



Sustainable Seafood for Our Animals

Sustainability is one of the core institutional values of the Seattle Aquarium, and sustainable seas is one of our conservation priorities, with a special focus on sustainable fisheries. We envision a future in which we balance ocean health and human needs, without compromising the communities or ecosystems of tomorrow.

The Seattle Aquarium has been a Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Partner since 2006, and its ratings are considered for all seafood purchases. To deepen our commitment to sustainable fisheries, we decided to go further, launching two initiatives in 2019:

- Transition to serving only “Best Choice” options to café and event guests.
- Evaluate and increase the sustainability of the seafood purchased for the animals in our care, including generating a new rating system for the carbon footprint of these products.

We completed the first initiative and the evaluation of the seafood purchased for the animals in our care, which represents about 75% of the seafood we purchase (by volume). In 2020, we are working to implement the recommendations from the evaluation to increase the environmental sustainability of our seafood purchases.

We are founding members of and have “leader” status with the James Beard Foundation’s Smart Catch program, which recognizes restaurants committed to sustainable seafood. Our Chef Molly De Mers recently achieved a grade of 100% for the seafood we purchase for our guests!



What do the animals in our care eat?

The short answer: the same restaurant-grade seafood that humans do. Some also eat products that do not appear on most (human) menus, like krill, mysid shrimp, and rotifers. We mainly purchase bulk frozen seafood, such as market squid, Alaskan Pollock, and Capelin. A small volume of supplements and other unique products (~2%) are also purchased to support the unique dietary requirements of tropical animals and salmonids.

Sourcing ecologically sustainable seafood

Fishing impacts the integrity, functionality, and productivity of ocean ecosystems—from directly changing organism abundance and ecosystem resilience, to altering water quality. However, sustainably managed fisheries and aquaculture can reduce these impacts, while maintaining or even improving ecosystem health. According to Seafood Watch ratings, 67% of our bulk seafood products are sustainable. The remaining 33% do not have a Seafood Watch rating at this time. The reason for the lack of ratings is because these products are harvested mostly to support the specialized diets of animals in human care (e.g., Sand lance) and/or represent a smaller, boutique fishery (e.g., Chub Mackerel).



Assessing the carbon footprint of seafood

The *Seafood Carbon Emissions Tool* (seafoodco2.dal.ca) was developed as a scientific collaboration between Seafood Watch and Dalhousie University. This is currently the only tool that provides emissions associated with fishing and aquaculture to the point of landing. For emissions associated with transport from the dock to the aquarium, we averaged the emissions estimates from two tools—the former plus a carbon calculator designed by EcoTransIT World (www.ecotransit.org). The combination of these tools served as the foundation for developing a new internal rating system for the complete carbon footprint for seafood.

Standing for fair labor & social justice in the seafood industry

We are committed to supporting fair labor practices and upholding social justice for all people involved in the fishing industry. Periodic review of our seafood supply chains and active avoidance of low transparency jurisdictions and operations help us stay ahead of such concerns. Nearly all our seafood comes from fisheries, aquaculture facilities, and suppliers based in the United States and Canada. The select products from outside North America are fished by Icelandic and Norwegian fleets, both of which have robust, transparent labor protection records.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program ratings include three levels: “Avoid” (red), “Good Alternative” (yellow), and “Best Choice” (green). In 2019, they began encouraging member aquariums and zoos to audit the seafood for the animals in their care and provide a list of top priority, unrated products.



Rising to the challenge

Building on these findings and momentum, we are committed to rising to the challenge of transitioning to 100% ecologically and socially sustainable seafood while minimizing carbon emissions. Our next steps are to research alternative products, including options to transition all possible products to Seafood Watch’s “Best Choice” (green) rating while meeting nutritional requirements. This will serve as the foundation to develop and implement a product transition plan. The results of this work will serve as the foundation for other zoos and aquariums and ultimately will advance sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.



Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment

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