

Working with the Ocean

Ocean Week 2025

Tides of Experience

Dive into career options and opportunities available in the field with interviews from SeaChange team members!

Where should you start your academic journey?

Our handy chart will help you better envision your academic future.

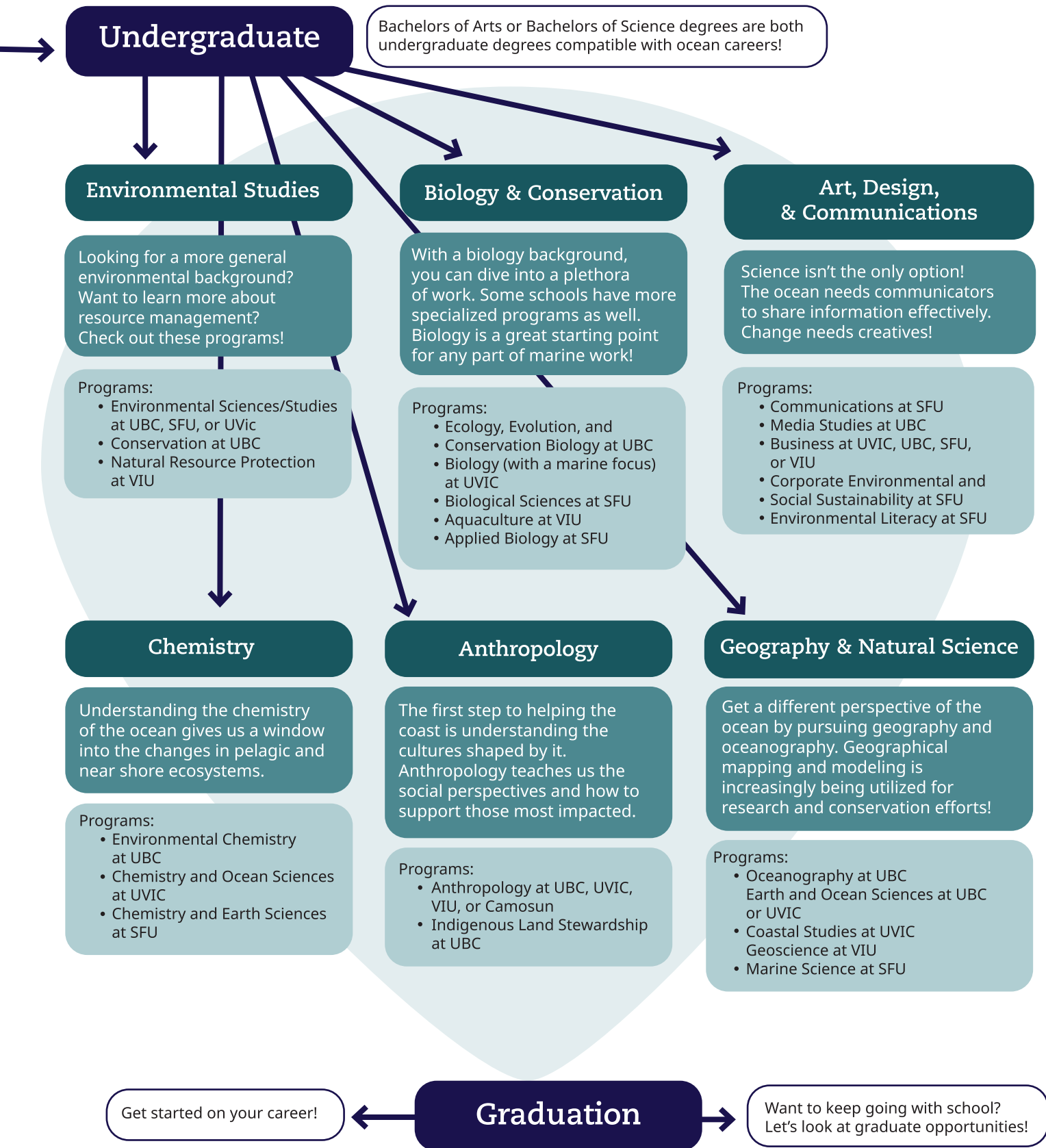


2025



Where to start your academic journey

Breaking into academia can be overwhelming. These are some of your options when it comes to schooling – but we all need a jumping off point! Remember: There is no singular way to work with the ocean.



Graduation

Get started on your career!

Programs:

- M/PhD in Anthropology at UVic, SFU, or UBC
- M in Land and Water Systems at UBC
- M/PhD in Communications at SFU
- M in Public Policy at SFU

Communications, policy and anthropology are just some graduate opportunities you can utilize if you wish to continue community efforts and research.

Anthropology, Communications, & Policy

Programs:

- M/PhD in Geography at UVic
- M/PhD in Oceanography at UBC
- M in Geomatics for Environmental Management at UBC

Continue to help ocean conservation and research by advancing geographical knowledge.

Geography & Oceanography

Programs:

- M/PhD in Earth and Ocean Sciences at UVic
- M/PhD in Biochemistry and Microbiology at UVic
- M in Environmental Science or Toxicology at SFU

Fell in love with the research and science during your undergrad? Keep learning through your postgraduate and specialize on a specific species, ecosystem, or scientific process!

General Sciences

Programs:

- M/PhD in Environmental Studies at UVic
- M/PhD in Resources, Environment and Sustainability at UBC or SFU
- M in Community and Regional Planning at UBC
- Climate Action Certificate & Nonprofit Management Certificate at SFU

Connect science, community, and governance with environmental management!

Management

Programs:

- M/PhD in Oceans and Fisheries at UBC
- M/PhD in Applied Animal Biology at UBC
- M/PhD in Biology at UVic
- Certificate in Aquaculture at UBC or VIU

Want to dive deeper into the behaviour, physiology, and management of marine species? Continue studying marine life after undergrad!

Marine & Wildlife Sciences

Masters Degree

Some jobs and research opportunities require a Masters degree. It can take 2-5 years.

Doctor of Philosophy

Typically, you complete a Masters degree before pursuing a PhD, though some programs allow you to roll up to a PhD while in a Masters program. A PhD can take 4-6 years.

There are many ways you can continue your education through masters and doctorate programs. You can even take additional, specialized coursework or certifications from universities.

Postgraduate

In search of a job? Look no further!

Knowing how and where to search for careers is the key to finding opportunities that suit your experience! Oftentimes, job titles may not be as straight forward as you'd expect.

Example Job Titles

Program Manager
Fisheries Observer
Educator
Conservation Technician
Animal Care Specialist
Environmental Coordinator
Naturalist
Marine Resource Specialist
Commercial Diver
Environmental Consultant
Acoustic Technician

Outreach Coordinator
Captain
Fish Habitat Restoration Specialist
Aquarist
Aquaculture Technician
Wetland Conservation Specialist
Marine Manager
GIS Specialist
Dive Operations Manager
Policy Analyst
Lab Assistant

Tools for finding jobs

Below are QR codes for various job boards and online groups where you can find job postings. You can also utilize job search hashtags on social media such as #BCJobs, #GreenJobs, #WorkBC, & #BCHiring



GoodWork



Vancouver Island
Outdoor Jobs



Wise Oceans



Science Careers



Work Cabin



Government of
Canada Job Search



Wildlife Science
Career Network



EcoJobs



Local opportunities

There are lots of organizations, institutions, and businesses in British Columbia that have volunteer, training, internship, and job opportunities. Here is a list of a few you may want to keep an eye on!



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Tides of Experience

First hand accounts from coastal professionals at SeaChange



Isabelle Maurice-Hammond
South Salish Sea Coordinator

From the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, to the University of Victoria, Isabelle has been all over studying anthropology, social justice, and environmental science. She is a PhD Candidate of Environmental Studies & Ethnoecology at UVic. Her goal has always been to support healing the land and Indigenous sovereignty by working with communities and supporting the restoration of traditional food systems.

What does an average day look like for you?

Right now, I'm working part time while I finish my PhD (about 30ish hours a week) and mostly from home, though I also get to do some field work. I start my day off by answering any emails that need my attention. Then, I turn to the projects that I am coordinating. Right now, through our Resilient Estuaries of the Salish Sea (RESS) project, we are focusing on renewing relationships with the Gulf Islands by developing community-led estuarine restoration and conservation projects. I'm planning some work on Salt Spring, which involves a lot of relationship-building, finding the best ways to connect with and contact peoples, and ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are at the forefront of decision making.

How does anthropology inform your work on the coast?

To work on, and care for, Indigenous territories means that we have a responsibility to the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded these territories since time immemorial. My education has given me the tools to be able to see these stewarded landscapes, understanding the deep histories of the lands on which we live and work, and the ways in which we could help renew these stewardship systems. The most important lessons that I have learnt (and am still learning), however, are that the core of this work is in relationships and being accountable to community (so, volunteer, whenever you can! Learn and listen!)



Phil Climie
North Salish Sea Coordinator

Phil started with a BA at UVic in Business before completing a graduate degree at UBC in Community Planning. After graduating, he went on to work with various NGO's and Indigenous communities across the BC coast. Now at SeaChange, he spends his days meeting and working with people to identify conservation opportunities and concerns in northern Salish Sea estuaries.

Any advice for folks who want to work in the coastal/NGO field?

Get involved in local initiatives by volunteering with local conservation groups. You'll meet people, get outside, and learn more about where your best fit will be. Plus if you're a student you can get free/discounted tickets to conferences.

How do community partners inform the projects that you work on?

Community partners are the leaders on projects. SeaChange has resources and expertise to support certain initiatives around estuaries, so good partnerships develop where that supports aligns with community desires.



Jamie Smith

Dive Team Lead
Underwater Photographer

Jamie studied professional photography in college, but his passion for the ocean led him to pursue commercial diving. He wanted to combine both interests—working with cameras and being underwater. Over time, Jamie expanded his skills by earning certifications in marine operations and commercial diving. By bringing all these experiences together, he has built a career as a mariner, commercial diver, and photographer/filmmaker, often working on conservation-focused projects.

What does an average day look like for you?

A typical day involves spending 6 to 8 hours on the water aboard my boat. Depending on the project, I might be diving for eelgrass transplant work, conducting marine surveys, or operating underwater camera systems to film marine life and habitats. Every day is different, but it's always hands-on and deeply connected to the ocean.

How can someone work as a diver/what is the best way to get into career diving?

The first step is to get your recreational diving certification. If you discover a love for the underwater world, you can take it further by training to become a commercial diver. There are a few reputable schools in BC that offer the training needed to begin a career in commercial diving and underwater work.



Watch “Deep Trouble”,
a short film about marine
debris removal and eelgrass,
by Jamie Smith.



Justin Lisaingo

Operations Manager

Justin received his BSc from SFU in 2010, during which he started a 16-year tenure at the Vancouver Aquarium where he worked in different areas of the aquarium, from fish research to BC Waters Animal Care. Now as the Operations Manager for SeaChange, he provides support for field and research staff. On any given day he could be on a boat assisting the dive team, identifying species for biodiversity surveys, orchestrating marine debris removals, writing safety protocols, or maintaining and improving the boats.

What led you to work in the marine field?

I did not grow up with an innate appreciation of nature, but I have always been highly food motivated. While marine biology is arguably the most delicious of the sciences, it also affords opportunity to collaborate and connect with local knowledge keepers whose expertise and traditional knowledge is invaluable to maintaining a sustainable and culturally informed coexistence of humans in a natural world. My favourite foods rely on properly functioning natural environments, so I find the work of supporting marine environments highly gratifying.

What did you learn working at the aquarium, and what advice do you have for those wanting to work at marine facilities?

Through my tenure at the Vancouver Aquarium, I developed a practical and versatile skill set, including scuba diving, boating, asset management, field operation logistics, and risk mitigation - skills that are readily applicable to a wide range of professional roles - but the most valuable gift I received, was mentorship from numerous passionate, experienced leaders in their respective fields. Opportunity is a privilege, and not everyone assumes they can ask for it. Talk to the people that inspire you. They want to hear from you! Try new things and be open to opportunities that present themselves, but remember to ask yourself why you're doing what you're doing, and if you are leaving the place a little better than how you found it.



Seanie Malcolm

GIS Lead

Seanie graduated from UVic in 2019 with a BSc in Geography, focusing mainly on physical and marine geography. She then spent 3 years as Head Naturalist on a whale watching boat, where she further developed her passion for conservation. In 2022, Seanie joined the ShoreZone team as a polygon mapper and is now GIS Lead at SeaChange.

What does a typical day look like for you?

For a large part of the year, my days are desk-based—mapping shorelines, processing imagery, maintaining datasets, and creating maps. In the warmer months, field season kicks off. I've taken part in aerial imaging surveys in Barkley Sound, Haida Gwaii, Northern BC, Cape Breton, and the Bay of Fundy. I've also worked on tow camera surveys in local estuaries. Every season looks a little different, and I'm always looking forward to whatever the next one brings.

Advice for folks who want to work in the environmental mapping field?

It can be a competitive field, so don't get discouraged if it takes more applications than expected to land that first job. Take advantage of co-ops, field schools, and any hands-on experience you can get while in school. Be open to opportunities that might not look exactly like your dream job—they can lead you somewhere unexpected. Most importantly, stay passionate and curious!

How does mapping help coastal conservation?

The ability to visualize data through mapping is incredibly powerful. GIS and mapping tools help collect, analyze, and interpret spatial data, making it easier to understand changes over time and space. They support informed decision-making, guide resource management, and help communicate complex information to both scientific and public audiences. Mapping bridges the gap between data and action, making it an essential tool in marine and coastal conservation. The possibilities are nearly limitless when it comes to how maps can support and strengthen conservation efforts.



Kendra Nelson

Communications Manager

Kendra graduated from BYU Hawai'i with a BSc in Biology. During university, she worked as a lab assistant, teaching assistant, and on a variety of projects involving coral conservation, reef fishes, and sharks. Ocean conservation became her passion as she organized beach cleanups and other events to promote stewardship. She decided to not pursue research and lean into communication as a content creator and for nonprofits.

Is a Bachelor of Science necessary to work in the marine field?

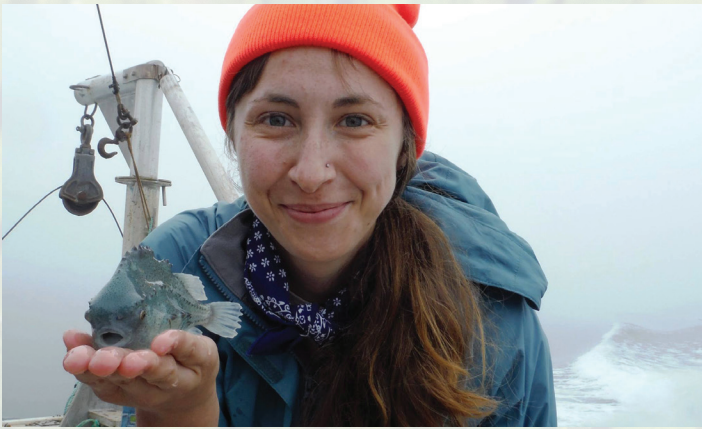
This depends on what your goals are! I know lots of folks in the field who don't have a scientific background but work out in the field, assist with research, and fill in other roles like in communications or management. I got my degree in biology because I wanted to work on research but that didn't end up panning out how I had planned... luckily I also loved working with scientists and organizations to communicate their work with the public!

How did you get into communications?

It happened organically! While in university, I was startled by the amount of marine debris I saw on the shoreline. I started to make posts about it on social media. I dove into studies on marine debris and started organizing beach cleanups for a local organization and the marine science club that I was the president of. Over the years, I continued to write about recent research and policy issues for social media and blogs. When I graduated and moved to British Columbia, I got a job as the social media coordinator for the Rivershed Society of BC and fully decided then that I wanted to work in communications for environmental organizations.

What does a typical day look like for you?

I'm not sure that I have a typical day. Some days I am spending 7+ hours designing materials (like this pamphlet). Some days I am coordinating event details, emailing, or in meetings. Sometimes I get to go to conferences, workshops, or symposiums. The majority of my work is done at my desk, but I do get out on occasion for field work or events.



Susan Anthony

RESS Lead Researcher

Susan didn't start off her academic background in the usual way. After struggling in secondary school, she attended college where she could really learn how to learn. It gave her lots of hands-on experience, and led her to UVic to pursue a Bachelor's degree. She attended many field classes in Oceanography and Marine Biology, through the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. That led her into her Master's at Bamfield in sea slug ecology and then a PhD in thermal physiology, centred around the effects of climate change. Now Susan works as the lead scientist and project manager of the Resilient Estuaries of the Salish Sea (RESS) Project with.

What does an average day look like for you?

Since a big part of my job is as a project manager, I spend a lot of time behind the computer, making sure all the working pieces are fitting together. But every so often I get to be out in the field, on the boat or giving talks, and being back at the computer to look over the data. Even though I am doing many things, I get to think and talk about the ocean all the time.

What advice do you have for those pursuing a master's or PhD degree?

Make sure you choose your supervisor wisely; someone you can learn from and who respects what you can offer them. The school itself doesn't really matter. Don't be discouraged by rejection; many supervisors would like to take you on, but it may be the wrong time, or they don't have the funding to support you. Take your time and find the right fit. And while doing your degree, pace yourself, explore your interests, and make connections: most people leaving their degrees don't carry on with academia, so find your own place in the world.

Any advice for folks who want to work in the field?

If you want to have a job involving the ocean, you don't have to be a scientist! Follow your passions and build your skills, and find how it can help ocean-related work.



Elle Schroeder

Research Assistant

Elle is a third-year Geography student at UVic in the BSc stream. She has always been interested in taking an environment-based degree and at UVic has begun focusing on coastal and marine mapping using satellite imagery. Working as a research assistant and mapping technician for the RESS project at SeaChange has been her second and third co-op terms. This role has allowed her to grow her skills and love for working with the ocean and helped her to choose her direction for post-grad studies and work.

Would you recommend joining a co-op program?

I would highly recommend taking part in a co-op or internship program! It has been an incredible opportunity for me to gain relevant job experience (and networking!) as an undergrad student. A lot of people have a fear of graduating with no idea what to expect in your field, I know I did. So far co-op has been a great way to try out jobs in geography without competition from those outside of UVic. Plus, you never know what you really like to do until you try it, so I highly suggest it for any degree!

What does a typical day look like for you?

There's always a lot of variety! I could be working from home or out in the field on any given day. Generally, I do a lot of habitat mapping, researching for our estuaries, sampling, and more!



Elle counting and preparing bottles for in-house and lab water samples at Tod Inlet. These will be used to measure nutrient and bacteria content around the estuary.

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OCEAN WEEK

VICTORIA

Be sure to check out other events at oceanweekvictoria.ca



The Ocean Career Fair event and “Working for the Ocean” are a part of the Resilient Estuaries of the Salish Sea (RESS) Project from SeaChange Marine Conservation Society. RESS is working to identify and restore medium to small sized estuaries in the Southern Strait of Georgia that will provide crucial ecological hot spots as climate change continues to impact marine ecosystems. With our partners and collaborators, we are working to identify these estuaries and then determine the best plans for restoration and action to conserve these ecosystems. We are currently working in 10 different estuaries. RESS has helped remove over 5 tonnes of debris from the seafloor, planted 1,000 shoots of eelgrass, installed new voluntary mooring buoys in Oak Bay, and much more.

“Working with the Ocean” was written and designed by Kendra Nelson and Elisabeth Schroeder.

Photos in this pamphlet were provided by Jamie Smith and Kendra Nelson.



SEACHANGE
MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Our mission is to understand, conserve, restore, and manage coastal ecosystems in partnership with coastal communities and within the broader conservation collective. We believe communities are at the heart of conservation and restoration. From the most vulnerable ecosystems to the most resilient, we strive to understand, measure, and mitigate the impacts of human activity and climate change on coastal ecosystems for the benefit of all communities. Since 1998, we have:



Removed more than 94 tonnes of debris from the ocean.



Planted over 4,706m² of eelgrass.



Delivered over 1,000 educational programs.

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