

UBC Social, Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Report

Sustainable Seafood - Phase I - Executive Report

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Moving towards Sustainable Seafood at UBC - Phase I

Executive Summary

The University of British Columbia is making important and landmark decisions to ensure that all seafood consumed on campus is sustainably sourced. Most ocean fisheries are grossly depleted, with consequent grave conservation concerns for many marine species and habitats. In response, conservation based groups around the world have developed tools that allow consumers to select sustainable seafood while dining or shopping. As well, interdisciplinary stakeholder coalitions are working to unite interested groups in advancing seafood sustainability, and retail giants such as Wal-Mart are now selling only seafood certified as responsibly sourced.

With a population of perhaps 45,000 people on campus daily, UBC is determined to maintain a strong record in sustainability. Ecologically, socially and economically sustainable seafood purchasing and education at UBC is needed to support the University's *Trek 2010* vision of excellence in sustainability, research, and global citizenship. The current Sustainable Seafood Project represents a collaboration among five groups: Project Seahorse at the UBC Fisheries Centre, the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, the Sustainability Office, and the two largest UBC food service providers, AMS Food and Beverage and UBC Food Services.

Phase I of the UBC Sustainable Seafood Project, completed in April 2006, involved four steps: (1) creating links and dialogue among food system actors involved in seafood purchasing and consumption at UBC, (2) documenting current seafood purchasing and consumption practices at AMS Food and Beverage and UBC Food Services, (3) assessing the ecological sustainability of UBC's seafood sourcing, mainly under Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch guidelines, and (4) recommending improvements in seafood purchasing on campus (full report available at <http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/seeds.html>).

The programme has already seen measurable progress. First, on completion of the report, UBC Food Services immediately removed four highly unsustainable seafoods from its menu. Second, companies supplying seafood to the two main UBC food service providers have become involved in developing better records and labeling to help trace seafoods from "sea to table." Third, the project team has started to address information gaps in current seafood sustainability assessment systems and invited collegiate groups to do the same.

As it moves into phase two, the project team has great ambitions. UBC Food Services has asked for advice on adjusting consumption of all other seafood items on its menu, including salmon and shrimp. Such advice will emerge from new projects to be executed by student researchers, who will begin incorporating social and economic concerns into their assessments of ecological sustainability. The programme will also disseminate results and reports to the UBC community, and further its ties with the two other UBC food service providers, St. John's College and Green College, both of which share a similar vision of sustainable seafood accessing.

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