



**ISLAND COASTAL ECONOMIC TRUST ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR
VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY'S INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
STURGEON STUDIES**

For Immediate Release

April 28, 2010

Nanaimo, BC – Barry Janyk, Chair of the Island Coastal Economic Trust and Mayor of Gibsons, on behalf of the Board of Directors, today announced funding by the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) of \$1,300,000 for Vancouver Island University's International Centre for Sturgeon Studies (ICSS). The total cost of the project is estimated at \$5,250,000.

Janyk explained that the objective of ICSS is securing a sturgeon industry for Canada's Pacific Coast, focussing on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. "Sturgeon species represent a high commercial value per fish, and have an estimated worldwide trade of more than \$500 million. They are suited to land-based, closed containment production systems which we believe is responsible and environmentally sound protein production. ICSS has been a leader in the sturgeon field, and has a collection of white sturgeon broodstock that is unique among public institutions in Canada. Currently, there is demonstrated interest in this type of aquaculture on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast, with enormous growth potential. This type of project responds to the mandate of the Trust to address aquaculture as an economic pillar and growth opportunity in the ICET mandate area. It also builds on the investment the Trust made recently to invest in the Deep Bay Centre for Shellfish Studies which is also a major Trust investment for shellfish expansion with our partners at Vancouver Island University," said Janyk.

According to Dr. Ralph Nilson, President and Vice-Chancellor of Vancouver Island University, VIU is committed to supporting both coastal resource management and regional economic development on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. The economic and research opportunities provided by white sturgeon in BC, is huge. The ICSS's secure source of the brood stock, and our approach to academic and industrial commerce partnerships, provide massive international market opportunity for sturgeon. "We have been working with Target Marine in Sechtel and a number of other potential producers, including First Nations, who have expressed a strong interest in entering into this development opportunity."

Don Tillapaugh, Director of the International Centre for Sturgeon Studies explained the economics of the production of sturgeon in closed containment systems. He indicated that farm-gate revenues for white sturgeon can be up to ten times that of farmed Atlantic salmon due to the fact that sturgeon have a higher farm-gate value and because more of them can be grown in the same volume of water. These economics, coupled with the fact that sturgeon have a similar production cycle and are robust under culture conditions, make sturgeon culture in freshwater

tank farm facilities very attractive. “With ICSS having exclusive ownership of broodstock and the practical application knowledge, these factors bode well for massive aquaculture benefits for Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast, and other BC locations in the next few years.”

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust was established on February 27, 2006 under an Act of the Province of British Columbia. It provided a \$50-million endowment that is managed by an independent Board of Directors comprised of thirteen members – eight Mayors and five provincial appointees from the ICET area.

The Board’s mandate is to make strategic investments in economic development priorities including forestry, transportation, tourism, mining, energy, Olympic opportunities, economic development, agriculture and aquaculture, and small business. The ICET region encompasses all Regional Districts and municipalities on Vancouver Island north of the Malahat as well as the Powell River and Sunshine Coast Regional Districts.

ICET has approved \$41 million for over 40 projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since starting its grant program in 2007. The total impact of these investments is estimated at \$230 million.

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

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Fact Sheet

- Sturgeon are the world's largest freshwater fish, and appeared on earth 200 million years ago.
- They are highly valued for their fillets and caviar, and the world-wide trade in sturgeon products is valued at \$500 million annually.
- Cultured white sturgeon meat sells for between two and three times the price of cultured salmon and can be raised at four times the density; cultured white sturgeon caviar sells for \$2000 to \$4000 per kilogram depending on quality.
- Of the 26 species world wide, five are found in Canada, and two in BC: white sturgeon and green sturgeon.
- The biggest species in the world is the Beluga sturgeon found in the Caspian Sea. They can grow to 26 feet in length and weigh over 3,000 pounds.
- The white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) can grow to over 20 feet and weigh over 1,800 pounds.
- In 1897, a white sturgeon was landed in New Westminster, weighing 1,384 pounds, possibly one of the last of the big fish in the Fraser River.
- Global demand and habitat loss have devastated most wild sturgeon stocks, notably the Beluga sturgeon, which until recently provided the majority of the world's caviar.
- BC has an active conservation aquaculture program to restore white sturgeon stocks in the Fraser and Columbia River systems.
- The lower Fraser River provides a catch-and-release white sturgeon sport fishery that is worth \$15 million annually.
- Conservationists hope that sustainable commercial aquaculture will shift consumption away from wild-caught fish and allow stocks to recover.
- Sturgeon are cultured in land-based closed containment systems.
- The ICSS will house the only collection of white sturgeon broodstock – mature, spawning fish – at any academic institution in Canada.
- VIU has been culturing sturgeon since the mid 1980's and carried out its first successful artificial spawning in 1991.
- The ICSS will host two upcoming major international sturgeon conferences: the World Sturgeon Conservation Society's North American Chapter conference in 2011, and the 7th International Symposium on Sturgeon in 2013.

