

Ecological Principles

For a **Blue
Economy
Strategy**



The ocean is deteriorating and faces increasingly severe risk from the twin crises of **climate change** and **biodiversity loss**.

Extractive industries, increasing greenhouse gas pollution, and unsustainable management continue to threaten a healthy future for the ocean in Canada. Despite the challenges the ocean faces, it continues to serve as the life support system for the planet. The ocean supports complex ecosystems, provides food, sequesters carbon and our shared future relies on its health. The ocean's ability to support a healthy planet in the decades to come relies directly on our ability to transform how we use and interact with ocean systems today.

Pursuing ocean conservation and an ocean economy can no longer be treated as two separate pursuits. As mounting evidence shows, there can be no blue economy in an unhealthy ocean.¹ Canada has engaged as a global leader in numerous international initiatives that address the urgent need for ocean conservation. As a member of the Global Ocean Alliance, Canada is committed to protect 30% of our ocean by 2030² and as a signatory of the High-Level Panel³ for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, Canada is committed to 100% sustainable management of our ocean by 2025.⁴ Canada's blue economy strategy must uphold and center these international commitments.

Canada has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to guide ocean economic development in restorative and reparative directions. Investments in coastal restoration, ocean protection, fisheries rebuilding and the transition to zero-emission marine technologies will create good jobs and will deliver positive, long-term economic benefit to communities.^{5,6} To do this, Canada's Blue Economy Strategy must be one that prioritizes the protection of ocean ecosystems, mitigation of climate change, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The government must use the strategy to move investments away from destructive ocean industries and polluters, and move toward a sustainable blue economy.

¹The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review. [Headline Messages](#), February 2021.

²As members of the Global Ocean Alliance, along with other international commitments, Canada has been a global champion for protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030

³In 2020, Canada joined 14 other world leaders on the High-Level Panel in committing to sustainably manage 100% of Canada's national ocean jurisdiction by 2025 and to urge other coastal and ocean states to join in this commitment as well

⁴Canada has been co-chairing the post-2020 framework process under the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#), is a signatory of [The Paris Agreement](#) within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a signatory of the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#), a leading member of the [High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People](#), and is committed to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals including [Goal 14: Life Under Water](#)

⁵Hepburn et al, 2020. Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change? Smith School Working Paper 20-02.

⁶Edwards, P.E.T., et al. 2012. Investing in nature: Restoring coastal habitat, blue infrastructure, and green job creation. Marine Policy, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2012.05.020>



A truly sustainable blue economy strategy is one that:

Meaningfully recognizes and empowers Indigenous nations by:

- Advancing Indigenous-led sustainable ocean economic priorities;
- Investing in Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and Guardians programs;
- Recognizing the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on Indigenous peoples, particularly on Inuit and the Arctic.

Fully protects at least 30% of the marine environment by 2030 by:

- Applying strong minimum standards of protection across all marine protected areas and other effective conservation measures;
- Prioritizing areas with the highest values for biodiversity, climate mitigation, and recovery for species at risk;
- Aligning the strategy to Canada's domestic conservation targets and international conservation commitments under the United Nations Convention for Biological Diversity.
- Investing in protection and conservation to create thousands of sustainable and beneficial jobs for coastal communities.^{7,8}

Rebuilds the health of wild fish stocks by:

- Implementing strong regulations to protect and recover wild fish populations to abundance;
- Investing in habitat restoration to support wild fish species, and implement regulations to address cumulative impacts to fish habitat;
- Preventing wild fish stocks from entering the critical zone.

Restores degraded marine and coastal ecosystems by:

- Investing in measures to enhance the ocean's ability to sequester carbon;
- Using natural infrastructure to bolster climate resilience in coastal areas;
- Creating jobs in nature restoration projects, science, and monitoring.

Phases out industrial activity inconsistent with sustainable use of the ocean by:

- Implementing a just transition from offshore oil and gas by 2030;
- Placing a ban on deep-sea mining activities within Canadian waters, while supporting a moratorium on the high seas;
- Transition open net cage salmon farms out of Canadian waters, with the transition on the West Coast complete by 2025.

Reduces ocean pollution resulting from land based sources and ocean industries by:

- Investing in wastewater and stormwater treatment, and mitigating effluent discharge while creating jobs in infrastructure projects;
- Stimulating opportunities for shipping companies to reduce noise pollution, avoid the introduction of invasive species and invest in effective spill response and risk mitigation;
- Recover and recycle plastic pollution from fishing gear while implementing systems and regulations that prevent pollution at the source in the fishing industry.

Recognizes that the ocean is a major part of the climate solution, and invests in ocean-based emissions reductions opportunities by:

- Aligning the strategy to our emission reduction targets under the Paris Agreement to keep warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius, while becoming more ambitious, and recognizing the climate role of ocean ecosystems and ocean industries;
- Investing in the protection and restoration of ocean ecosystems as key nature-based climate solutions;
- Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies in the fishing industry, supporting zero-emissions marine technologies and the development of clean fuel to achieve zero emissions by 2050 across the entire maritime sector including fishers, ports and ships.

Done correctly, a sustainable blue economic strategy can provide a road map to healing our relationship with the ocean and allowing it to recover to abundance. If the blue economy strategy protects and restores the ocean ecosystem and meaningfully includes the priorities of Indigenous governments, it could chart a healthier path forward for the ocean, and for all who rely on it.

⁷Balmford, Gravestock, Hockley, McClean & Roberts. 2004. The worldwide costs of marine protected areas. PNAS 101(16), 9694-9697. www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0403239101

⁸ Edwards, supra note 6

