



British Columbia  
Regional Tourism  
Secretariat



BIOSPHERE  
TOURISM

For Immediate Release  
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## **TOURISM VANCOUVER ISLAND SIGNS LETTER OF COMMITMENT TO PURSUE BIOSPHERE CERTIFICATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

**Nanaimo, B.C.** – Today, on World Earth Day, Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI) signed a letter of commitment to pursue the [Responsible Tourism Institute’s Biosphere certification](#); an international designation that aligns with 17 sustainable development goals of the United Nations.

TVI joins three other regional destination management organizations (Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association and Northern BC Tourism Association) – who together with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) operate under the umbrella of the BC Regional Tourism Secretariat – to officially declare their application. If successful, they will join TOTA which is among only 34 destination management organizations in the world, and the only one in Canada, to achieve this status.

Not to be confused with UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, this certification is based on established standards in areas that include climate change, environment, social, economy and culture – and guarantees compliance and continuous improvement through a private, voluntary and independent certification system – which is evaluated on an annual basis. The certification allows a region to demonstrate how they take sustainability seriously, but also ensures they are accountable to make necessary and ongoing improvements.

“Today marks the first step in a very important process,” said Anthony Everett, President & CEO, Tourism Vancouver Island. “It’s a journey that will see the establishment of strategic actions that support responsible growth of the tourism sector in our region while being inclusive of residents; our heritage, including Indigenous peoples and cultures; and encourage discussion on issues related to cultural diversity and sustainability.”

“The desire to achieve certification is two-fold,” continued Everett. “This will guarantee the role of tourism as a means to promote both sustainable tourism practices and development, while enhancing the visitor experience and creating awareness among visitors on sustainability issues.”

Everett and CEOs representing each of the participating tourism regions were joined at the announcement by Patricio Azcárate Díaz de Losada of the Responsible Tourism Institute; Dr. Dirk Glaesser, Director of the Sustainable Development Program of the World Tourism Organization; Dr. Paul Rogers, Co-founder and Director of Planet Happiness; Frank Antoine, Co-founder of Moccasin Trails (an Indigenous tourism business based in Kamloops) and a strong tourism ambassador who is passionate about issues of sustainability and Indigenous culture. The Honourable Melanie Mark, BC Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport also provided a letter of congratulations.

For information about the Biosphere certification, visit: [www.biospheretourism.com/en](http://www.biospheretourism.com/en).

For the BCRTS provincial news release, [click here](#).

For images of Tourism Vancouver Island signing the letter of commitment, [download here](#).

**About the Responsible Tourism Institute:**

*The Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI) has been leading the contribution of tourism to Sustainable Development for more than 20 years. The mission of the RTI is the promotion of the principles of the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism and all the guidelines and precepts on Sustainable Development promoted by United Nations.*

**About Tourism Vancouver Island:**

*As one of five not-for-profit destination management organizations within the province, Tourism Vancouver Island's mission is to support Vancouver Island's evolution into a globally preferred travel and getaway destination. Governed by a volunteer board of directors, the association represents tourism stakeholders throughout the region, including Victoria, Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and a stretch of mainland coast between Moses and Bute inlets. Tourism Vancouver Island gratefully acknowledges funding from the Province of B.C. through the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.*

**About the BC Regional Tourism Secretariat:**

*The BC Regional Tourism Secretariat (BCRTS) is a collaboration between five regional destination management organizations (Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association, Northern British Columbia Tourism Association, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, and Tourism Vancouver Island) representing more than 8,000 tourism businesses and organizations. The BCRTS is leading a ground-up approach so local voices and knowledge shape programs and compliment local and regional tourism strategies. This focus is also reflected in destination development to help tourism operators offer the most desirable and sustainable tourism experience for visitors.*

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