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UBC fisheries scientists land big prize

Nelson Bennett
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Daniel Pauly, left, and Rashid Sumaila will share the US\$250,000 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement. | Kim Bellavance



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Two University of British Columbia fisheries scientists are being recognized for their work on overfishing on the high seas with a US\$250,000 prize.

Daniel Pauly and Rashid Sumaila at UBC's Institute for Oceans and Fisheries have been awarded the [Tyler Prize](#) for Environmental Achievement in recognition of their work on overfishing in international waters.

Pauly is a world-renowned ecologist and head of the Sea Around Us research initiative at UBC. He has published seminal work on overfishing and is the world's most cited fisheries scientist, according to a 2020 *PLOS Biology* study.

Sumaila, an economist, is the Canada Research Chair in Interdisciplinary Ocean and Fisheries Economics at the Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries and the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at UBC.

Sumaila's research focuses on bioeconomics, marine ecosystem valuation, fisheries subsidies, marine protected areas, illegal fishing, climate change, marine plastic pollution, and oil spills.

Pauly and Sumaila are being jointly awarded the Tyler Prize for their efforts to ban fishing on the high seas.

Nations can manage fisheries within their 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone. But outside those zones, on the high seas, fishing is difficult to regulate and monitor.

Pauly and Sumaila are being credited for their influence in creating new international marine protected areas – the first step towards a total ban on high-seas fishing.

To date, international agreements have closed the Antarctica's Ross Sea to fishing, creating the world's largest marine protected area, and more than 190 countries have committed to the 30x30 agreement at the Convention of Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP15) to protect 30 percent of their land and waters by 2030.

"But we must move faster," Sumaila said. "Overfishing increases global emergencies such as climate change, biodiversity loss and food insecurity – particularly for already vulnerable communities, such as Indigenous peoples and populations in the Global South."

"Our modeling shows that closing the high seas would result in no loss in total global catch – just a more equitable distribution," Pauly said. "Most commercially fished species move back and forth between the high seas and coastal areas, where they can be caught in a country's exclusive economic zone."

Pauly and Sumaila have also organized a [petition](#) to the United Nations to press for "an unequivocal ban on fishing on the high seas as part of the Treaty of the High Seas."

"Our lives and livelihoods depend on the ocean, which covers more than 70 percent of Earth," said Julia Marton-Lefèvre, chairperson of the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement. "The Tyler Prize executive committee recognizes professors Pauly's and Sumaila's outstanding individual and complementary achievements towards the conservation of this global life-source."

“By pioneering analytical approaches and knowledge platforms to assess the global state of world fisheries, they have discovered viable solutions, offering policymakers a realistic pathway towards the sustainable management of ocean fisheries.”

nbennett@biv.com

twitter.com/bennett_biv

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