



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## PRINCE RUPERT NOW OFFICIALLY ADDED TO WEST COAST 'WHALE TRAIL'

**APRIL 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - PRINCE RUPERT, BC** – The West Coast’s “Whale Trail” now stretches further north than ever before, with the addition of Prince Rupert as a new stop on the network of shore-based marine mammal viewing sites along North America’s Pacific coast.

Fresh interpretive signage and viewing binoculars — funded through the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, Prince Rupert LNG, and the Port of Prince Rupert — have now been installed on the City’s public breakwater, identifying it as the most recent addition to The Whale Trail ([www.thewhaletrail.org](http://www.thewhaletrail.org)).

“Improving our understanding of the marine mammals that transit Canada’s west coast waters is an effort we’re proud to support in partnership with agencies like the Vancouver Aquarium,” said Jason Scherr, Sustainability Manager for the Port of Prince Rupert. “Our marine mammal program is helping port industries minimize our impact on whales and other species. It’s our hope that joining the Whale Trail will encourage more residents and visitors to Prince Rupert to contribute to the Cetacean Sightings Network.”

The Whale Trail is a Seattle-based organization dedicated to identifying sites along the west coast where the public is most likely to view marine mammals from shore. In 2015, the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre started to expand the Whale Trail further into British Columbia. It now stretches from the Central California coast to Northern B.C. Although most B.C. viewing sites are located in remote areas of the coastline, Prince Rupert is a notable exception. As the furthest walkable point into the harbour, and a pre-established viewpoint for pods of passing killer whales over the past year, the breakwater was identified as a prime location for inclusion along the trail.

Caitlin Birdsall, coordinator of the North Coast Cetacean Research Initiative through the Vancouver Aquarium, coordinated the addition of the breakwater as a “Whale Trail” stop with the City’s Marina staff.

“Prince Rupert’s breakwater provides an ideal viewing site for The Whale Trail, and its accessibility will help us in our efforts to engage citizen scientists to learn about and collect data on cetaceans,” said Birdsall, who works with the Aquarium’s B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network. Birdsall noted that as well as information about local species, the new signage encourages people to report their marine mammal sightings for conservation-based research.

From the public breakwater, there are over six species of marine mammals that can potentially be spotted during different times of the year – including, but not limited to, stellar sea lions, harbour seals, humpback whales, killer whales, and both harbour and Dall’s porpoises. Descriptions of each species are listed on the sign, along with behavioural attributes, and the likelihood of spotting them.

Additionally, names of all of the different species were translated into Sm’algyax, the language of the local Ts’msyen people, with translation generously provided by the local Sm’algyax Language Authority Committee.

### **B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network**

A research and conservation program of the Vancouver Aquarium, in collaboration with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the goal of the B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network is to increase public awareness of British Columbia's whales, dolphins, porpoises and sea turtles, and the threats to their survival, through outreach and opportunistic data collection. Sightings can be reported at [wildwhales.org](http://wildwhales.org); by calling toll-free: 1.866.I.SAW.ONE; by e-mailing [sightings@vanaqua.org](mailto:sightings@vanaqua.org); or using the smartphone app, WhaleReport.

### **Coastal Ocean Research Institute**

Established to measure and monitor the health of coastal ecosystems, the Coastal Ocean Research Institute produces and communicates scientific knowledge and understanding about Canada's West Coast. Established by the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, the Research Institute is grateful for its generous founding partners the Sitka Foundation and North Growth Foundation.

### **Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre**

The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre is a non-profit society dedicated to the conservation of aquatic life. [www.vanaqua.org](http://www.vanaqua.org).

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION (MEDIA ONLY), PLEASE CONTACT:**

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