

Summer 2023 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Initiative (USI) is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the Apply page to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at midnight on Sunday January 29, 2023.

> This is a Fraser Estuary Research Collaborative Project <

The [Fraser Estuary Research Collaborative](#) (FERC) is focussed on advancing efforts to protect the Fraser River estuary in collaboration with key NGO and Indigenous partners. If you are interested in producing new knowledge and supporting Fraser estuary protection through scientific, technical, governance and policy innovations, the following project might be for you. Read on for more details.

Project title: Market and regulatory research to support prohibition of expanded polystyrene (EPS) in the marine environment

Project Background & Overview:

Expanded polystyrene (EPS) is a chemical laden form of unstable plastic that does not biodegrade yet is one of the most common materials used in Canadian marine environments for docks, rafts, floats, aquaculture amenities, and other forms of marine infrastructure. When EPS is used for floatation, it consistently breaks down into small beads. These polystyrene beads mix into the water column where they can harm marine species if consumed or end up on beaches where they are extremely difficult to impossible to remove.

In the movement to shift towards zero plastic waste in Canada, EPS is the elephant in the room. EPS pollution is not an accident like a shipping spill or plastic leakage from ineffective waste management systems. In British Columbia, it is intentionally used for 80% of floatation. This is a solidified oil spill, as EPS is eroding into the oceans and waterways every day. BC has over 25,000 kilometers of coastline, a majority of which is incredibly remote. This coast is inundated with EPS foam, including the shorelines of the Fraser Estuary. Removing this pollutant is not even feasible. Instead, it's essential to stop this pollution at the source before the abundance of EPS in the marine environment increases further.

In Fall 2022, Surfrider Foundation Canada successfully encouraged local governments to endorse a call to ban EPS at the Union of BC Municipalities Convention ([resolution EB 53](#)), demonstrating to the provincial government that citizens and municipalities want real action to take care of the coastline. We also amplified the [federal petition](#) calling for a ban on marine EPS, put forward by Member of Parliament Rachel Blaney, which amassed a large amount of signatures. As a result, MP Blaney has since risen in the House of Commons to discuss the severity of EPS pollution. You can watch her address [here](#).

There is momentum around this issue and Surfrider Foundation Canada aims to develop a full-scale campaign to address this issue at a provincial and national scale. With [readily available alternatives](#) for many EPS applications that are manufactured right here in Canada, eliminating this harmful material is a no-brainer — and from our success influencing a National Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste, we know that Surfrider Canada is in an ideal position to drive this issue towards a coastal victory.

Project description

There are various materials made from EPS, such as dock floats, buoys, insulation and even surfboards. And depending on the industry that is using these materials, they may be regulated by different jurisdictions. The purpose for this project is to perform research and analysis into the various applications of EPS in the marine environment, how those materials are regulated and the availability of alternative less-harmful materials.

The results of this project will be used to immediately to inform the development of a campaign strategy that Surfrider Foundation Canada will use to guide its advocacy on prohibiting EPS in the marine environment. Given that there is a range of uses of EPS, this project will be critical in prioritizing which applications of EPS are the most harmful and have readily available alternatives, therefore making them strong targets for our advocacy work. As a result, this research will improve the quality of our campaign and increase our ability to achieve a coastal victory.

Plastic materials, such as EPS, have significant impacts to climate change throughout their life cycle. As if plastic pollution wasn't bad enough, [a recent report by the Center for International Environmental Law](#) found that the lifecycle of plastic is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and therefore is a serious contributor to climate change. From cradle-to-resin, plastic racks up a hefty carbon footprint, doing damage over three stages – beginning (extraction of fossil fuels), middle (chemical and manufacturing refining processes), and end of life (landfill, recycling, or incineration). Finding ways to avoid unnecessary and harmful types of plastic, such as EPS, is critical in reducing GHG emissions and addressing climate change.

Project scope

Project work can be split into four main components:

1. Market Research of EPS
 - a. What are the different products used in the marine environment that are made of EPS?
 - i. What are various volumes of consumption?
 - b. What are the different industries that use EPS?
 - c. What alternatives exist for various EPS products?
2. Regulatory Review
 - a. What are the different jurisdictions responsible for regulating EPS products and applications in Canada?
 - i. What pieces of legislation govern the use of EPS in Canada?

- ii. What are the legislative requirements?
3. Jurisdictional Scan
 - a. Have other countries prohibited the use of EPS in the marine environment?
 - b. Are there voluntary programs available for reducing EPS pollution (e.g., dock retrofit grant programs)?
4. Recommendations
 - a. Based on the market research, regulatory review and jurisdictional scan, are there any “low-hanging fruit” that can be the focus of our advocacy?
 - b. Are there specific EPS products, that if eliminated, would provide the greatest reduction of GHG emissions?

Deliverables

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).
- Presentation(s) to Surfrider Foundation Canada

Time Commitment

- This project will take 260 hours to complete: 250 hours to be allocated to the research, and 10 hours to be allocated to participating in meetings and collaboration opportunities with the rest of the FERC cohort
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 15, 2023
- The Scholar is to complete hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.
- The Scholar must live in the lower mainland in order to be available to attend FERC meetings and events in person.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Excellent public speaking and presentation skills
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- Strong interpersonal communication skills
- Passionate about environmental issues
- Familiarity with the marine environment where EPS might be used as an asset

To learn about Surfrider Foundation Canada and connect with the staff and volunteers, it is encouraged that the scholar attends several events, if feasible:

- Surfrider Foundation Canada Conference – Date: Spring 2023, Location: Vancouver
- Surfrider Foundation Canada events:
 - Community shoreline cleanup
 - Remote shoreline cleanup expedition
 - Local chapter volunteer meeting

SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Applications close **midnight Sunday January 29, 2023**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 23, 2023.
[Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>