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Predicting the Future of Oceans - UBC and Nippon Foundation Partnership

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GLOBE-Net, December 6, 2010 - University of British Columbia researchers have 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.

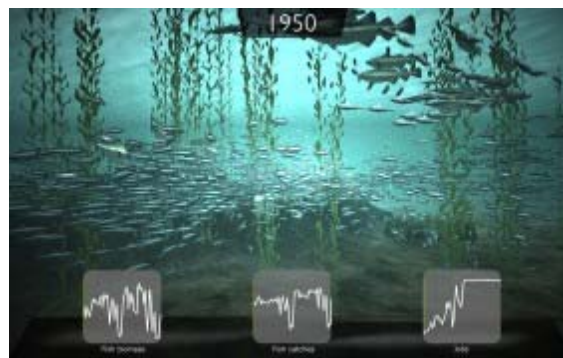
"This generous support from and collaboration with The Nippon Foundation will enable international research to address some of the most pressing issues facing the world's oceans today and for generations to come."

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."

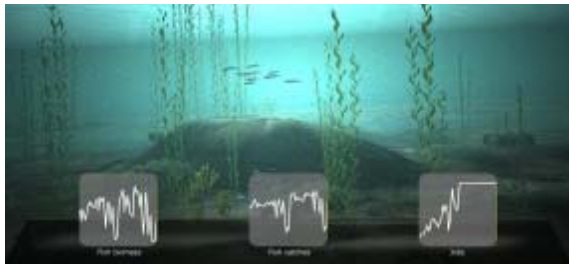
"The problem with fish stock depletion is that it is a common threat to mankind and we must tackle this problem together by transcending our own views and interests," said Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation.

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."

Last week in collaboration with the National Geographic Society the Centre published in the online journal *PLoS ONE* details of the [study](#) showing that world fisheries have expanded at a rate of one million sq. kilometres per year from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s. The rate of expansion more than tripled in the 1980s and early 1990s - to roughly the size of Brazil's Amazon rain forest every year.

"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 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, government, NGOs and other partners. For more information, visit www.fisheries.ubc.ca and www.cfis.ubc.ca.

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