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Vancouver Aquarium honoured as Canada's first Coastal America Learning Center

Designation creates new cross-border collaboration opportunities

Vancouver, BC – At a formal ceremony today with Canadian and US elected officials and dignitaries, the Vancouver Aquarium was formally recognized as Canada's first Coastal America Learning Center. The designation was bestowed by Laura Furgione of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on behalf of Coastal America following an extensive selection and evaluation process.

The Vancouver Aquarium's induction into the Coastal America Partnership will open new doors to broader public outreach and engagement in marine conservation. "As a Coastal America Learning Centre, the Vancouver Aquarium will help us teach people about the importance of our coastal resources," said Michelle Pirzadeh, acting U.S. EPA regional administrator in Seattle. "We look forward to working with the Vancouver Aquarium to share information and technical expertise and help protect these precious areas."

Designation as a Coastal America Learning Center recognizes the Vancouver Aquarium as a center of excellence and leader in ocean education and environmental literacy. As the only Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center in Canada, the Vancouver Aquarium's designation will strengthen the Canadian/U.S. partnership for protecting and restoring our shared ocean resources. This designation will enhance access to resources, expertise and collaborative opportunities on both sides of the border, with the goal of addressing critical coastal and marine issues.

"We are honoured to receive this designation. In addition to expanded public education, our status as a Coastal America Learning Center will also enable scientific collaboration on ocean and coastal issues with US federal agencies and network partners," commented Dr. John Nightingale, President of the Vancouver Aquarium. "It is an opportunity for Canada to strengthen our leadership in this critical area."

The Coastal America partners look forward to collaborating to address issues that face our shared water bodies. Numerous commitments are already in place from U.S. federal agencies such as National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S Navy and others. These commitments include initiatives to address salmon management, invasive species, marine debris and marine protected areas.

The Coastal America Learning Center Network has also made commitments for collaborative outreach efforts, educational materials and exhibitory related to environmental issues of regional significance.

Key initiatives include:

- Contribution of Northwest Fisheries Science Center Expertise to the development of a Vancouver Aquarium Marine Genetics Lab.
- Collaborative research in 2011 with the EPA vessel OSV Bold on the coast of British Columbia and in the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin.
- Increased collaboration with US federal agencies with the Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking project; a program to develop and promote the application of new electronic tagging technology to study usage of marine environments and migration routes of Pacific Salmon.

A detailed list of commitments and program initiatives is available at:
<http://vanaqua.org/CELC>

About Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a global leader in connecting people to our natural world, and a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, conservation practices, education, research, and direct action. Learn more at www.vanaqua.org

About Coastal America

Coastal America is a unique partnership among federal, state and local governments and private alliances to protect, preserve and restore our coastal and marine environment. Partners include 16 U.S. federal agencies, 23 Coastal America Learning Centers and over 1000 state and local agencies, corporations and non-governmental organizations. Coastal America's mission is carried out by leveraging the capabilities and expertise of all partners to solve local and regional coastal problems, and encourage ocean literacy and public stewardship. Learn more at <http://coastalamerica.gov>

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