



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STEWARDSHIP CENTRE PLANNED FOR PORT ALBERNI

PROJECT WILL BRING NEW VISITORS TO COMMUNITY BY TELLING THE 'STORY OF THE SALMON'

COURTENAY – When salmon are a key component of your community - through commercial, sport, First Nations, and recreational fisheries - it makes sense to also create tourism and economic development activities around these amazing fish.

The West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Centre, a project valued at more than \$370,000, will be built in Port Alberni with \$140,000 in funding support from the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

The project, led by the West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association, will feature indoor and outdoor exhibits as well as interactive, educational experiences for visitors. Located in the Harbour Quay area, the centre will serve as a launch pad to learn about interpretive trails and other attractions and excursions in the Alberni Valley and Barkley Sound area.

“With one of BC’s largest salmon runs flowing through the community, Port Alberni is already identified as the ‘Ultimate Fishing Town’, and this project will enhance that reputation while bringing in new tourism revenue,” said Phil Kent, Chair of ICET.

Using interactive technology such as live tanks, interpretive panels and multi-media interfaces, the Centre will be on trend with more experiential, and learning-focused museums and aquariums. The exhibits will walk visitors through the life cycle of a salmon, and the aquatic and terrestrial species that make up their habitat. Children will have the opportunity to pop their head into an aquarium bubble, touch live specimens, or use microscopes and tablets to learn through play.

“We’re creating an engaging and financially self-sustaining centre that showcases local aquatic life, and helps tell the story of salmon,” said Sheena Falconer, Project Manager for West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association. “Tourists are seeking out authentic, local experiences, and this Centre will be a draw for them. But we also expect the Centre to be a catalyst for the development of new tourism products and markets, providing the community with valuable business and growth opportunities.”

The new Centre will also target the active retiree and educational tourism market. A large part of the shoulder season market is expected to consist of school groups, researchers and post-secondary students attracted through research partnerships with North Island College and Vancouver Island University as well as eco-tourists who want to spend their vacation working on environmentally beneficial projects.

The Centre is expected to draw 10,000 visitors per year. This will generate approximately 5700 new tourist days for the community, resulting in more than \$600,000 per year in incremental spending from out-of-area visitors. The employment impact is projected to be 6.7 new local jobs.

The project has been endorsed by the City of Port Alberni, the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District, Port Alberni Port Authority, Island Timberlands, the Chamber of Commerce, and more.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$48 million for over 130 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$270 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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