



PRESS RELEASE
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INREST, UQAC, and Université Laval combine their expertise to study the Saguenay Fjord ecosystem

The new Groupe de recherche sur l'écosystème du fjord du Saguenay will advance scientific knowledge and improve understanding of the factors that influence marine habitats, plants, and wildlife

Saguenay, 8 June 2022 – The Northern Institute for Research in Environment and Occupational Health and Safety (INREST) is very proud to announce the creation of the Groupe de recherche sur l'écosystème du fjord du Saguenay (GREFS). Bringing together the high-level expertise of teams of researchers and professionals from INREST, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC), and Université Laval, the new research group will advance scientific knowledge and improve understanding of the factors that influence the Saguenay Fjord ecosystem.

Coordinated by INREST, the GREFS's work is part of the Enviro-Actions pilot project, which was developed by INREST's Centre for Industrial Port Expertise (CEIP). This innovative pilot project, combined with two newly created laboratories—UQAC's Laboratoire de recherche sur l'écosystème du Fjord du Saguenay (Écofjord) and Université Laval's Laboratoire de recherche sur la biodiversité marine et aquatique (Biome)—will support the GREFS in conducting large-scale research projects. The data collected will provide marine managers with a management tool designed to protect ecosystems, better understand the factors that influence the fjord's plant and wildlife habitat and find out how these factors interact by linking and analysing them within a comprehensive, independent, and robust scientific framework. This cutting-edge research is made possible by an investment of \$5.6 million from local stakeholders and the Government of Quebec.

The in-depth study of the various factors that make up the Saguenay Fjord ecosystem will complement and enhance the existing body of research. It will also promote the continuous improvement of best practices as well as prevention and innovation within the port and shipping industry. For example, within a multidisciplinary framework the GREFS will study various factors that affect the biodiversity and food web of species in the Saguenay Fjord, which will significantly improve current knowledge.

Against this background of improving scientific knowledge, research by the GREFS will focus on three main areas:

- The Saguenay Enviro-Actions pilot project, whose purpose is to improve scientific knowledge of marine communities and provide port and industrial zones with the tools and instruments they need to manage their activities in a preventive and

proactive manner with regard to their impact on the environment, for instance by issuing Enviro-Alerts

- The study of biodiversity and trophic interactions, i.e., factors relating to the feeding and food web of marine species, combined with the study of species reproduction, recruitment, and migration
- The assessment and identification of environmental stressors and their impact on marine plants and wildlife

The GREFS and the Enviro-Actions project are supported and made possible by the Port of Saguenay, Rio Tinto, Promotion Saguenay, and the Government of Quebec through the Ministère des transports as part of the Advantage St. Lawrence strategy.

Visit <https://inrest.ca/en/environment/#enviro-actions> for more information on the Enviro-Actions project.

Quotes:

“According to UNESCO, scientific understanding of the aquatic environment's responses to anthropogenic pressures, combined with management measures, is fundamental to sustainable development. Ocean observations and research are also needed to predict the consequences of climate change, develop mitigation measures, and guide adaptation. The creation of the Saguenay Fjord Ecosystem Research Group (SFERG) positions the scientific and financial partners among the world's leaders in the preservation of aquatic environments and is a responsible and sustainable response to the Quebec government's Advantage Saint-Laurent vision, Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) St. Lawrence Program under the Canada-Quebec Agreement, and the recommendations of the United Nations.”

**- Julie Carrière Ph. D.
General Manager INREST/CEIP**

“Our research will focus on fish in the Saguenay Fjord and how they reproduce, feed, grow, and survive, with an emphasis on forage fish species such as smelt and capelin, which are a 'pantry' of sorts for marine mammals, birds, and piscivorous fish.”

**- Pascal Sirois Ph. D.
Laboratoire ÉcoFjord, UQAC**

“Despite its strategic and unique environmental, economic, and social position, we know very little about the biodiversity and habitats of the Saguenay Fjord and the effects of human activities on the health of this exceptional ecosystem. The first invertebrate surveys of the fjord were carried out by Mgr. Drainville in 1958 and again in the early 1970s and included 229 species living on the Saguenay seabed. Apart from a few projects in the 1990s, particularly after the flood of '96, the biodiversity of

invertebrates remains little known, although they account for 99% of marine wildlife biodiversity."

**Philippe Archambault Ph. D.
Laboratoire Biome, Université Laval**

"Advancing scientific knowledge and understanding the factors that influence the Saguenay Fjord ecosystem are key to responsibly and sustainably developing our environment and peacefully coexisting in it. The Port of Saguenay is proud to act, in close collaboration with credible and important partners, as a practical and forward-looking leader to promote the continuous improvement of our practices and the proactive management of our activities."

**- Carl Laberge
President & Chief Executive Officer
Port de Saguenay**

"After several years of discussions, we are very proud to have created the Saguenay Fjord Ecosystem Research Group, which brings together trusted partners whose work will help better document and understand our unique and precious environment. This knowledge will also make it possible for Rio Tinto to keep its shipping operations running in a way that is safe for the Saguenay ecosystem. We always strive to protect the environment in the communities where we operate and are pleased to invest \$2.67 million to support scientific research."

**-Catherine Munger, Ph. D.
General Manager, Environment and Sustainability
Rio Tinto Aluminum**

"The Saguenay Fjord is at the heart of our city's economic and tourism development. This waterway is etched in our DNA and represents an incomparable window onto the world. Promotion Saguenay is proud to contribute concretely, through its commitment to the Saguenay Fjord Ecosystem Research Group and in conjunction with leading partners and researchers, to the advancement of scientific knowledge and understanding of the habitats that make up our fjord. This knowledge is key to ensuring innovative, sustainable, and responsible growth in Saguenay and our region and to laying a solid foundation for the future. "

**- Priscilla Nemey
General Manager
Promotion Saguenay**

For information

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