atmosphere, which leads to warming since 91% of this heat is transferred to the ocean.
- Warmer water holds less oxygen, which leads to hypoxia, a state of low or depleted oxygen.
- Concurrently, 26% of the atmospheric carbon dioxide is transferred to the ocean's surface waters, which increases ocean acidity.
- Ocean acidification is corrosive to shellfish, and at current rate of emissions, the average surface ocean acidity is expected to increase by 100% to 150% higher than preindustrial levels by the year 2100.

**Learn More:**

Read the BC OAH Action

Plan: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/91B75C87A0A14521A490CDE8CC3BB70E>

The BC OAH Action Plan is supported by a comprehensive scientific assessment:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/A88625836B9843DFB3ED91DF71F9B9F8>

Tula Foundation: <https://tula.org/>

Ocean Decade Collaborative Centre: <https://oceandecadenortheastpacific.org/>

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