

Ocean Networks Canada teams up with BC Ferries to monitor Canada's busiest waterway

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NEWS RELEASE

VICTORIA, B.C. ? The University of Victoria's Ocean Networks Canada (ONC) has expanded its world-class ocean observatories to include data collected from three BC Ferries.

With instrumentation in the ferries' hull and a weather station on deck, scientists can now observe ocean surface properties continuously while the ferries transit the Strait of Georgia between Vancouver and Vancouver Island.

The strait is a vital waterway to understand. Not only is it Canada's busiest trade route, it's home to the world's largest commercial salmon fishery, important habitat for herring to spawn and grow, and one of the largest overwintering areas for waterfowl in Canada.

It is also a waterway influenced by tides, current and the Fraser River system, which during spring run off, delivers as much as 10,000 cubic metres of fresh water full of fresh silty water into the Strait, in a plume that can cover 10 sq km—a phenomenon visible from the space station.

?With all three ferry crossings in place, ONC now offers a comprehensive overview of the surface waters of this important body of water,? says Kate Moran, ONC's president and CEO. ?These continuous data are of great interest to scientists in multi-disciplinary studies that span from the dynamic seafloor, currents, waves, and life in the sea.?

ONC's expansion into BC Ferries, initiated in 2010, is a technological collaboration. The

water monitoring system built into the hulls mid-ship measures surface water properties such as oxygen, temperature, salinity, turbidity, and chlorophyll.

A weather station, combined with communications equipment, is mounted on the upper decks and together they capture high-resolution measurements of sea surface and atmospheric conditions every 10 seconds. Data are transmitted over the cellular network and are freely available in real time, via ONC's website.

The three ferries instrumented are the *Queen of Oak Bay* (July 2015) the *Spirit of Vancouver Island* (October 2014) and the *Queen of Alberni* (May 2012).

As part of our environmental program, BC Ferries is proud to support ONC in its collection of valuable data to better understand the Strait of Georgia where we operate, says Mark Wilson, BC Ferries' vice-president of engineering.

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