



Climate Action Plan for Tourism on Vancouver Island

Restated June 2023

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Introduction

The Vancouver Island region is defined by its ancient rainforests, rugged coastlines, and cool waters of the Pacific Ocean. The region is inclusive of Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands as well as a stretch of the mainland coast between Moses and Bute Inlets. The region includes over fifty First Nations and is the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish peoples.

Vancouver Island's diverse landscapes lend itself well to an abundance of outdoor recreation experiences. Hiking, camping, kayaking, whale watching, skiing and festivals and events are key activities driving visitation. Annually, the Vancouver Island region attracts over ten million visitors.



As the destination management organization responsible for this region, 4VI has committed itself to advancing sustainable tourism with the goal of increasing the benefits and reducing the negative impacts caused by tourism in the Vancouver Island region and beyond. Within its efforts to reduce the negative impacts of tourism, climate action has risen to the top.

4VI's climate action work began with signing the Glasgow Declaration, a shared commitment to unite global stakeholders in transforming tourism to deliver effective climate action. 4VI supports the goal to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050. 4VI also commits to consistently aligning its actions with the latest scientific recommendations to ensure its approach remains consistent with a rise of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

As part of being a signatory to the Glasgow Declaration, 4VI committed to publish a climate action plan within 12 months of signing and implement accordingly. This document outlines an industry-leading climate action plan for both the organization and region.

About 4VI

4VI is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to ensuring that travel is a force for good for Vancouver Island – forever. The organization’s new mandate is to deliver innovative tourism advisory services, working directly with Vancouver Island Region communities, business and tourism partners to enrich their work and power the stewardship of the Island. The aim is to create an enduring, vibrant and sustainable Vancouver Island visitor economy.

The 4VI team is focused on supporting locally inspired, sustainable, and innovative destination development initiatives that authentically represent the community, businesses, and culture as well as supporting the environment by committing to stewardship of Vancouver Island.

In 2022, 4VI achieved destination Biosphere Certification from the Responsible Tourism Institute. This certification ensures that 4VI is meaningfully leading and engaging with tourism projects that span the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. 4VI is committed to advancing the UN SDGs in all its work and the team has identified Goal 13 (Climate Action) as a top priority for the current year. In addition, 4VI has developed a Biosphere Commitment Program to enable tourism businesses to plan, manage, and implement their own sustainability action plans.

Stakeholder Engagement

This action plan was initiated by 4VI with support from Synergy Enterprises; however, the strategic direction and content of this plan was informed through engagement with Vancouver Island stakeholders.

We were fortunate to have a diverse range of tourism stakeholders offer their perspective on both opportunities and challenges. Survey responses, four virtual roundtable sessions and one-on-one interviews with transportation stakeholders and Indigenous tourism operators shaped the direction of this plan.

It is clear there is stakeholder support for 4VI to play a role in climate action, especially now that the organization has shifted to a social enterprise model. Survey results indicated that stakeholders feel 4VI should focus its efforts on education and capacity building, followed closely by facilitating group funding applications and advocacy.

GHG Emissions Summary

Tourism is interwoven into the daily lives of residents and the operations of businesses across Vancouver Island. Measuring the greenhouse gas emissions associated with tourism in a destination is a challenging task; however, it is important to begin to establish key metrics and understand the impact. This will allow 4VI to set targets, meet the commitments outlined by the Glasgow Declaration, and engage in collaborative projects. The objective is to identify key areas to reduce emissions while supporting local operators and enhancing the visitor experience.

A greenhouse gas inventory for Vancouver Island tourism was completed by Synergy Enterprises in January 2023. The baseline year for this inventory is 2019. This year was chosen as a representative, pre-pandemic year from which to set targets and measure future performance.

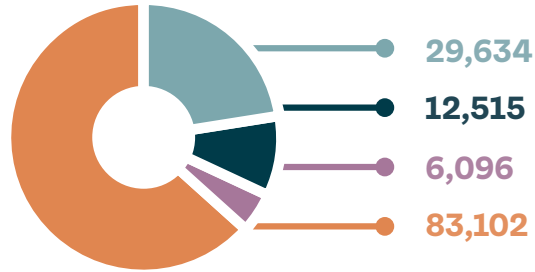
Region	Emissions (tCO ₂ e)	Visitors	Emissions Intensity (kgCO ₂ e/Visitor)
Greater Victoria/Gulf Islands	1,738,587	6,217,045	280
South-Central Island	131,347	2,921,486	45
Pacific Coast	73,933	868,550	85
North Island	20,988	157,918	133
Total	1,964,855	10,165,000	193

2019 saw tourism activities on Vancouver Island produce nearly two million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, represented as tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent (tCO₂e).

Two million tonnes are roughly equivalent to 540,000 cars driving for a year. As the primary gateway to the Island, 89% of greenhouse gas emissions occurred within Greater Victoria, followed by the South-Central Island at 7%, the Pacific Coast at 4%, and the North Island at 1%.

Emissions by Region Outside of Greater Victoria (tCO₂e)

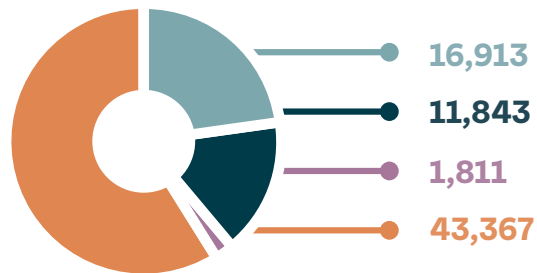
South Central Island



North Island



Pacific Coast



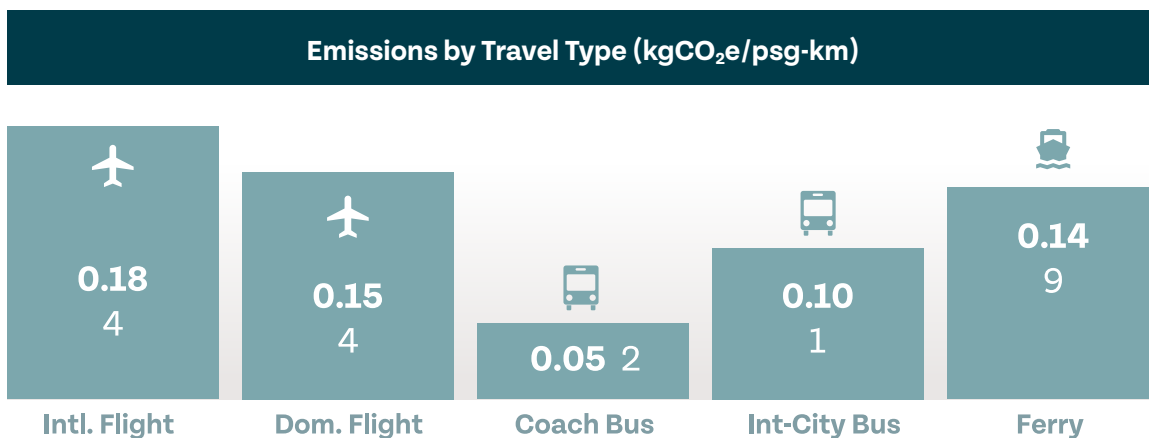
Total Emissions: **226,268**



Transportation to and from the Island, as well as inter-island travel, proved to be the most significant emissions source, accounting for 51% of all tourism emissions.

Within transportation, international flights were responsible for 69%, followed by domestic flights (14%). Personal and rental vehicle travel accounted for 8%, while ferries, the method used by the highest volume of tourists (8.2 million), accounted for 6% of all transportation emissions.

After transportation, the purchase of goods and services, including food and beverage and general retail, accounted for 36% of the Island’s total footprint. Accommodations produced 11% of all tourism emissions, followed by tour operators, who were responsible for 2% of emissions.

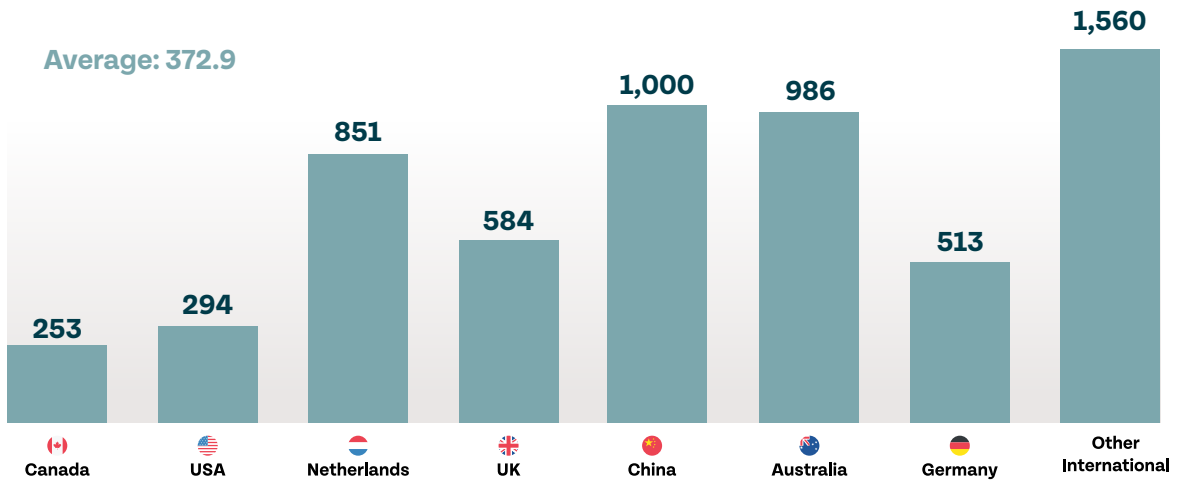


Travellers who departed Greater Victoria went to one or more of the South-Central Island, Pacific Coast, and the North Island. Transportation into these regions was limited mainly to road travel, reducing the impact of travel on the overall footprint of these regions. Goods and services proved to be the most emissions intensive in these regions, accounting for between 59 and 63% of the total. Tour activities in the South-Central region accounted for 5% of total emissions, compared to only 1-2% in the other regions.

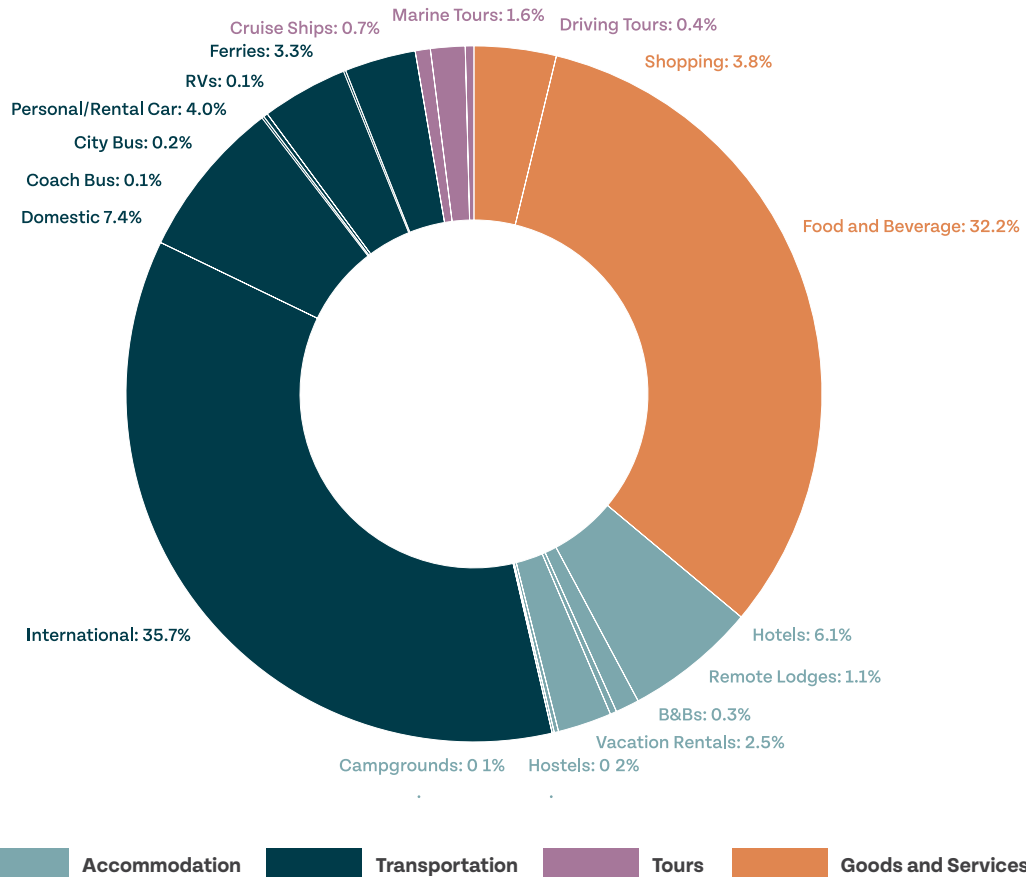
The more remote locations of the Pacific Coast and North Island resulted in higher transportation emissions than those for the South-Central Island (16-17%), with this impact leading the North Island to be the second most emissions intensive region after Greater Victoria at 133 kgCO₂e/traveller.

International travellers, particularly those from China and Australia, had a higher emissions impact, due to the distance travelled. Day trippers had a much lower impact as travel was generally local, they did not stay in accommodations, and they spent less on goods and services.

Emissions per Visitor by Country of Origin (tCO₂e)



Total Island Emissions by Activity



Climate Action Goals

This plan outlines 4VI's climate action goals from 2023-2030 in five key areas, which are in alignment with the Glasgow Declaration. Each pathway has at least two goals, and these goals were informed through stakeholder engagement and the results of the baseline greenhouse gas emissions inventory. The goals, while specific, allow for a range of opportunities for joint projects that meet the needs of the Vancouver Island region and its tourism stakeholders.

1	Measure	Create a baseline Greenhouse Gas Inventory for tourism on Vancouver Island	Support 150 businesses and 10 CDMOs to measure their carbon footprint
2	Decarbonize	Cut tourism emissions in half over the next decade and reach net zero as soon as possible	Reduce emissions from 193 kgCO ₂ e per visitor to < 100 kgCO ₂ e by 2030 or earlier
3	Regenerate	Reach \$10 million in funding toward conservation initiatives	Support or initiate on regenerative tourism project each year
4	Collaborate	Collaborate with CDMOs on measurement and capacity building for operators	Share best practice with global Glasgow Declaration signatories
5	Finance	Support \$2 million in funding applications by 2025	Support at least one joint funding application every year

Pathway 1: Measure

4VI recognizes the importance of measuring greenhouse gas emissions to better understand the climate impact of tourism, set goals and monitor changes. The key challenge in measuring greenhouse gas emissions is gathering robust data.

During interviews and roundtable sessions, hospitality and tour operators emphasized the importance of data to drive climate action and understand focus areas, and that acting without a baseline can take investments in the wrong direction. Creating a clear picture of emission sources will allow us to focus on the highest areas of opportunity.

While there has been significant progress to date, there is more work to be done, recognizing that no one organization can lead this alone. The actions outlined below emphasize working collaboratively to collect and manage the high-quality data required for emissions measurement. By implementing these actions, we will be able to calculate more accurate greenhouse gas emissions for the tourism industry.

Achievements

- Measured GHG impact of 4VI as an organization
- Measured the GHG impact of tourism on Vancouver Island

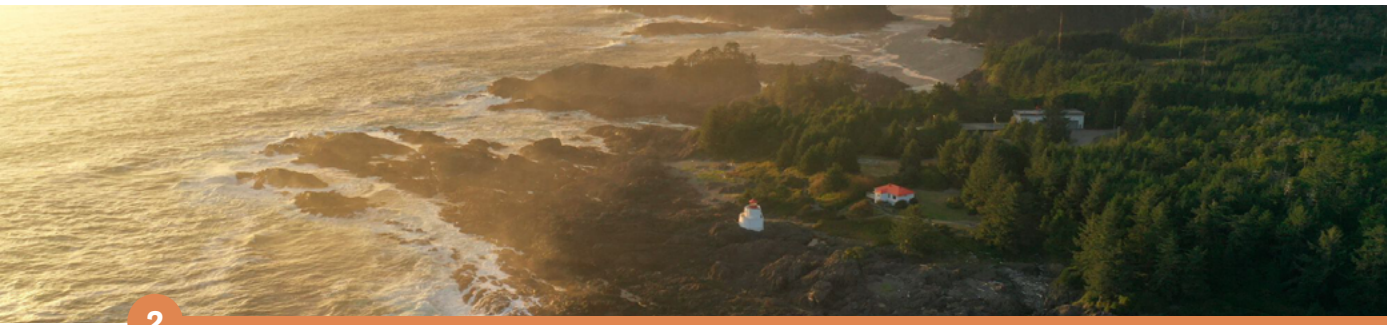
Goals

- Create a baseline Greenhouse Gas Inventory for tourism activities on Vancouver Island.
- Support 150 businesses and 10 Community DMOs to measure their carbon footprint.

Key Actions

Action	Details	UN Sustainable Development Goal(s)
Measure GHG impact of tourism on Vancouver Island	Measuring the carbon footprint of tourism activity on Vancouver Island. These activities include transportation, accommodation, tours, and goods and services.	13 – Climate Action
Collect quality data for one high impact area	Collect primary data or work with stakeholders to collect quality data for the total number of tourists visiting Vancouver Island.	13 – Climate Action
Improve data collection related to food & beverage and retail	Support improvements to data collection for food & beverage and retail partners as Goods & Services represented 36% of total carbon footprint.	13 – Climate Action
Help stakeholders measure their carbon footprint	Encourage tourism stakeholders to measure their carbon footprints. Provide administrative, financial, and other support where possible.	13 – Climate Action
Assess the climate resiliency of operators	Measure the availability of resources locally and identify tourism activities that are most vulnerable to climate change.	13 – Climate Action
Improve and streamline GHG emissions source data collection	Create a strategy to streamline and centralize data between regions on Vancouver Island. This strategy should prioritize collecting high-quality data for travel methods and distance by tourists across Vancouver Island.	13 – Climate Action
Improve regional data collection	Improve data availability and collection, specifically for the Central Island and North Island regions.	17 – Partnerships for the Goals





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Pathway 2: Decarbonize

Decarbonization is about continuous improvement and working together to implement solutions. Empowering operators is particularly important, as many are stretched and see time and capacity as the greatest obstacle.

Decarbonization can be accelerated by sharing best practices, creating partnerships, and collaboration. By removing geographic and sector-based silos, tourism stakeholders on Vancouver Island can collectively share opportunities and challenges, develop projects, and seek financial resources.

Another key challenge is community infrastructure. Solutions to decarbonize will often depend on the availability of alternative fuels, clean electricity, and other resources. This will require a system-level approach and seeking opportunities to collaborate across levels of government and sectors.

Achievements

- Created an organizational climate action plan for 4VI to reduce the carbon footprint of operations, events, and travel
- Signatory of the Glasgow Declaration, supporting the goal to halve global carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050

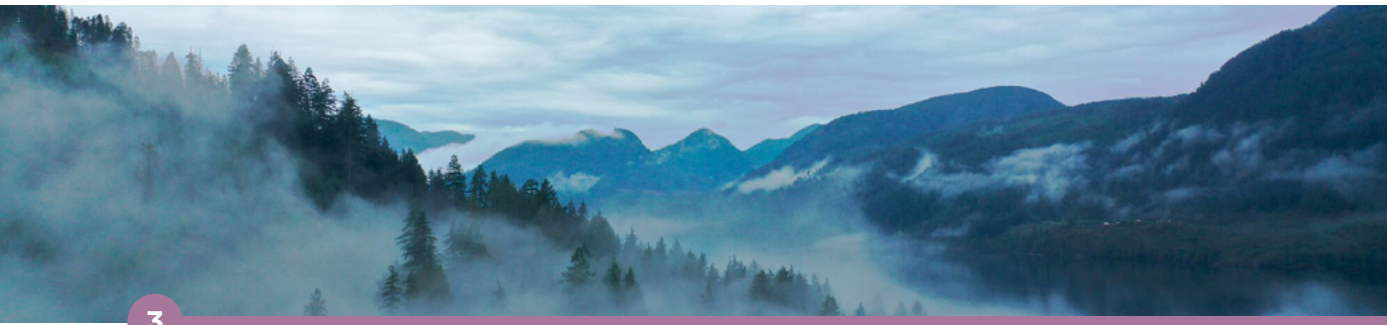
Goals

- Cut tourism emissions in half over the next decade and reach net zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050.
- Reduce emissions from 193 kgCO₂e per visitor (2019 baseline) to < 100 kgCO₂e by 2030 or earlier.
- Grow the Vancouver Island Biosphere community to 200 Biosphere Committed businesses.

Key Actions

Action	Details	UN Sustainable Development Goal(s)
Develop Island EV Station Map	Map EV stations across the island (make accessible to visitors) or highlight another website/tool that does this effectively.	11 – Sustainable Cities & Communities 13 – Climate Action
Create Responsible Purchasing Guidelines	Create guidelines to help tourism operators purchase more locally and from sustainable suppliers.	12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
Decarbonize Events	All events hosted by 4VI follow best practices for low-emission events and are certified carbon neutral.	13 – Climate Action
Support Marine Decarbonization	Support decarbonization of marine industry through education, joint industry projects, and showing support for initiatives underway, such as shore power.	13 – Climate Action
Visitor Impact Profile	Outline the climate impact of consumers based on source market (lower mainland BC, Alberta, Ontario, international).	13 – Climate Action
Create an online Climate Action portal for CDMOs and tourism operators	Connect businesses with proven technology, pilot projects, and working groups to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing of decarbonization opportunities, funding, and joint industry projects.	13 – Climate Action 17 – Partnerships for the Goals





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Pathway 3: Regenerate

Tourism as an industry has the potential to become regenerative if its upstream and downstream impacts help restore and protect ecosystems, cultures and local economies. Regenerative tourism can also shape the visitor experience through storytelling and connection to nature and culture. Vancouver Island already has examples of leadership in sustainable and regenerative tourism, which can be shared to enhance public awareness.

Vancouver Island's forests, wetlands, soil and seaweed are powerful carbon sinks, helping to mitigate climate change while providing vital habitat. As part of empowering stakeholders to adopt a more regenerative approach to tourism, 4VI has an opportunity to champion projects that promote conservation, restoration and regeneration of natural ecosystems. 4VI can also play a role in increasing awareness of the value of these natural assets. Many local nongovernmental organizations are already doing great work in these areas. 4VI can facilitate partnerships and awareness of these organizations such as Tribal Park Allies, 1% for the Planet, Fish for the Future, and many more.

Regenerative tourism and Indigenous tourism are inextricably linked. It is critical that we consider how Truth and Reconciliation can be enabled as we seek climate action as we have an opportunity to look at both decarbonization and decolonization in tandem. It is important, as a part of the decolonization process, that this approach be led by the Indigenous tourism community on Vancouver Island and supported by 4VI.

Achievements

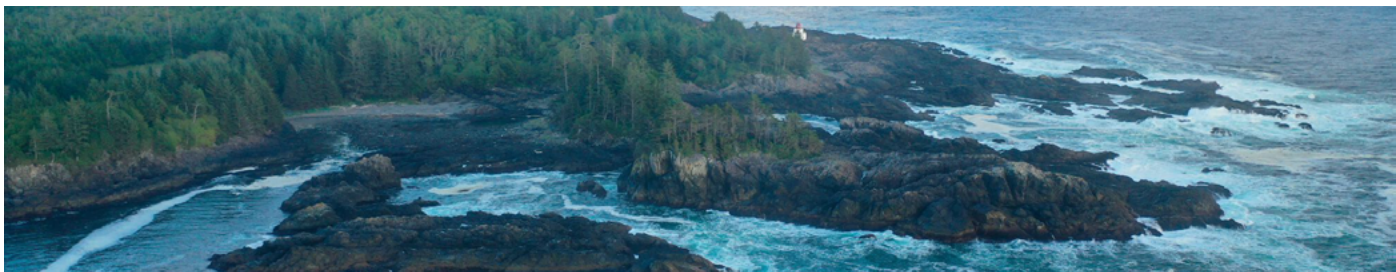
- Provided funding for the construction and upgrade of ocean plastic recycling depots in Ucluelet and Cumberland
- Supported mountain bike trail maintenance and enhancements across the region
- Supported the construction of board walks through ancient forest ecosystems to reduce visitor impacts

Goals

- As an industry, reach \$10M in funding towards conservation initiatives.
- Support or initiate one regenerative tourism project each year.
- Create a resource web portal for tourism operators and visitors related to regenerative tourism.

Key Actions

Action	Details	UN Sustainable Development Goal(s)
Educate stakeholders and visitors on carbon sequestration	Increase awareness of the ability for ecosystems to sequester carbon to influence practices to protect these natural assets.	13 - Climate Action 14 - Life Below Water 15 - Life on Land
Champion ocean conservation programs	Work with ocean conservation groups to divert waste by collecting and recycling ocean plastic debris.	14 - Life Below Water
Conserve water and energy supply	Educate tourism stakeholders and visitors on water and energy consumption best practices. This can help avoid cases of overconsuming from regions with insufficient resources.	14 - Life Below Water 15 - Life on Land
Champion a Climate Resiliency project	Champion an ecosystem-based adaptation project that increases the resilience of a destination from climate hazards. 4VI's role could include funding a project or bringing partners together.	15 - Life on Land
Promote Indigenous Tourism	Work with local Indigenous tourism operators and regional organizations to create joint projects and support Indigenous tourism objectives.	15 - Life on Land





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Pathway 4: Collaborate

Climate change requires an urgent response and we need all hands on deck. Implementing this climate action plan will require collaboration with multiple stakeholders across Vancouver Island and is not the sole responsibility of any one organization.

We view our role as an enabler, connector and advocate for tourism on Vancouver Island. 4VI does not own the assets that need to transition to low-carbon solutions, but we can inform, empower and support those that do.

As an enabler, we can provide support for businesses to develop their own decarbonization strategies and share best practices.

As a connector, we can create space for dialogue and foster collaboration. One of the most common requests from the stakeholder engagement sessions was for 4VI to continue organizing working groups to keep climate action top of mind and share solutions. We can also work to connect stakeholders to existing programs being run by other organizations.

As an advocate, 4VI can act as a voice for Vancouver Island operators to advocate for funding and policy change in areas where tourism is not always considered. Joint advocacy will allow the tourism community to have a greater impact and access more resources. This is especially important for small operators who have limited resources and capacity.

Achievements

- Directly supported 31 different grassroots tourism projects in collaboration with local partners
- BC Regional Tourism Secretariat and 4VI provided support to over 750 tourism businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic

Goals

- Collaborate with Community DMOs on measurement and capacity building for Vancouver Island operators.
- Share best practices with global Glasgow Declaration signatories.

Key Actions

Action	Details	UN Sustainable Development Goal(s)
Peer Learning Sessions	Facilitate peer learning sessions for stakeholders to share best practices and lessons learned. Bring in expert guest speakers to support decarbonization.	9 – Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation
Connect Tourism Businesses to Advance the Circular Economy	Collaborate with the tourism value chain to implement innovative business models and establish connections that improve circularity.	12 – Responsible Consumption & Production
Tools & Resources for Operators	Best practices, tools, resources, focused on the needs of small operators with fewer resources.	13 – Climate Action
CDMO Annual Survey	Annual survey to CDMOs to understand what knowledge or resource gaps are needed for advancing climate action. Use this to inform future programs.	17 – Partnerships for the Goals
Operator Mentorship Program	Create 1:1 mentorship program between operators who have implemented sustainability programs and those who are starting their sustainability journey.	17 – Partnerships for the Goals





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Pathway 5: Finance

4VI can play a role sharing funding information and coordinating stakeholders to apply for funding as a group. The transition to decarbonize Vancouver Island’s tourism economy will require significant investment in two key areas.

The first is capital investments in infrastructure, clean technologies, vehicles/vessels, equipment and building retrofits. The second is in capacity building, research and training for direct tourism employees and auxiliary services required to run a low-carbon tourism economy. As one stakeholder recalled “It took six weeks to fly someone out from California to work on one of our electric shuttles”. Various financial tools and strategies will be necessary to fund the transition.

Achievements

- Distributed \$2.3 million in funding through the Targeted Regional Tourism Development Initiative
- Provided up to \$3,000 in services to small and medium sized tourism operators for sustainability planning and implementation
- In 2022, 4VI applied for funding for a decarbonization feasibility study for marine operators in Campbell River area

Goals

- Support \$2M in funding applications by 2025.
- Support at least one joint funding application every year.

Key Actions

Action	Details	UN Sustainable Development Goal(s)
Joint Funding Applications	Stakeholders submit joint funding application as a collective, supported by 4VI. This may include studies, capacity building, decarbonization efforts, consumer marketing and other initiatives.	17 – Partnerships for the Goals
Develop a Climate Micro-Credit Program	Partner with a post-secondary institute to develop a climate-related micro-credit for tourism operators.	4 – Quality Education
Share Decarbonization Funding Opportunities	Ensure stakeholders are aware of opportunities for preferred financing rates, grants and other products to support decarbonization and regeneration. Amplify in quarterly newsletter.	9 – Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation
Advocate for Tourism	Advocate for the inclusion of tourism in government climate action funding programs.	9 – Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation



