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UBC and The Nippon Foundation launch \$13-million research program to predict the future of oceans

by: [University of British Columbia](#) | Dec 5th, 2010



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University of British Columbia researchers today launched a \$13-million, nine-year research program with Japan's Nippon Foundation (NF) to study the future of the world's oceans and to monitor the impact of human activities on seafood resources.

With support from the Foundation's Marine Affairs Department, the *NF-UBC Nereus – Predicting the Future Ocean* program at the UBC Fisheries Centre will bring together international experts in fisheries, climate change, environmental policy, geospatial modeling, marine ecology and socio-economics for research collaborations, capacity building and increasing public awareness about fish stock depletion.

"UBC is a leader in international research partnerships," said UBC President Stephen Toope, who helped launch the program today at the Nippon Foundation Building in Tokyo. "This generous support from and collaboration with The Nippon Foundation will enable international research to address some of the most pressing issues facing the world's oceans today and for generations to come."

Research by scientists at the Fisheries Centre has shown that overexploitation of the world's fisheries resources has caused major decline in fish populations and poses a serious threat to food security for coming generations. The Nippon Foundation's Maritime Program aims to "pass on the ocean to future generations."

"The problem with fish stock depletion is that it is a common threat to mankind and we must tackle this problem together by transcending our own views and interests," said Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation.

"The Nippon Foundation is proud to collaborate with researchers from UBC and indeed from around the world to build an international cross-disciplinary network of marine scientists to construct a global basis to fight against this urgent problem that concerns not only our future oceans but future generations as well," said Sasakawa.

Combining real-time and projected data and 3D simulation and visualization technology, researchers will be able to show scientists, policymakers, fisheries managers and members of the public how different conservation and management scenarios could affect the ocean environment and people who depend on fisheries.

The UBC-led research program will also take the pulse of the future health of our oceans, raise public awareness about their plight, and support an international education and research network of 30 young marine scientists around the world.

“To date, we only have fragmented predictions of what our future oceans and fisheries will look like,” said Villy Christensen, an associate professor in the Fisheries Centre and Nereus’s lead investigator. “This research program will help inform fisheries management plans by identifying maximum sustainable yields for communities that rely on seafood resources.”

One of 12 research units in UBC’s College for Interdisciplinary Studies, the Fisheries Centre is world-renowned for its excellence in research to restore fisheries, conserve aquatic life and rebuild ecosystems.

“One of the biggest challenges for conservation of fisheries is that most people can’t see the state of our oceans with their own eyes because from the surface, everything seems unchanged,” said Daniel Pauly, professor at the Fisheries Centre and chair of the Nereus Steering Committee. “This program will bring the real impacts of our decisions and actions right before our eyes.”

In 2005, Pauly became the first Canada-based researcher to win the International Cosmos Prize, awarded by the Expo ’90 Foundation of Japan. Recent research by Pauly, principal investigator of the Sea Around Us Project at UBC, shows that aggressive expansion of fisheries in the past 50 years has left the Earth with no more room to fish.

The Nippon Foundation is an international non-profit organization, engaged in a wide variety of activities around the world, including fields such as ocean affairs, education, social welfare and public health (e.g. the elimination of leprosy). In cooperation with the world’s leading ocean research institutes, universities, national governments, NGOs, and the United Nations System, the foundation’s Maritime Program is placing special emphasis on programmes to develop capacity building and human resources in the field of ocean affairs. There have been 640 fellows from almost 100 countries supported by those programmes. The principles, as carried out in these programmes, are to promote connections and inter-linkages across disciplines and organizations. For more information, please visit <http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/eng/maritime/index.html>

The University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre, in the College for Interdisciplinary Studies, undertakes research to restore fisheries, conserve aquatic life and rebuild ecosystems. It promotes multidisciplinary study of aquatic ecosystems and broad-based collaboration with maritime communities, governments, NGOs and other partners. The UBC Fisheries Centre is recognized globally for its innovative and enterprising research, with its academics winning many accolades and awards. For more information, visit www.fisheries.ubc.ca and www.cfis.ubc.ca.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is one of Canada’s largest and most prestigious public research and teaching institutions, and one of only two Canadian institutions to be consistently ranked among the world’s 40 best universities. Surrounded by the beauty of the Canadian West, it is a place that inspires bold, new ways of thinking that have helped make it a national leader in areas as diverse as community service learning, sustainability and research commercialization. UBC attracts \$550 million per year in research funding from government, non-profit organizations and industry through 7,000 grants. For more information, visit: www.ubc.ca

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