

[Print Message](#)

draft post: A look back at meeting Peter Robinson, Feb. 22, 2010

From: VIVIAN KRAUSE <vivian.krause@me.com>
To: Peter Robinson <probinson@davidsuzuki.org>
Cc: Gary Mason <GMason@globeandmail.com>
Date: March 30, 2011 4:27:06 PM

Mr. Robinson,

As you know, I've tried to ask you whether it is true, as it appears, that the David Suzuki Foundation removed about 20 press releases and web-pages last year, on the very same day that I posted my open letter to Dr. Suzuki. I've also tried to ask you why, if so, you didn't mention this when we met on Feb. 22, a few weeks later. I'm let down that you have not replied to any of my inquiries. I feel, as I also did a year ago, that my questions are fair and that your thoroughgoing refusal to respond is unfair.

At my blog, I am planning to write, looking back, about our meeting last February. Below, I've provided a draft for your review. If you find anything here that is factually incorrect, or if I have missed any important points, please let me know.

As before, you or your staff can reach me at 604.618.8110. Please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,
Vivian Krause

A look back at meeting Peter Robinson, The David Suzuki Foundation's CEO, Feb. 22, 2010

Please read: [Copyright Notice & Disclaimer](#)

Considering the hefty influence that the David Suzuki Foundation has on public opinion and public policy, I believe that David Suzuki should take responsibility for the information that he and his foundation provide. If the David Suzuki Foundation or any other organization provides inaccurate information, there is no shame in acknowledging this and making amends.

What troubles me about the David Suzuki Foundation is what I see as a lack of accountability with regards to the information that it has provided over the years about farmed salmon and salmon farming. For example, the David Suzuki Foundation has issued a series of press releases about "scientific studies" of PCBs in farmed salmon, and sea lice. These press releases brought about a lot of negative media coverage that has had a big influence on public opinion. In these press releases, the David Suzuki Foundation has described its sea lice research as [undeniable](#), [compelling](#), [irrefutable](#) and [proof](#). As far as I can tell, however, these press releases are now gone.

It doesn't seem right to me that the David Suzuki Foundation has quietly removed these press releases - especially now that the Cohen Commission is taking place. This commission was demanded by environmental organizations, in large part because of fears that sea lice were threatening Fraser sockeye. It doesn't seem right to me that the press releases from the David Suzuki Foundation that formed the basis of so much media coverage and prompted so much public concern, have all but vanished from the public record.

Since the spring of 2007, I have been writing a [series of letters](#) to David Suzuki in order to express my concerns, my opinions and my questions about what appears to me to be a systematic stream of inaccurate and selective information from the David Suzuki Foundation about farmed salmon, and salmon farming.

In the spring of 2010, after quite a fuss, I was finally granted an opportunity to meet with Peter Robinson, the CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation. What I was hoping for is that the David Suzuki Foundation would issue some sort of a clarification with regards to the statements that I believe are flagrantly untrue, and that it would provide more comprehensive, up-to-date, accurate information - including information about its U.S. funding.

The thing that has prompted me to look back at this meeting - over a year later - is that I recently found out that most of the web-pages that I have been concerned about, seem to have been removed on the same day: Feb. 3, 2010. That just happens to be the same day that I posted an [open letter](#) to David Suzuki on a blog that I had at the time, called Fish Farm Fuss.

When I met with Peter Robinson on Feb. 22, I didn't know that, in fact, weeks earlier, most of the press releases and web-pages about which I was concerned, had been quietly removed. So, for over an hour, on Feb. 22, 2010, Peter Robinson and I discussed a series of web-pages that, in fact, were not even on-line anymore. Either the CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation didn't know, or he didn't let on that he did.

Here's what happened:

- **January 18, 2010:** I sent David Suzuki an [open letter \(#11\)](#) which presented my calculations that the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) has had \$61 million in revenues (2000 - 2008). I asked about the origin of **\$27.4 million** which, over that same period, that DSF had reported as revenue from "other registered charities and other sources." In particular, I asked how much of that \$27.4 million originated from U.S. foundations - either directly, or indirectly, through Tides Canada. No reply received.

- February 3, 2010:** I sent an [open letter \(#13\)](#) in which I asked David Suzuki about his apparent involvement in marketing Alaskan salmon by demarketing the competition: farmed salmon. I posted that open letter [at the blog](#) that I had at the time, called Fish Farm Fuss. In my e-mail, I indicated that I would call later on in the day in order to request an opportunity to speak with Dr. Suzuki or Mr. Peter Robinson, the CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation. When I called, I was told by Mr. Robinson's secretary that he would not speak with me - not that day, not the next week, not the next month, not ever. I explained that I felt that my questions were fair and that the refusal of the David Suzuki Foundation to speak with me, was unfair. Following our phone conversation, I put those same sentiments into an [e-mail](#) and copied it to several editors in the seafood industry.

- February 4, 2010:** A Norwegian seafood editor wrote an article titled, "[Cowardice from David Suzuki](#)." He wrote, "This is a lesson in arrogance and incompetence. Seen from inside Canada, we have learned that these people (the David Suzuki Foundation) hold a strong grip on politicians and authorities, and have a great influence on their policies concerning the aquaculture. Seen from outside Canada, its a mystery how people from organisations like David Suzuki Foundation can play such a role in the public. We have not yet seen any evidence of truth in what they tell..."

- February 5, 2010:** In the U.K., the Norwegian story of the refusal of the David Suzuki Foundation to meet with me was picked up by [Callender McDowell](#), a seafood industry commentator in the U.K. In error, Callender McDowell attributed the harsh words of the Norwegian editor, to me. I then asked him to correct the record, which he did, [here](#).

- February 9, 2010:** The secretary of Mr. Peter Robinson, the CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation, informed me that he would meet with me.

- Feb. 22, 2011, Meeting with Peter Robinson:** I gave Mr. Robinson a [46 page document](#) in which I tried to explain how 26 DSF press releases and articles contained false or misleading information about PCBs in farmed salmon, or sea lice. Mr. Robinson seemed to agree with me that

Join the Salmon Nation Army

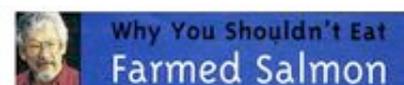


I want **YOU** to eat **Wild Salmon!**

And join the **Salmon Nation Army**



Why You Shouldn't Eat Farmed Salmon



Toxic salmon



some of the statements in the press releases were, in fact, untrue, but he did not actually say so. He agreed that he would have his staff look over the materials that I had provided, and get back to me. He didn't but several weeks later, I noticed that 20 of the on-line document about which I had expressed concern, had been quietly removed. For a list of these documents and links showing how they were obviously removed, **click here**. For web-pages from Internet Archives showing when these web-pages were removed, **click here**. Note: [e-mail](#) confirming Feb. 22 meeting.



- For the 46 page document that I gave to Mr. Robinson, click [here](#).

Begin forwarded message:

From: VIVIAN KRAUSE <vivian.krause@me.com>
Date: March 14, 2011 3:50:42 PM
To: Peter Robinson <probinson@davidsuzuki.org>
Subject: Misinformation from the David Suzuki Foundation about Farmed Salmon and Salmon Farming

Mr. Robinson,

I did not receive any reply to the three e-mails that I sent you in late January, including the one below.

As I mentioned in January, I am going to be writing again about the salmon farming controversy and the information that the David Suzuki Foundation has provided for many years. As I've said before, I am concerned that much of this information is inaccurate, selective, out-of-date or incomplete and that on the whole, the portrayal of salmon farming by the David Suzuki Foundation has been misleading.

I am also concerned that your foundation has not answered any of my questions about the millions of dollars that you have received from U.S. foundations - the same ones that are heavily funding a marketing program that sways demand towards "wild" fish - much of which is Alaskan.

Recently, it has come to my attention that the David Suzuki Foundation seems to have removed a substantial amount of on-line information about farmed salmon and salmon farming on Feb. 3, 2010. That's the same day that I sent an open letter to David Suzuki. I would like to ask, is it true that the David Suzuki Foundation removed about 10 press releases and a further 10 or so web-pages about salmon farming on Feb. 3? If so, I would like to know why you didn't say so when we met a few weeks later, on Feb. 22.

I have submitted an op-ed for publication about my analysis of the so-called science that the David Suzuki Foundation has funded and publicized about PCBs in farmed salmon. Out of courtesy, I am sending you a copy of this in advance, for your review.

As before, I appeal to you to please clarify the misinformation that your foundation has disseminated for years about farmed salmon and salmon farming. In particular, please clarify that contrary to your earlier claims and press releases - now removed - your research:

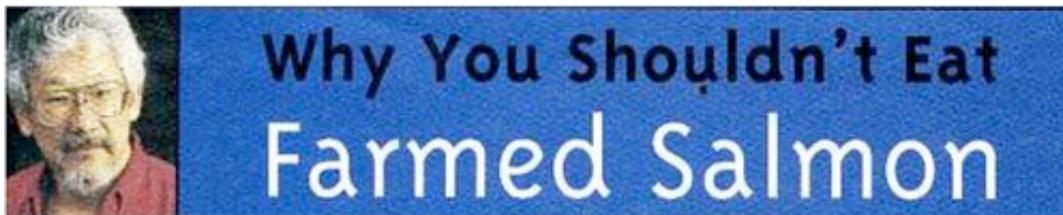
- Does NOT show that farmed salmon is high in PCBs and should be avoided
- Does NOT show that sea lice originating from salmon farms cause high levels of mortality among juvenile salmon in the wild, putting them at risk of extinction.

You may contact me at 604.618.8110. Please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Vivian Krause

Did David Suzuki Prevaricate About PCBs in Farmed Salmon? And if so, WHY?



"There is good science in the campaign of course. All campaigns at the David Suzuki Foundation begin with good science."

- Dr. David Suzuki

This post is based on a paper that I wrote in 2010, titled [Research on Contaminants in Farmed Salmon: Science or Marketing?](#)

Please read: [Copyright Notice & Disclaimer](#)

Canada has the largest coastline in the world and we're right next door to the world's largest seafood market: the United States. If there's one industry that Canada should be developing, it's aquaculture. Northern B.C. and Nova Scotia, the places where fish farming could provide hundreds of jobs, are some of the poorest parts of Canada.

Aquaculture avoids the worst risks of commercial fishing, such as over-fishing and by-catch. Yet, ironically, the biggest obstacle facing the aquaculture industry is opposition from environmentalists. In British Columbia, a "[war on fish farmers](#)" has been declared. More than [20,000](#) people signed a petition to close salmon farms.

"Don't buy farmed salmon ANYWHERE. [Phone your local hospitals](#) and find out if farmed salmon is served to patients," says a brochure from the David Suzuki Foundation.

"Its poison!" David Suzuki told a [conference](#) in Toronto. He wouldn't feed farmed salmon to a child, he said. In Australia, David Suzuki told an audience that farmed salmon is "full of toxic chemicals."

A few years ago, [Global Assessment of Organic Contaminants in Farmed Salmon](#), a study by Ronald Hites et al., triggered a worldwide scare about contaminants in farmed salmon. The Hites study found that levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were eight-fold higher in farmed Atlantic salmon than in Pacific salmon.



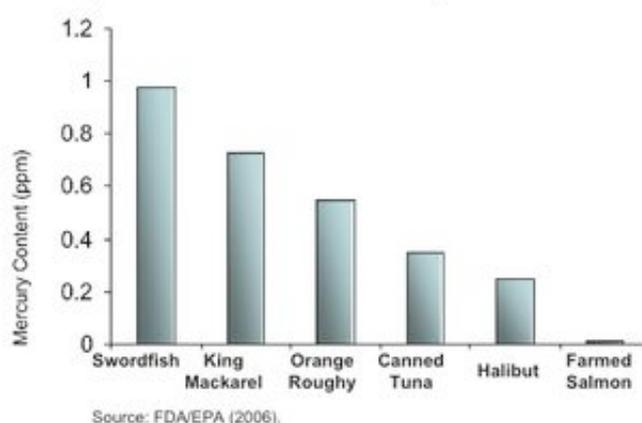
Source: Finding Solutions, the newsletter of the David Suzuki Foundation. Summer 2001. http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/downloads/2001/DSF_Summer_Final.pdf

If the eight-fold difference had been between 0.5 parts per million (ppm) and 4.0 ppm, the findings would have been consequential to human health. However, the eight-fold difference was between 0.0366 ppm and 0.0048 ppm. Since the tolerable level for PCBs in fish is 2.0 ppm, the eight-fold difference is inconsequential. Nonetheless, in a newswire that dismayed scientists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) reported "*Farmed Salmon More Toxic Than Wild.*" Following suit, the media reported the Hites study with alarming headlines worldwide.

The same day that the Hites study was published, the Alaskan Governor issued a press release. He said, "It is important to note that this study is not telling people not to eat fish. It is telling them to eat more wild Alaskan salmon."

David Carpenter, a co-author of the Hites study, told the press, "We hope it does not turn people away from fish, we hope it turns people away from farmed salmon." Mr. Carpenter also told the media "women should avoid eating farmed salmon at all, from the day they are born through menopause." He also said "one should avoid farmed salmon like the plague," and "Our results indicate elevated cancer risk from one meal (of farmed salmon) or even less per month."

Mercury Content of Farmed Salmon Compared to Other Fish

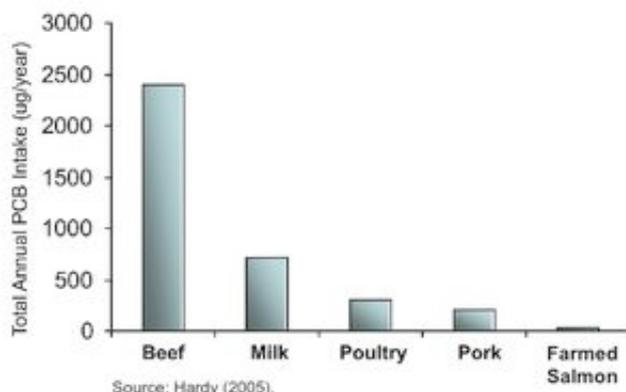


The problem is, Mr. Carpenter's claims are way out of line with the actual findings of the Hites study. Furthermore, Agriculture Canada, the U.S. Institute of Medicine and the U.K. authorities advise eating salmon - farmed or wild - on a weekly basis.

"There are no consistent differences between wild and farmed fish both in terms of safety and nutritional contribution," says the European Food safety Authority.

At Idaho University, Dr. Ronald Hardy estimated that the average yearly PCB intake is about 30 ug from farmed salmon, 200 ug from pork, 300 ug from poultry, 700 ug from milk, and 2,400 ug from beef. Evidently, farmed salmon is not a significant source of PCB exposure compared to other foods. Dr. Hardy concluded, "Even if Americans doubled their intake of farmed salmon, the contribution of this consumption on total yearly PCB intake would still be 40–80 times less than the amount from beef."

PCB Intake From Farmed Salmon Compared to Other Foods



The Hites study was published in the prestigious journal *SCIENCE*, the flagship of the AAAS. At the time, the Editor-in-Chief of *SCIENCE* was Donald Kennedy, a former president of Stanford University, and a trustee of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The current Editor-in-Chief of *SCIENCE*, Bruce Alberts,

is a [trustee](#) of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

Since 2000, Packard and Moore have granted more than \$130-million to B.C. organizations, none of them favourable to salmon farming. Of that, at least, \$12-million went to the members of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform which runs a demarketing campaign called [Farmed and Dangerous](#). This campaign against farmed salmon is based on research about PCBs and sea lice ([Krkosek et al. 2007](#)), conveniently published in the journal *SCIENCE*.

Packard has paid a staggering [\\$83 million](#) since 2000 for various projects to sway market share towards wild fish and away from the competition: imported, farmed fish. The [Marine Sciences web-portal](#) of the AAAS has been funded by Packard.

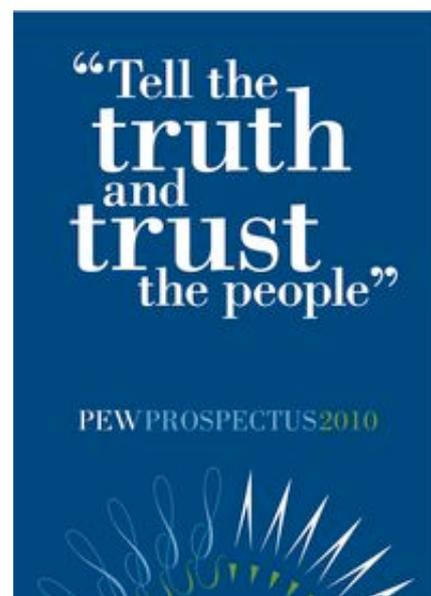
The Hites study and its publicity was paid for with \$5.5-million from the Pew Charitable Trusts; [\\$2.5 million](#) was granted to the State University of New York and [\\$2.5 million](#) to the Tides Center, part of the Tides USA network. Pew also granted [\\$140,000](#) to Mr. Carpenter and [\\$300,000](#) to Daniel Pauly at the University of British Columbia. For a study of its kind, a \$5.5 million budget was unusual. The \$440,000 for publicity was highly unusual.

As per [Pew's specifications](#), the Hites study compared farmed Atlantic salmon and wild Pacific salmon. Because wild Atlantic salmon and farmed Pacific salmon were excluded, comparisons among the same species of salmon were avoided. In essence, the study compared apples to oranges.

Had the Hites study compared wild vs. farmed Atlantic salmon, or wild vs. farmed Pacific king ("chinook") salmon, it would likely have found higher levels of contaminants in the wild fish, a conclusion precisely **the opposite** of what was spread around the world in scary headlines.

The Pew Charitable Trusts states that it holds itself to the highest standards of [integrity, transparency and effectiveness](#). And yet, when asked how the Tides spent that \$2.5 million, Pew staff [refused to say](#), citing the advice of its legal department.

"Tell the truth," says the cover of Pew's annual report for 2010. That same year, I appealed to the Pew Charitable Trusts, in an [open letter](#), to please clear up the confusion and controversy stemming from flagrantly unsubstantiated claims about PCBs in farmed salmon, made by Pew-funded scientists on the basis of Pew's \$5.5 million dollar study. The CEO of the Pew Charitable Trusts [replied](#) indifferently, "it is important to note that this research is rigorously peer-reviewed and published in prestigious journals such as *SCIENCE*. It was therefore hard to understand the claim in your open letter that the findings are "flagrantly unsubstantiated." Too hard to admit maybe, but surely the CEO of a [\\$4.5 billion dollar foundation](#) should know when a food contains merely 3 percent of the acceptable level of an omnipresent contaminant like PCBs, there is no basis to say that that particular food should be avoided because of PCBs.



In the London Times, [Magnus Linklater](#) called the Hites study “a sorry saga of flawed science, selective research and hidden commercial bias.” “That it was allowed into the pages of the apparently respectable journal *SCIENCE* is inexplicable,” wrote Linklater.

[Sandy Szwarc](#) wrote in a newsletter of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, “An ulterior motive may be at work.... Facing competition from aquaculture, the wild salmon industries of California, British Columbia, and Alaska have allied themselves with environmental groups to promote wild salmon as the healthier and environmentally-friendly choice.”

Facing stiff competition from farmed salmon, the value of Alaskan salmon collapsed over the 1990s from a peak of \$1.2-billion to only \$125-million. Since 2002, Alaskan salmon prices have tripled. This remarkable improvement was due in part to Alaska's [\\$50 million](#) Salmon Revitalization program. However, much of that money went to [2,600 fishers and 63 municipalities](#). That won't have done much to improve salmon prices.

After Alaskan salmon prices improved, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute reported, "The infusion of dollars wasn't the sole driver; we need to be honest here. It wasn't the only thing that changed market conditions. There was some bad press for farmed salmon and there was the health issue and people wanting more seafood in their diets. All these things kind of came together like the perfect storm."

On the day before the Hites study was actually published, press releases were issued by a trio of Packard-funded environmental organizations, including [SeaWeb](#), [Environmental Defense](#) and the [David Suzuki Foundation](#). SeaWeb calls wild salmon "the [white truffle](#) of seafood" and has a long history of promoting Alaskan salmon. Environmental Defense provides [recipes](#) for Alaskan salmon. Since 2000, SeaWeb and Environmental Defense have been paid \$23-million and \$21-million, respectively, by the Packard foundation.

SeaWeb was also paid by the Moore Foundation to co-ordinate an "antifarming campaign," including "science messages" and "earned media." After questions were raised about this grant, it was quietly re-written by the Moore Foundation.

SeaWeb		\$560,000	Apr. 2004
Wild Salmon, Consumers, and Conservation Project			
Term	Amount	Date Approved	
24 mo.	\$560,000	Apr. 2004	
Purpose			
This grant helps SeaWeb provide a toolkit and coordination for salmon aquaculture campaigns. Outcomes for this grant include identification of antifarming audience and issues, integration of aquaculture science messages into antifarming campaign, standardization of antifarming messaging tool-kit, creation of an earned-media campaign, and coordination of media for antifarming ENGOs.			
Grantee Websites			
SeaWeb			



In the wake of the Hites study and its international publicity by environmental organizations, bad press about farmed salmon tripled for about two years, according to an [Idaho University study](#). Ninety percent of the news items mentioned cancer risks and yet the actual research findings didn't indicate any such risks.



going to feed their child half a meal because half is safe and half isn't?

"The avoidance of modest fish consumption due to confusion regarding risks and benefits could result in thousands of deaths every year due to cardiovascular disease, and the suboptimal neurodevelopment in young children," [Harvard scientists warn](#).

At the University of British Columbia, [scientists found](#) that Vancouver-born infants of well-educated mothers are deficient in omega-3 fatty acids. The infants' eyesight was compromised, their brain development may have been adversely affected. This situation is not helped by the fact that Canada's most trusted environmentalist has been giving pregnant women faulty advice to avoid farmed salmon. The truth is, farmed salmon is higher in omega-3 fatty acids than any other fish.

The Packard foundation paid the David Suzuki Foundation [\\$762,600](#) for Pacific Salmon Forests, a project which produced a brochure titled, "[Why You Shouldn't Eat Farmed Salmon](#)."

In a series of open letters since 2007, David Suzuki has been asked whether the bad press that his foundation has generated about salmon farming is part of a "demarketing" campaign to prop up demand for Alaskan salmon. He hasn't replied but 20 press releases and negative articles about farmed salmon have been quietly removed from his foundation's web-site. Nevertheless, the campaign against farmed salmon rages on. In 2010, the Moore foundation paid the David Suzuki Foundation [\\$329,525](#) for "salmon market standards."

Begin forwarded message:

From: VIVIAN KRAUSE <vivian.krause@me.com>
Date: January 21, 2011 7:08:26 AM
To: Peter Robinson <probinson@davidsuzuki.org>
Subject: The brochure, "[Why You Shouldn't Eat Farmed Salmon](#)."

Mr. Robertson,

As I mentioned yesterday in an e-mail, I am going to be writing again about the salmon farming controversy. I am doing this, still, as a concerned member of the public.

As you know from our meeting last spring, I have concerns about the inaccurate information that the David Suzuki Foundation has provided to the public about farmed salmon, and I have questions about the American funding that the David Suzuki Foundation has received over the years. In this regard, I would like to re-iterate several of the questions that I tried to ask you last year, and that I have been trying to ask Dr. Suzuki since the spring of 2007.

In light of the above, I would like to inquire about the origins of the funding for the brochure, *Why You Shouldn't Eat Farmed Salmon*? which was produced as part of the Pacific Salmon Forests project. Was this covered by the \$762,600 that the David and Lucile Packard Foundation paid to the David Suzuki Foundation specifically for this project, over 2000 and 2001? Was this brochure one of the "market intervention tools," funded by the Packard Foundation?

Below, I have presented the information and analysis on which my question is based. If I have presented anything that is factually incorrect, or if I have missed any important points, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Vivian Krause

About the brochure, "Why You Shouldn't Eat Farmed Salmon," and the Pacific Salmon Forest Project:

Between May of 2002 and the spring of 2010, the David Suzuki Foundation distributed a brochure titled, "*Why You Shouldn't Eat Farmed Salmon*." This brochure was produced as part of the Pacific Salmon Forests project.

According to U.S. tax returns, between 2000 and 2003, American foundations paid **\$US 2.8 million** to the David Suzuki Foundation for the Pacific Salmon Forests project, including:

- \$762,600 from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, California (CA)
 - [\\$US 362,600 in 2000](#)
 - [\\$US 400,000 in 2001](#)
- \$ 815,000 from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Menlo Park, CA
 - [\\$US 315,000 in 1999](#)
 - [\\$US 250,000 in 2000](#)
 - [\\$US 250,000 in 2001](#)
- \$ 1,080,000 from the Lannan Foundation, based in New Mexico
 - [\\$US 330,000 in 2000](#)
 - [\\$US 250,000 in 2001](#)
 - [\\$US 250,000 in 2002](#)
 - [\\$US 250,000 in 2003](#)
- \$ 180,000 from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, San Francisco, CA
 - [\\$US 150,000](#) (1999 - 2001) and [\\$US 30,000](#) in 2002
- [\\$US 20,000](#) from the Marisla Foundation, based in Laguna Beach, CA

The \$US 762,600 from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation was provided as part of the Marine Fisheries program. This program has a strategy titled [Market Intervention Tools](#) to Conserve Marine Fisheries.