



Restoring Our Ocean: Supporting Conservation-based Economic Recovery

May 2020

Global reports released in 2019 made it clear that we were in climate crisis as well as a biodiversity crisis.¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere*² documented the impact of climate on oceans. The High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy report *The Ocean as a Solution to Climate Change: Five Opportunities for Action* details recommendations for how ocean-based activity can contribute to reducing emissions and keeping global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees.³ Canada has also made commitments to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, with *Goal 14: Life Below Water*⁴ a significant contribution to our national efforts to restore biodiversity and reduce poverty.

Between 2015 and 2019, Canada largely overhauled its ocean and fisheries legal framework⁵ providing a solid foundation for a departure from the status quo related to how we manage our ocean. Yet our ocean environment remains among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts, with the Arctic Ocean warming at three times the rate of other areas⁶, valuable shellfish fisheries at risk of ocean acidification, and fisheries biomass moving further north.

Now in 2020, the world is faced with an unprecedented human and economic crisis as a result of COVID-19. As we plan the recovery, there is an opportunity for transformation in fisheries and oceans that allows Canada to lead as an ocean nation with a blue economy based in biodiversity protection and climate action. The recently released European Union Biodiversity Strategy⁷ indicates commitment from other nations to ensuring that environment and economic recovery go hand in hand.

Here we provide 6 areas where Canada's recovery from COVID 19 can include our ocean, meet government commitments, and advance critical efforts in marine conservation to ensure resilient ecosystems and communities into the future. Canada's stimulus efforts need to lead to a transformative future that otherwise would not have come to fruition.

¹ <https://ipbes.net/assessment-reports/americas>

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/home/>

³ http://oceanpanel.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/HLP_Report_Ocean_Solution_Climate_Change_final.pdf

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

⁵ <https://seabluecanada.org/2019/08/29/progress-in-canadian-ocean-law-2015-2019/>

⁶ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/arctic-climate-change-1.4857557>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm

The goals below are based on implementing Canada's laws, directly linking ocean and climate change and creating economic benefits for Canadians. We have focused on actions that require strong decisions rather than only significant investments of funding and that will underpin sustainable and just employment.

Achieving Climate-Resilient Oceans

Goal: Canada fully integrates ocean and aquatic ecosystems into the climate agenda as part of COVID recovery efforts.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Integrate ocean and climate into Canada's stimulus and COVID-19 economic recovery efforts.
- Advance the development of a Blue Carbon protocol to enable quantitative assessment of protected areas and fish-population recovery contributions to climate mitigation and natural solutions.



RATIONALE:

- Canada's ocean basins and freshwater ecosystems are increasingly impacted by warming temperatures.
- At the same time, healthy and resilient ecosystems are better able to withstand climate-related change.
- To date, while Canada is an ocean nation, oceans and aquatic ecosystems have not factored into natural solutions to climate change.
- Rebuilt fish populations, restored coastal habitats, marine protected areas and healthy marine mammal populations should be considered in the same manner as planting two billion trees as a viable natural solution to climate change.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES:

- Canada is viewed as leader in ocean and climate solutions.
- Canada is proactively planning for climate-related changes in coastal and marine industries, thus reducing sudden economic impacts.

Supporting local coastal economies

Goal: By 2025, Canada has stimulated 20,000 additional jobs related to recovered fisheries and fish habitat as well as climate impacts on oceans.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Canada invests, together with its provincial partners, in robust coastal monitoring and restoration programs.
- Indigenous monitoring and guardian programs receive the necessary investments to succeed at monitoring and enforcement in marine industries.
- Investment in oceans technologies and innovations support sustainable blue economy jobs and is integrated into training programs in community colleges and universities.
- Apprenticeship programs are established in sustainable fisheries to enable new entrants into coastal fisheries.
- Canada supports ongoing removal and, where possible, commercial use of invasive species in freshwater and marine ecosystems.



RATIONALE:

- Coastal and rural jobs rely on healthy aquatic ecosystems.
- Canada's stimulus and future success in a sustainable blue economy must be based in both environmental and economic recovery.
- Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) requires investment in Indigenous guardian programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES:

- A robust ocean and aquatic economy that is underpinned by healthy ecosystems.
- An ocean economy directly linked to conservation and science-based decision making.
- Engagement of the private sector in technological and monitoring solutions.
- Post-secondary educational institutions build further expertise in ocean-based training and education.

Protecting Species and Places

Goal: By 2030, Canada has protected 30% of its coastal and marine environment and advanced Indigenous Protected Areas in all three ocean basins.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Advance all protected areas currently proposed as *Oceans Act* Areas of Interest or National Marine Wildlife Areas, with a focus on those supported by Indigenous communities and governments.
- Include marine protected areas as part of Canada's natural solutions to climate change agenda.
- Announce negotiated boundaries for South Hampton Islands, Torngat, Fundian Channel and Browns Bank, James Bay and Eastern Canyons at 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in September 2021.
- Announce establishment of the large offshore area in the Pacific at IMPAC5 in September 2021.
- Create a process by which Indigenous communities and coastal communities can propose areas to be considered for protection, with a view towards creating monitoring and tourism-based employment.
- Champion a new high biodiversity agreement with text completed by December 2020 as part of filing legal gaps for ocean protection.



Credit: Kristin Westdal

RATIONALE:

- Canada has used its ocean leadership agenda in international relationships and has built unprecedented momentum over the past four years in advancing marine biodiversity protection.
- Canadians overwhelmingly support further protection of the marine environment.⁸
- Advancing UNDRIP can be in part achieved through allowing for Indigenous Protected Areas to be proposed by communities and Indigenous governments.
- Spatial conservation is one of the most cost-effective efforts to protect biodiversity and address impacts of climate change.
- Canada is a co-lead on the post-2020 framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and leadership at home will be expected.

⁸ <http://www.wwf.ca/newsroom/?uNewsID=30061>

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES:

- Marine environments are provided more opportunity to recover from human use.
- Recovered ecosystems contribute to tourism and sustainable fisheries.

Rebuilding Fish and Fisheries

Goal: *By 2030, Canada commits to doubling the fish biomass in our marine and freshwater ecosystems.*

KEY ACTIONS:

- Commit to rebuilding forage fish populations and place a moratorium on new forage fisheries.
- Incentivise low-impact fishing, with a preference for gear that reduces bycatch and limits habitat damage.
- Require a transition to electronic and video monitoring for all fisheries where bycatch of non-target species is >5% of the catch.
- Create a fisheries apprenticeship program through local community colleges to transition to the next generations of fishers, with a focus on recruiting women and Indigenous participants.
- Require fish passage to be enabled in all new federally funded infrastructure projects.
- Engage with the private sector to incentivise the removal of dams and causeways wherever possible.
- Canada completes an accessible project registry to enable cumulative effects monitoring and decision-making regarding fish habitat restoration and recovery.



Credit: Nick Hawkins

RATIONALE:

- Recreational and commercial fisheries, worth almost \$10 billion in Canada in 2018⁹, require healthy fish populations to continue to thrive.

⁹ https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/stats/fast_facts_2019.pdf

- Restoring fish and fish habitat is now enabled by Canada's modernised *Fisheries Act*.
- Restoring habitat and ensuring fish passage can be enabled by ensuring federally funded infrastructure does not cause harm to fish habitat.
- In many cases, recovering fisheries and fish habitat requires strong decisions but not additional departmental funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES:

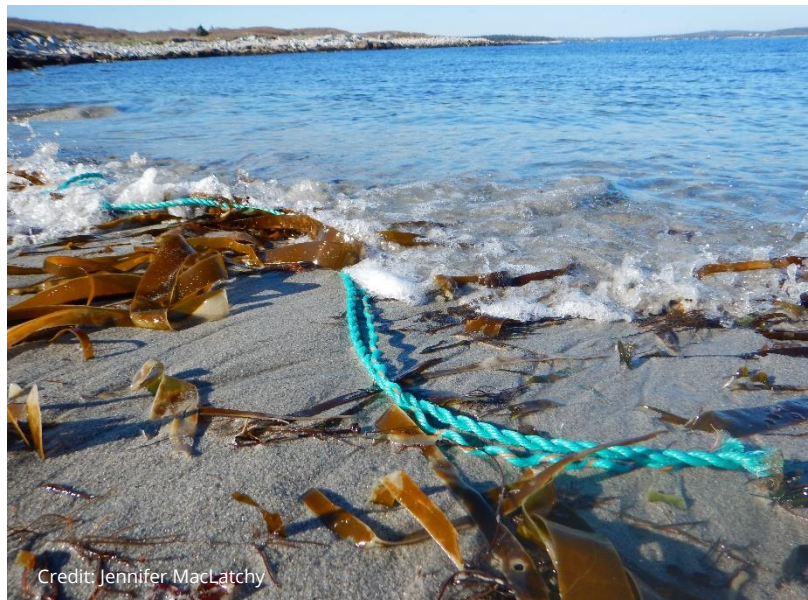
- Increased fish biomass contributes to carbon storage and blue carbon, thus helping to mitigate climate change.
- Increased access to recreational fishing supports local economies and appreciation of nature.
- Restored commercial fisheries will ensure a renewable economic basis for coastal communities, many of which are going to be negatively impacted by the decline in tourism expected for the next one to three years.

Reducing Ocean Plastics

Goal: By 2030, fishing-related plastic pollution in Canada is reduced by half.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Continue programs that require recovery of lost fishing gear as part of supporting employment outside of the fishing season.
- Incentivise use of fishing gear that is lower-risk for plastic pollution, as per recommendations by the Global Ghost Gear Initiative.
- Extended producer responsibility (EPR) is required for fishing gear.
- Support a certification system for vessels that have committed to reducing plastic used at sea and bringing all garbage into port.



RATIONALE:

- COVID-19 has upended Canada's plans to eliminate single use plastic and to meet commitments under the G7 Plastics Charter¹⁰.
- ~65% of plastic in the ocean originates in the fishing industry.
- Canada can maintain a commitment to reducing ocean plastics and play a leadership role as an industrialized fishing nation.
- Gear and material innovation can be included as part of a Blue Economy Strategy.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES:

- Ocean plastic inputs are reduced.
- Canada's fishing industry engages fully in the reduction and removal of plastic and increases stewardship of coastal and ocean ecosystems, upon which it depends.
- EPR programs support additional jobs in coastal communities, thus contributing to a circular economy.

Leading in Shipping Innovation and Pollution Prevention

Goal: By 2025 Canada leads in technological advances in reduction of shipping emissions and ocean pollution.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Incentivise through clean tech programs the design of hydrogen, solar, wind, hybrid electric, and ammonia powered vessels in Canada, starting with government procurement programs.
- Invest in shore power connections for ships to plug in, charge, or otherwise decarbonize cargo-handling and drayage equipment, and supply green alternative energy for zero-emission vessels, vehicles and equipment.
- Advance efforts at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to require a global reduction in shipping emissions and develop a Canadian action plan with absolute reduction targets and timelines.



¹⁰ <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/managing-reducing-waste/international-commitments/ocean-plastics-charter.html>

- Support the installation of Advanced Wastewater Treatment Systems for all ships to treat both sewage and grey water while in Canadian waters.
- Promote alternative ship fuels which would reduce the use of exhaust gas cleaning systems and the discharge of contaminated washwater and reduce the risk of oil spills.

RATIONALE:

- Shipping accounts for 3% of global emissions and shipping is not included in the Paris Agreement.
- As it is expected that shipping goods by air will take time to recover, Canada should advance initiatives for low-carbon transport.
- With three ocean basins, few countries are as well positioned as Canada to ensure that shipping is environmentally sustainable, with reduced GHG emissions and reduced pollution and noise levels.
- Disturbances, oil spills, strikes, and pollution from ships can have severe impacts on habitat and community food security.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES:

- Canada is an innovator in shipping and Canada's ship-building companies begin to attract global procurement.
- Canada leads by doing on shipping reductions.
- Communities and the marine environment benefit from noise and pollution reduction.