



Fight for orca: *Two steps forward, one step back*

by Christianne Wilhelmson

Although the federal government listed the southern resident orcas as endangered in 2003, this “protection” has been a reality only on paper—meaning very little in terms of the whales’ day-to-day survival. This is why Georgia Strait Alliance has made it a priority, for more than seven years, to work to protect this species, including taking action in court.

And it’s always good news when that action bears fruit!

Just before Christmas, GSA—along with eight other leading environmental groups, ably represented by Ecojustice—received some excellent news: the Federal Court ruled that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) had failed to adequately protect the critical habitat of BC’s resident killer whales.

The ruling relates to two Protection Statements issued by DFO. The first, in 2008, supposedly sought to legally protect critical habitat—but used only voluntary guidelines and non-binding laws and policies. The second, in 2009, limited habitat protection to geophysical features. In response, we made a submission to the Court alleging that DFO had failed to legally protect important aspects of critical habitat for both the southern and northern resident killer whales—for example, factors such as the availability of salmon and the quality of the marine environment. We also claimed that voluntary guidelines and laws were not enough to protect the orcas.

The Court agreed, and in December 2010, rejected DFO’s Protection Statement as meaningful protection of critical habitat.

With such a powerful statement from the Court, we had hoped that finally, DFO would have been ready to roll up their sleeves and figure out the best way to take action to protect this beloved species. Regrettably, that is not the case.

Photo by Mike Grace



If any creature can symbolize the unique beauty and complex threats to the Strait of Georgia, it is the southern resident orca: spectacular yet threatened by pollution, noise and the decline of wild salmon, this endangered species now numbers fewer than 90 individuals. The fight to protect these animals from extinction is truly the fight for the health of our Strait.

In early January we were notified that the federal government has appealed a part of the ruling, related to the power of Ministerial discretion to make decisions on protection of at-risk species by using the *Fisheries Act*. If the government wins the case, the Minister of Fisheries would be allowed to claim that provisions in the *Fisheries Act* already legally protect the critical habitat of aquatic species such as the killer whale—making action under the *Species at Risk Act* unnecessary.

It’s unfortunate that our federal government would rather waste its time

and taxpayers’ money in court than take steps to truly protect at-risk species. But the good news is that many aspects of the December ruling still stand, so while the latest wrinkle in this lengthy case takes us a step backwards, we have still moved two steps forward. Thanks to your ongoing support, GSA will continue to work hard, along with our partners, for protection of the orca—knowing that the fight to protect these iconic animals from extinction truly represents the fight for the health of our whole Strait.

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Strait Thoughts: Hope and energy renewed

by Christianne Wilhelmson,
Executive Director



For most of us, the beginning of a New Year tends to bring a sense of hope and excitement: a chance for a fresh start perhaps, time to commit to something new, or even to simply turn the page on the year that was. Here at GSA, we are moving on from some wonderful celebrations of our first 20 years of successful work to protect the Strait, and turning our attention to the excitement of the year ahead.

It was truly a wonderful experience to have so many of our members and supporters take part in our 20th Anniversary Celebrations around the region (see pages 6 and 7). I experienced a real pleasure in meeting so many of you and hearing stories that covered the breadth of our organization's existence. It renewed my belief that the work GSA does is deeply important to our members, and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the future.

Our start to 2011 has been very stimulating. Some of our staff members are taking on new challenges and as a

result, we have hired several new people to join the GSA team (see *Comings and Goings*, p.11). Having emerged from a time of economic restraint, when our staff team had to become smaller, it's gratifying to be able to grow a bit again—and a sign of the hope and confidence that our members have in GSA.

Our Clean Marine BC Program (formerly "Green Boating") is now under the new leadership of Lisa Winbourne, as Mike Richards wraps up 10 years at the helm of that successful program and takes on the challenge of Director of Special Projects, a new position for GSA.

We also welcome David Fields, who is joining GSA's Salmon Aquaculture program team until early June. And by the time you receive this newsletter we will also be welcoming a new Fundraising Assistant, who will be providing me with much-needed support—enabling me to spend more time engaging with all of you and with the broader community on issues that affect the region.

We're very excited by these additions, and even more so as they are being made in concert with our new three-year Strategic Plan. With renewed commitment to some of our existing programs, creating transition plans for others, and the development of new initiatives, we have entered our third decade with an eye to winning important victories and change in the Strait. We look forward to sharing these details with you in the months to come.

In the spirit of 'something new', you may have noticed a new look to our newsletter. After many months of passionate discussion, we are excited to launch our new logo. It's a fresh look that continues to represent the long-time passion and strengths of GSA: our effectiveness at connecting land and sea, and the 'caretaker' responsibility we have for the Strait, just as a mother orca has for her new calf. We know you share this passion with us, and we look forward to celebrating many more achievements together in the next decade.

There has been a sharp increase in the past five years in number of **OIL TANKERS** travelling out of the Westridge Terminal in Burrard Inlet. Kinder Morgan has indicated an interest in more than doubling the capacity of its terminal—which would make the volume of oil out of Burrard Inlet 30% higher than the amount proposed by Enbridge in its controversial plan for BC's north coast. Unlike the north coast proposal, Kinder Morgan's plan here in our region does not require an environmental assessment, because it is an existing facility. With the increases we have already seen, many people are wondering *not if, but when*, a catastrophic spill will occur in the Strait of Georgia. The Islands Trust and its neighbouring US jurisdiction of San Juan County have put the risk of oil spills and maritime safety on their priority list for 2011. They've recently called on the US and Canadian governments to take action for prevention and response in the transboundary waters, including reviewing tug escorts for tankers, emergency towing and spill response. They have asked that the US and Canadian Coast Guards put a top priority on addressing these issues in 2011/2012.

After hearings last summer and meetings with community members on both coasts last fall, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended that Ottawa halt its plan to further de-staff **LIGHTHOUSES**, at least for now. The Committee heard overwhelming support for staffed lighthouses and concluded that any future decisions need to be

What's New in the Strait?

made on a case-by-case basis. In addition, they recommended a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis on the full range of services provided by lightkeepers. The report was wonderful news—but as history has shown, the attacks on our lightkeepers and the needs of coastal communities ebb and flow. Although we have a welcome reprieve for now, GSA will continue to keep a close eye on this issue, to ensure staffed lighthouses are here to stay.

Oil is not the only hazardous material being transported through the Strait of Georgia. In January a Liberian-registered cargo ship had an onboard spill of radioactive **URANIUM CONCENTRATE** ("yellowcake") when some of its containers shifted in heavy seas off the coast; it was forced to return to the Strait, where it anchored off Ladysmith for a few days before travelling to Vancouver for food and fuel. Fortunately the spill was contained within the ship and according to officials posed no threat to the crew, public or environment, and the Fraser River Keepers, who monitored the hull from their boat, found no presence of radioactivity. But the news came as a surprise to local residents and the media, and illustrates how little most of us know about what hazardous materials are being transported through our waters on a regular basis. In fact approximately 500 vessels a year leave Canada carrying uranium; this ship was carrying 350 tonnes of yellowcake from a Saskatoon-based corporation.

Isn't it about time?! NMCA for the southern Strait

by Christianne Wilhelmson

Since 2005, Parks Canada has been conducting a feasibility study to assess whether a **National Marine Conservation Area** (NMCA) is viable in the Southern Strait of Georgia.

In the subsequent years, scientific assessments were conducted and stakeholder input was gathered. The discussion about the NMCA proposal was rich and collaborative, and GSA was hopeful that the result would be positive.

However, over the past few years, engagement with First Nations has languished and the conversation has gone behind closed doors, as the federal and provincial governments seem to have lost the motivation to agree on the issue of seabed transfer. (Currently, the seabed of the Strait is under provincial jurisdiction, but for the *NMCA Act* to be applied, the rights would need to be ceded to the federal government.)

It was our hope that an agreement could be reached, but there has been little sign of movement for a long time now. For this reason, we have renewed GSA's commitment to take action to bring a NMCA to this region. Over the past year we have been working with our partners at CPAWS BC and the Islands Trust, and with a coalition of smaller groups, to make the NMCA a priority for both levels of government.

As we put the spotlight on the NMCA again, the issue has also received support from other quarters recently. Organizing for Change, a project of 10 of BC's leading environmental groups, has chosen the NMCA as one of its policy priorities for this year (<http://organizingforchange.org>), while the Union of BC Municipalities passed a resolution supporting the creation of a NMCA in the Southern Strait at its fall 2010 convention.

The NMCA and other marine planning efforts are vitally important to protect our orca and the many other species that call Georgia Strait home. While legal actions such as GSA's current court case (see *page 1*) are important, they are only one tool in the effort to ensure that orca and other at-risk species are protected and wildlife populations are given the chance to rebound.



Photo by Alan Wilson

Enjoying one of the beaches on Discovery Island near Victoria, part of the study area being considered for the NMCA.

Beyond legal action, we know that the real solution to protecting the orca is to protect its habitat, by making changes to how humans use these waters. While it's critical to focus on individual threats such as pollution, noise and the increasing threat of a crude oil spill, the issues affecting these animals are interrelated, so addressing them effectively can be complicated.

It's only when we take a regional approach to these threats that we can make the kind of changes that are necessary—which is where marine planning efforts such as the NMCA come in. Marine planning is a key mechanism to address survival of the orca, as it enables us to have the much-needed dialogue about how to live with nature, and to be ready to identify threats and find ways to mitigate them.

We must move beyond paper protection to making real changes in our waters, reducing the threats to orca and other species. A clear path to change is through regional marine planning, including the Southern Strait of Georgia NMCA.

Despite the cold water that the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has poured on our orca litigation (*page 1*), it's our hope that in the months to come, a real conversation about managing threats to the Strait will begin through government channels. (We're encouraged by some discussion occurring in DFO's Strait of Georgia Ecosystem Research Initiative.) GSA is working to get the process back on track for the completion of a NMCA in the Southern Strait of Georgia, an idea that has languished for far too long. We hope to have some good news for you in the coming months.

NMCAs are a form of protection under the *National Marine Conservation Areas Act* (2002). The *Act* is intended to protect marine biodiversity and habitat by establishing large zoned ocean areas, managed for multiple uses but protected with environmental objectives. They can include a range of protective measures, the most stringent being no-fishing and/or no-trespass zones, while in other areas the only prohibition might be extraction of non-renewable resources. Parks Canada has said it intends to create one NMCA in each of the 29 marine regions that make up Canada's three oceans.

Planned Giving: Donating RRSPs and RIFs

by Don Bulmer, MBA, CFP, CIM

In our continuing series on ways to support Georgia Strait Alliance through planned giving, we look at the benefits of donating Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP) and Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIF). These widely used tools for saving can also be a source of funds for charitable giving, particularly as part of your Estate plan.

Two Methods of Giving

You can make a gift of registered retirement funds (i.e. RRSP or RRIF) to GSA or other registered charities in one of two ways: indirectly, through a bequest in your Will; or directly, by designation gift. Both ways give you equal tax benefits, but each achieves different planning objectives.

1. BEQUEST BY WILL

Some people name their Estate as the beneficiary on their RRSP or RRIF plan documents (or do this effectively by failing to name a beneficiary on their RRSP or RRIF plan). Having your Estate as beneficiary ensures that all your assets are in a single account and that they get distributed according to the wishes outlined in your Will. The disadvantage of this method is it inflates the value of your Estate, which may increase executor and probate fees (depending upon your province of residence). Another disadvantage is that, typically, a bequest in your Will takes longer to be distributed to your chosen charity/ies than a direct designation would take.

Photo by Eva Manley



Planned giving can go a long way in supporting GSA's work in the future—helping to ensure that even your great-grandchildren will still find wonder at the seaside.

2. DIRECT DESIGNATION

A direct designation gift of a RRSP or RRIF plan is done by naming GSA and/or other charities as beneficiaries on the plan's documents. With this method, your assets bypass your Estate and are paid directly to the charities you have named. The assets do not form part of your Estate and, therefore, avoid the probate process and associated fees. In addition, a direct designation is useful in separating family beneficiaries from charitable beneficiaries, which can help preserve privacy. Note, however, that some financial institutions do not permit multiple beneficiary designations for RRSPs or RRIFs, and if this is true in your case, you may need to include provisions in your Will for dealing with RRSP/RRIF assets. In addition, some provinces do not allow direct beneficiary designations to charities, so depending

on where you live, you'll need to see if that's the case. (Direct designation is allowed in British Columbia).

Tax Treatment

The full value of the RRSP or RRIF is taxable on the deceased's final income tax return, which means they are typically the most heavily taxed asset in an Estate. Registered funds can be rolled over tax-free to a surviving spouse/partner, but tax deferral ends with the death of the second spouse.

A gift of RRSP/RRIF plan assets to GSA or another registered charity would generate a tax credit at least equal to the tax owing on the fund at the time of death. In addition, donations can be claimed against up to 100% of net income in the year of death. If the donation is too large to claim in the year of death, it is possible to carry it back to claim against up to 100% of net income in the previous year. If the charitable gift is large enough relative to the income, the 100% contribution limit can eliminate all tax in the final two years.

Endowment Fund

Gifts of RRSP or RRIF funds can be made directly to GSA, or to our Endowment Fund. Please contact us at 250-753-3459 if you are interested or wish to learn more.

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Also available online at www.GeorgiaStrait.org as a PDF with live links.

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The next issue of *Strait Talk* will be our Annual Report.

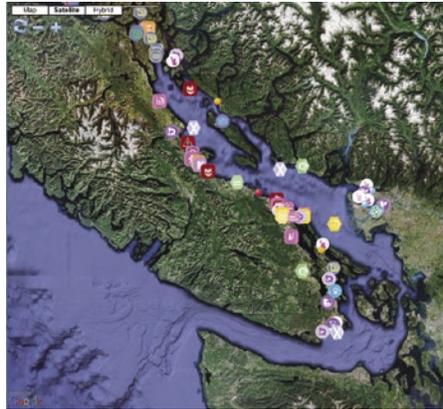
Community Map taking shape

by Rachele Ray & Rebecca Adams

Our Community Mapping program has been gaining steady momentum since it was launched just over a year ago. Last fall, after many months of research and outreach, and thanks to support from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development Job Creation Partnership, we began developing the online map, incorporating all of the information that had already been gathered, and connecting with individuals in the region's communities to hear more about what they feel is important about Georgia Strait. (For background on the program and its goals, see the Summer 2010 issue of *Strait Talk*.)

With the support and resources of the University of Victoria Mapping Initiative and the international community mapping organization, Green Maps, the **Georgia Strait Community Map website** is now up and running.

The map is a Google Maps-powered Geobrowser which uses customized layers to display information on satellite images. Each time information is added to the map, it is categorized into themes that reflect GSA's priorities, and these themes are represented by Green Map/Google icons. When you visit the site and click on a particular location you'll see a description and location of the site, photographs, videos and links to more information. The geobrowser allows you to tailor the map to view certain topics and topic combinations



Follow the links from GSA's home page to watch the progress of the map or contribute to its development.

by selecting layers on the accompanying map legend.

We have designed the Georgia Strait Community Map to represent life around the Strait, with a focus on the issues that GSA addresses and our members care about.

You can use the Map to find all kinds of information including, for example:

- **environmental and stewardship organizations in your area and what projects they have underway,**
- **relevant government agencies and their initiatives,**
- **significant environmental landmarks such as estuaries and other important habitat areas,**
- **lighthouses, sewage outfalls, fish farms, marinas and pump-out stations,**
- **opinions and ideas from others in your community,**
- **profiles of people involved in helping to protect the region's environment, and**
- **links to scientific and citizen research, environmental education resources, and green businesses in the region.**

In the spirit of social networking, we envision people using the website to connect with other individuals and organizations concerned with protecting our coastal waters. We hope you'll spend some time on our Map, learn more about the Strait, share your ideas, and connect

with others—building new relationships and sharing our collective resources as we work to address the issues that are impacting our home, Georgia Strait.

In January we held our first **Community Mapping Workshop**, at Nanaimo District Secondary School, bringing a community together to map their ideas and concerns. Local conservation groups, Fisheries and Oceans personnel, GSA members and other interested citizens attended the event. We hope to host similar workshops in other communities in the Strait.

Since then we have attended other events, including the 2011 World Community Film Festival in Courtenay, and in March we'll be at the Green Solutions Trade Show in Nanaimo. We will be promoting the Map and collecting people's ideas and concerns about the Strait. If you see us, please come by and tell us your story, show us the location of your favorite places, share your concerns, or give your thumbs-up to an organization or community member for their contribution to the protection of the Strait. Have a voice in the future of your community, inspire people with your ideas, and see what others are saying.

The next phase in the project will be to use the information contained on our multi-layered Map to create a set of **Georgia Strait Protection Principles**. These will be used to educate municipal planners and decision-makers about local marine priorities as well as shoreline, watercourse and other environmental protection measures needed around the Strait.

Please visit www.GeorgiaStrait.org/GScommunitymapping to check out the Georgia Strait Community Map and watch its progress as it grows. You can fill out our online form to add information to the map, create your own profile on the map, or add information about your organization.

Our thanks to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, the Vancouver Foundation, and to all those that have contributed to the map so far.



Rachele demonstrating the map at the Nanaimo workshop.



Entertainment by the Bald Eagles.

20 years!

1990 - 2010

You only turn 20 once, so we decided to celebrate—again, and again, and again! In 2010 GSA staff, board and volunteers joined members and supporters in Nanaimo, Courtenay, Vancouver and Victoria to raise a glass and share stories about 20 years of the Georgia Strait Alliance. From a community dance to cocktail parties, with silent and live auctions, we had a wonderful time in each of these communities, and we thank everyone for coming out to support us.

Photos on these pages by Laurie MacBride, Hilary Mandel and Alan Wilson.



Delicious catering by the UVIC Faculty Club and Daniel's Patisserie.



Member of Parliament Denise Savoie and Saanich Councillor Judy Brownoff.



Mike Richards and Lisa Matthaus.



Donna Berthiaume and Michelle Young.



GSA Directors Stan Boychuk and Brent England with Christianne Wilhelmson.

Brent England, GSA President.



Maggie Gilbert and Celine Trojand.



Christianne with MLA Murray Coell, BC's Minister of the Environment.



Liz Wouters and Judith Cullington.



20th Anniversary Event Sponsors

91.7 The Coast CKAY FM, Arrowsmith Mountain Cycle–Nanaimo, Bandidas Taqueria, Robert Bateman, Big Island Inflata-Boats, Arthur Black, Darren Blaney, Linda Booler, Bob & Kristy Bridgeman, Canine Conduct, Cannor Nursery & Garden Centre, Ron Carter, Richard Chamberlain, Coast Mountain Expeditions, Coastal Revelations Nature Tours, Comox Valley Kayaks, Rosemary James Cross, Daniel's Patisserie, Diners Rendezvous, Dirty Apron Cooking School, Dolphin Insurance Services Inc, Endura Manufacturing Co Ltd, Fairwinds Golf & Country Club, Gerald Fleming, Floating Stone Silks, Michael Grace, Grand Pacific Athletic Club, Peter Grant, Green Zebra, W. Allan Hancock Wildlife Artist, Harbour Air, The Harbour Chandler Ltd., Hollyhock Retreat Centre, Hutcheson & Co, Innisfree Farm, Island Parent Magazine, Krog & Co. Barristers & Solicitors, Lara Lauzon, Lunapads, Laurie MacBride, the late Helen Martin, Maynards, Roberta Meilleur, Midnight Sun Adventures Travel, Mountain Equipment Coop, A J Murch, Mustang Survival Corp, Nanaimo Port Authority, Naturalpod, Natures Path, New Society Publishers, Ocean River Sports Adventure Centre, Options Picture Framing, Pacific Yachting Magazine, The Port Theatre, Mae Moore & Lester Quitzau, Renfrew RitZ, Amy Robertson, Salal Books, Sealegs Kayaking Adventures, Seeds Natural Foods Market, Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, Graham Shuley, Suzanne Siemens, Simon Holt, Ski Tak Hut, Suzanne & James Smith, Joel Solomon, Sooke Harbour House, Sound Advice Music Shop, Surgenor Brewing Company, Thrifty Foods–Port Place, Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival, Vancouver Island MusicFest, Wavelength/Wild Coast Publishing, West Marine–Nanaimo, Michael Whatley, Yellow Bird Art Gallery, Yew Restaurant.

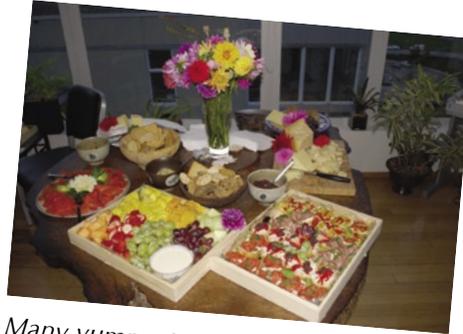
A big thanks also to all those individuals who made a donation at these events, who are included in the list on page 12.



Even the cake seemed to leap with joy!



Ruth and Rob Simons with Christianne.



Many yummy treats were on hand.



GSA Advisory Council member Suzanne Siemens and Director Shaena Lambert.



Madeleine Shaw, Vancouver City Councillor Geoff Meggs, Suzanne Siemens.



Robin Puga, Melinda Skeels, Stan Boychuk and Ruby Berry.



GSA Directors Matt Kirchner and Melinda Skeels.



Mike Magee and Amy Robertson.



Candace Batycki and Valerie Langer.



Jay Scott of Maynards Auctioneers.

Reflections from the cockpit: A 10-year evolution of Clean Marine BC

by Mike Richards

As I move into an exciting new position at Georgia Strait Alliance (see page 11), I've been asked to reflect on my work over the past decade.

In May 2000 my career took a change of direction when I accepted a part-time job with GSA, to launch a new program called Green Boating. No longer would I be commuting from Gabriola Island to Saanich, where I had been working as an Environmental Planner/Educator. Things were now going to be less predictable—and certainly more exciting. I was taking a significant pay cut, but the sting of that was offset by being able to spend more time with my young family and do something to really help our oceans. Having been around boating for most of my life, I relished the change and challenges of my new job.



GSA's Green Boating program had been the inspiration of founding Executive Director Laurie MacBride, who worked with Rupert Gale to lay its foundations. Before I arrived, Rupert had developed the first edition of the ever-popular *Guide to Green Boating*, which, right from the start, served me well in my many presentations to boaters and the marine industry.

I was initially encouraged by the responses I received. But I quickly came to realize that what appeared to be commitment to environmentally sustainable boating was in many cases only a lofty set of ideals. In truth, best practices were being embraced by only a small portion of the boating community at that time and the challenge to get people to “walk the talk” was much bigger than I had realized.



I remember well a couple of incidents that showed what we were up against. An organizer of one of the major boat shows gave approval for us to bring GSA's Green Boating display, and our family spent a whole day sailing in bad weather to get there for opening day—only to be turned away, being told we were not welcome because “boaters don't need to know” that they may not be using best practices. Another time, during my presentation to a yacht club a cantankerous member dared me to do an oil change on his boat without spilling any into the bilge. (I accepted the challenge but he did not take me up on it.)

Nevertheless, encouragement from our small but solid group of supporters pushed us to keep at it, and we were able to build sound partnerships with some local and regional government agencies. I spent a lot of time on the water, all around the Strait, and rowed around anchorages talking to boaters. By the end of the first two years we had visited almost every marina and major anchorage in the region, distributed over 15,000 copies of the *Guide to Green Boating*, posted large Green Boating signs at dozens of marinas, won a national Canadian Safe Boating Award, held displays at most major boat shows



and made presentations to several major boating organizations.

More partnerships developed and the Green Boating program was now a core part of GSA's work. I served as chairperson of the federal government's inter-agency Green Boating Work Group, and sat on Transport Canada's Vessel Sewage Working Group, advising the federal government as it developed new vessel sewage regulations. We also received a significant donation from a GSA member which, along with the generosity of local businesses, enabled us to buy and launch the GSA inflatable, Cynthia.

Late in 2003 I took a leave of absence to go cruising with my family. Sarah Verstegen coordinated the program while I was gone, developing the pilot for our Bilge Pad project and continuing our boater outreach. GSA joined the cross-border Pacific Oil Spill Prevention Education Team (which we are still very much a part of), and this later led to



our involvement with the Clean Pacific conferences and the US/Canadian Transboundary Spill Planning and Response Project.

After 20 months away, I returned in 2005 to lead the Green Boating program again. Sarah had kept the momentum humming, and we went straight into a full-blown version of

the Bilge Pad project for the Capital Regional District's marinas. Creating Bilge Pads kits is a time-consuming (and voluminous) exercise, requiring a great many wonderful volunteers and a wide variety of borrowed storage spots. Over the years our kit assembly parties have been lots of fun despite the hard work.

For a couple of years after my return I spent much time on the road/water, distributing the kits and recruiting marinas and yacht clubs to help. I also assisted Environment Canada



with a series of Boatyard Best Practices seminars, and

agency staff asked GSA to develop an ongoing program for marinas, suggesting that government funds could be made available. We began developing our marina recognition program and were soon very committed to the project, despite the government funding we had counted on never materializing.

Funding our programs is a major and ongoing challenge, and Green Boating has been no exception. We were excited in 2007, when we were shortlisted for the \$1 million Vancity Award for our Ocean Solutions project (developed jointly with T. Buck Suzuki Environmental



Foundation). Ocean Solutions aims to put innovative mobile sewage pump-outs in key locations—badly needed, since normal systems cannot be used on most of BC's remote coast, yet at the same time, pump-outs would help boaters to comply with the intent of the new federal regulations coming into effect in 2012. We met with many government representatives who said they loved the concept and asked us to develop it further. In the end, though, we did not win either government funding or the Vancity Award, so Ocean Solutions remains on hold—a great idea, awaiting financial support before it can proceed.



Meanwhile our other projects continued to gain momentum. In 2008 we hired Pam Murray to manage the Bilge Pad project for awhile so that I could concentrate on developing the marina recognition program.

Even before we had officially launched the new marina program, we received two more national awards. We inaugurated the program (called Clean Marine BC) in June 2008 with our new Marina Best Practices Handbook and our first eco-certification, Westport Marina in Sidney.

Since then, despite the economic challenges that have affected GSA and marinas alike, CMBC has expanded to six eco-certified marinas—with the Harbour Authority of Pender Harbour being the latest to pass its audit. Eleven more have officially signed on and we look forward to more joining the CMBC wave.

Over the past decade we have distributed more than 65,000 copies of the *Guide to Green Boating* and 36,000 bilge pads. We have worked closely with the marine industry, boating organizations and government agencies, developing wonderful partnerships and support. What started as educational outreach has grown to include much more: the



original Green Boating outreach, the marina eco-certification program, the Bilge Pad project (temporarily inactive, to begin again when funding becomes available), and the Ocean Solutions concept—all of them now under the umbrella of Clean Marine BC.

The evolution of Clean Marine BC shows that patience, a positive attitude, respect for others' ideas and a professional approach can work together to bring progressive environmental change. Nowadays we are welcomed at boat shows, and I'm pleased to see that more and more, environmentally responsible boating and Marina Best Practices are becoming the norm. I'm very proud of our successes and the progress we have made over the past decade—and I'm excited to be handing over the helm to Lisa Winbourne (see p. 11), to take Clean Marine BC into its next decade.



Risky migration begins for sockeye

by Michelle Young

Although last fall's sockeye returns to the Fraser River were abundant, most British Columbians will remember that 2009 was just the opposite. That fall, the runs completely collapsed: only about 10% of the anticipated number of sockeye returned to spawn a new generation.

This spring, the offspring of those much-reduced 2009 survivors are beginning their journey to the sea. It's an important and challenging time for these little salmon fry, as they must first make the difficult transition from fresh to salt water, then feed and grow in the near-shore waters of Georgia and Johnstone Straits, before they can start their next big journey later this summer, out to the open ocean.

The risks over the next few months are monumental for the young salmon, as they must pass through a gauntlet of fish farms in the area known as the Wild Salmon Narrows (a region of constricted channels lying between Georgia and Johnstone Straits, east of Campbell River). Interestingly, at the same time as they are travelling among the salmon farms, Judge Cohen will be continuing with the judicial inquiry into the reasons for the 2009 collapse, with his recommendations expected in June 2012.

Whether or not the Cohen Inquiry is able to determine the role that salmon aquaculture may have played in the demise of the 2009 Fraser River sockeye, it's clear that fish farms pose a very real risk to all species of wild salmon. Dozens of studies have concluded that salmon farming puts wild pink, chum, and coho salmon at significant risk from sea lice and farm-bred disease, and no research has shown sockeye to be immune to these impacts. That's why GSA has been pressing for one route through the Wild Salmon Narrows to be cleared

In the long journey that young salmon must make to the sea—and eventually, back to the rivers and lakes of their birth—many will be lost along the way from a multitude of causes, including supplying sustenance for countless other species. This is not a tragedy, but a natural sign of the abundance salmon provide in the delicate web of life. It is tragic, however, when the lives of juvenile salmon are cut short due to unnatural, avoidable causes. Reducing the obstacles we place in this keystone species' path is critical if we are to sustain the incredible gift of wild salmon.

For many years GSA has made it clear to all levels of government that the risks posed by open net cage salmon farms are unacceptable—but that these can easily be remedied. By removing open net cages from the ocean and instead, growing the farmed fish in closed containment, wild salmon can be protected from the impacts of fish farms. But to get there, the industry must move beyond denial of the risks that open net cages pose, and acknowledge the need for less damaging technologies. Until then, emergency measures will be needed to reduce the risks to wild salmon—which is why we are calling for clearing the active salmon farms out of the Wild Salmon Narrows.

—MY



GSA file photo

Michelle by the salmon farm at Conville Bay, which has recently been re-activated after a lengthy dormancy.

of farmed fish, as an emergency measure to protect the wild salmon that must migrate past the fish farms on their journey to the open ocean.

Over 50 organizations and thousands of people have now joined GSA in asking for the Wild Salmon Narrows region to be cleared of its active fish farms—specifically, the farms along Okisollo and Hoskyn Channels, which are the first ones that must be passed by juvenile Fraser River sockeye and countless other runs of salmon migrating north from the Strait of Georgia.

Sadly, despite overwhelming public support for this route to be cleared and despite the ongoing Cohen Inquiry, the fish farm industry has recently added insult to injury by re-stocking a formerly inactive farm along the route, at Conville Bay. This brings to six the number of salmon farms that we are urging be cleared out.

If you agree that it is high time that the aquaculture industry stop using our oceans as a dumpsite for salmon farm waste and disease, and you're ready to roll up your sleeves to help wild salmon to survive, visit www.GeorgiaStrait.org/springcleaning and join the Wild Salmon Narrows Spring Cleaning Crew—to help sweep the Wild Salmon Narrows clean of messy fish farms.

You can visit www.GeorgiaStrait.org/WSNdeclaration to see which organizations have endorsed the Wild Salmon Narrows Declaration, calling for the route along Okisollo and Hoskyn Channels to be cleared of fish farms.

For up-to-date news and information
www.GeorgiaStrait.org

Milestone in transition of industry

by Ruby Berry

Good news: closed containment salmon farming in British Columbia has just taken a huge step forward! In January the first commercial-scale, marine-based salmon farming tank was installed by AgriMarine Inc. and it is now stocked with 56,000 Chinook smolts.

This is the first of four solid-wall floating tanks being installed by AgriMarine at the facility, located in Middle Bay, just north of Campbell River. The system is licensed to produce 1,200 metric tonnes of Chinook and coho salmon.

Closed containment systems can eliminate or greatly reduce many of the environmental problems that plague net cage fish farms, including pollution of the marine environment, escapes, disease and parasite transfer to wild salmon, and the need for antibiotics and chemical treatments in farming fish.

GSA and the other members of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform have supported AgriMarine's efforts to realize this project since its inception. We hope that it will demonstrate the viability of closed containment technology and ease the way for industry-wide transition to closed systems for farming salmon.

The project received federal funding from Sustainable Development Technology Canada, enabling the company to develop this innovative system. However, much more federal investment will be needed in the overall development of closed containment technology, to ensure that Canada is



Photo by Rob Walker

Ruby beside AgriMarine's first floating closed containment tank, during construction. It's now installed and stocked with 56,000 Chinook smolts.

positioned competitively within this emerging sector—one that could create new long-term employment opportunities while helping to ensure the protection of wild salmon and other marine resources.

Comings and goings



Photo by Roy Tanami

A big welcome aboard to **Lisa Winbourne**, who has taken over the helm of our Clean Marine BC program (formerly "Green Boating") from Mike Richards. Lisa has lived and worked on the water for the past 20 years, and has been fortunate to explore much of BC's coast, from Haida Gwaii to the South Coast. She has a long history in the BC fishing and recreational boating world with a recent emphasis in the saltwater guiding community. Her excellent contacts and experience in recreational

boating will help her navigate the waters of Clean Marine BC. She currently lives in Vancouver but is planning a move to Nanaimo in the near future. You can contact Lisa at cmbc@georgiastrait.org.

Mike Richards is taking on a different set of challenges as he moves to a new position that has just been created, as GSA's Director of Special Projects. Over the coming months Mike will be researching a number of key and emerging issues in the Strait and developing action plans for GSA to address these. You can continue to reach him at mike@georgiastrait.org.

We welcome **Rebecca Adams** as a new Community Mapping Project Team member. Rebecca worked for GSA from 1999 to 2001 and played an important role in developing our popular ToxicSmart program as well as carrying out a survey on pesticide use on southern Vancouver Island. It's great to have her back! You can contact her at rebecca@georgiastrait.org.



We're also welcoming **David Fields**, who is joining our Salmon Aquaculture campaign team for the next four months. David brings to GSA a broad skill set and varied campaign experience here and abroad, including work on climate change and clean energy in Canada and New Zealand, toxins in the Great Lakes, the offshore oil issue in BC, and locally, improved transit in the Lower Mainland. He is also a proud new father who enjoys time with his daughter, Maia. David is based in Vancouver and you can reach him at david@georgiastrait.org.

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