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IT'S OCEAN WISE MONTH: LET'S PROTECT OUR OCEANS, LAKES AND RIVERS AND CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

Vancouver, B.C. – November is Ocean Wise Month and Canadians across the country are encouraged to join the sustainable seafood movement to help ensure our oceans, lakes and rivers are healthy for future generations. Partners from coast to coast will be donning aprons and heating up the kitchen at a number of celebratory events, including sustainable chowder competitions in Wolfville, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.

Ocean Wise Month helps raise awareness about the biggest issue our oceans face today: overfishing. Research shows that 90 per cent of the world's assessed fish stocks are currently overexploited or at capacity. Eating sustainably, by looking for the Ocean Wise symbol on seafood choices, is one way consumers can help reduce the impacts of overfishing. A poll from the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, conducted this year by Insights West, found that 33 per cent of Canadians are aware of Ocean Wise and three in four Canadians (76 per cent) think we are doing too little to conserve and preserve our oceans. The health of our oceans is a worry to the vast majority: 84 per cent of Canadians are concerned about overfishing.

"Overfishing is a monumental global issue. It's the greatest threat to our oceans and it's clear from our research that it's an issue that's top of mind for most Canadians," said Ann-Marie Copping, Vancouver Aquarium Ocean Wise program manager. "During Ocean Wise Month in November, we encourage Canadians to join us in taking small steps to help reduce overfishing simply by choosing Ocean Wise seafood at restaurants and markets. We have hundreds of partners where consumers can find ocean-friendly seafood. Simply look for the Ocean Wise symbol next to a seafood item for our assurance that you're making a sustainable choice."

The survey also found that nearly one in 10 (8 per cent) Canadians who don't choose Ocean Wise say it's because they feel their choice isn't going to make a difference in the long run, and another quarter (26 per cent) say sustainability isn't considered in their decision making process.

"Every decision to eat sustainable seafood contributes to the collective movement of reducing overfishing," notes Copping. "It's a collaborative effort that includes programs like Ocean Wise, our partners, the fishing and aquaculture industries and consumers. Our partners are helping to lead the charge and this month is about celebrating the ongoing change we're all effecting."

Ocean Wise began as a grassroots movement in Vancouver in 2005 and is now Canada's most recognizable sustainable seafood program. What began as an initiative involving 16 chefs has expanded to include more than 650 partners with locations from Victoria to St. John's.

Consumers wanting to join the sustainable seafood movement this Ocean Wise month can look for these top 10 ocean-friendly choices at a market or in a restaurant near them:

- Albacore tuna — BC & North Atlantic pole or troll caught
- Dungeness crab — BC trap caught
- Pacific halibut —BC bottom longline or handline caught
- Pacific sardine —BC purse seine caught
- Salmon (chum, pink, sockeye) —BC seine, gillnet or troll caught
- Shellfish (clams, mussels, oysters, scallops) —Nationwide farmed
- Shrimp (spot prawns, sidestripe, humpback, pink)— B.C. trap caught
- Walleye/Pickrel —Lakes Erie, Huron & Ontario bottom gillnet or trap net caught
- Sturgeon – Nationwide closed-system farmed
- Yellow perch —Lake Erie, Huron, Ontario & Superior bottom gillnet or trap net caught

Ocean Wise has also launched a sleek new website to help kick off Ocean Wise month. On it users can easily search for nearby partner locations, look up the latest scientific information about a seafood item, and find delicious, food-focused events in their area. Visit www.oceanwise.ca to take a tour and subscribe to The Quarterly Catch newsletter to stay up to date.

Vancouver Aquarium Ocean Wise®

Overfishing is the single biggest threat our oceans face today. With more than 675 partners across Canada, Ocean Wise makes it easy for consumers to make sustainable seafood choices that ensure the health of our oceans for generations to come. The Ocean Wise symbol next to a seafood item is the Vancouver Aquarium's assurance of an ocean-friendly seafood choice. www.oceanwise.ca.

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Media Contact

Alexis Brown | Vancouver Aquarium | alexis.brown@vanaqua.org | 604 659 3777