



Georgia Strait Alliance

SPRING 2017

STRAIT TALK

Caring for Our Coastal Waters

www.GeorgiaStrait.org



Oceans Matter

For Georgia Strait Alliance, the success of our mission is rooted in connecting with coastal communities around the region, so we can increase awareness about the pressures facing our waters, and engage with people so they become involved in some of the solutions to these threats.

As an organization, we accomplish this in a variety of ways. We've been reaching out to individuals and communities to discuss issues like the proposed boundaries of the National Marine Conservation Area for the Southern Strait of Georgia, and derelict vessels. In June we'll be celebrating World Oceans Day with the eighth consecutive Vancouver Festival of Ocean Films, and in the fall, we'll be hosting a community celebration to connect families with the waterfront at Water's Edge Day.

Keep up to date on events in 2017

www.GeorgiaStrait.org/events or
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STRAIT THOUGHTS

A new world of alternative facts

by *Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director*



Since early this year, I've noticed a New Yorker editorial [cartoon](#), by David Sipress, has been appearing regularly on my Facebook feed, as well as in other media feeds. In the cartoon, two people are walking down the street, and one person is saying to the other; "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane."

I can relate, and I'm sure many of you can too.

We are in the midst of the rise of the 'post fact' world where experts are decried as biased and elites to be ignored. Having no knowledge about an issue makes someone a great candidate to speak on the topic, and believing something to be true suffices to make it fact—and this is not something limited to south of the border. In BC and

throughout Canada, the notion that belief is fact and the reliance on alternative facts are increasingly becoming part of the narrative, and they're accompanied by fear and hate.

There are new challenges in trying to create change in our world, and this shift in understanding of what's real has me wondering: how can consensus be built for the kind of world we want to live in when facts are optional?

In talking with colleagues and friends, and with many more individuals who are also grappling with this new reality, I'm seeing that there's a growing sense that if you can get beyond the emotion and the rhetoric—regardless of where you sit on the ideological spectrum, and regardless whether facts may be

anathema—there are commonalities among us. We want to keep our families safe. We want to have economic security. We want our friends and families to be healthy. We want our communities to be safe.

While sources of information with differing levels of deceit, impartiality and authority continue to emerge, Georgia Strait Alliance remains unchanged in its mission to promote the sustainability of these waters that support coastal communities in BC. Our organizational efforts will continue to be grounded in science (and facts!), always keeping present that conversations are best started from a place of shared values. That is how we are going to get to where you and I both want to be: living on the shores of a healthy Strait of Georgia.





photo: Rachael Merrett

URGENT ACTION *or extinction*

Immediate measures needed for orcas

The federal government finally released its [Action Plan](#) for southern and northern resident killer whales—14 years after orcas entered the list of endangered species, and four years after the planning began.

The biggest hole in the Action Plan is its lack of urgency. It mostly calls for more assessment, monitoring and research. But the orcas can't wait any longer. It's time to take action with specific items that have clear timelines and funding.

This Action Plan is too weak to create real change. Georgia Strait Alliance needs your help to pressure the government for urgent action to reduce the threats of pollution, declining chinook populations, and noise. In the coming months we'll be sharing more details of what specific action needs to happen today to save these whales. Together, we can bring about the change that's needed to support orcas' critical habitat off our shores.

Extinction is a true possibility for the 78 southern residents in the Salish Sea

What's new in the plan?

- An action to convene an inter-agency Working Group to look at the roles and responsibilities of potential impacts of contaminants on orcas—as many of you requested in your letter to the government!
- An improvement in the prey availability section that includes the possibility of strategic closure of fisheries.
- New and additional actions to reduce noise, including using marine planning tools and prioritizing on-the-water enforcement.

What is missing?

- No actions to transition salmon farms to closed containment facilities.
- No indication of when marine mammal regulations will be released.
- No specifications that support limiting (or not approving) new projects that increase noise.
- No clear actions to reduce the use of chemicals that harm orcas.
- No clear timelines or funding allocations to support actions.
- No accountability as many actions lack a lead agency to guide effective execution.



Any type of spill—even overfilling fuel tanks by a few drops—are harmful to marine life

DOWN AT THE DOCK

Clean Marine BC expands to prepare marinas for oil spills



Georgia Strait Alliance is now bringing spill training to marinas through its eco-certification program [Clean Marine BC](#)—and 18 marinas around the Strait of Georgia have already participated!

Marinas are unique environments; they're often contained and sheltered, and they can be well positioned to coordinate responses to spills—when they have the proper supplies and skills. They're often the first line of defense for boaters when faced with a spill, and the ability of marinas to promptly mobilize responses can play an important role in maintaining healthy and resilient cruising waters. Marinas and boatyards also help boaters to understand the roles and responsibilities of individuals and agencies that are involved in spill response measures, so it's important their staff has knowledge and training that is up-to-date and readily deployable.

By facilitating theoretical and practical training that focuses on how to plan, prepare and respond to small-scale marine oil spills, Georgia Strait Alliance is helping boating facilities to have better spill response skills and awareness, and to support the education of boaters at their facilities and throughout their communities.

Boaters from BC to California are encouraged to report all fuel spills to 1-800-OILS-911

Mock spill training with moored vessels

Eighteen marinas around the Strait of Georgia have participated in full-day training sessions in the Vancouver and Victoria harbours, with classroom and practical components that are designed to support marinas in four key areas:

- 1. Planning** to address probable spill scenarios, oil types, roles and responsibilities, and correct notification procedures.
- 2. Preparedness** to make provisions for response resources and techniques, sorbents and spill kits, and training.
- 3. Response** to assess spills; safety and control measures at the site; initial response (including source control, containment and recovery options, and storage and disposal); and decontamination, demobilization and the restocking of supplies.
- 4. Post spill analysis** to look at lessons learned, as well as at monitoring and cost recovery alternatives.



To have your boating facility take part in future spill training sessions, contact Michelle Young | cmcb@georgiastrait.org





photo: Michael Wheatley

HOW TO STOP Kinder Morgan

Federal and provincial permits are not the end of the road. We learned that from Enbridge Northern Gateway. That project was proposed over a decade ago, it was given permits two years ago—and now it is dead. The frontline of our battle to defend our coast from Kinder Morgan may have shifted, but there are still many paths to victory. Kinder Morgan can and will be stopped, and here's why:



LEGAL

Crushed by the courts

Nine lawsuits have been filed by First Nations, municipalities and environmental groups against the federal permit. These challenge the government's failure to consult and accommodate constitutionally protected Indigenous rights, uphold the Species at Risk Act, and provide due process in the broken review by the National Energy Board (NEB). These are in addition to seven legal challenges that were already filed against the NEB's recommendation for approval. On the provincial level, the City of Vancouver and democracy groups are appealing the Province's approval, citing BC's failure to do its own environmental assessment, and conflict of interest relating to political donations.

This avalanche of lawsuits—18 in total—is very likely to cause costly delays for Kinder Morgan with legal wrangling and further consultation, and could ultimately kill the project outright.



photo: Carla Hunt



FINANCIAL

A house of cards

Kinder Morgan's finances have been called a 'house of cards' by Wall Street analysts. The company is so deeply in debt that it cannot afford to borrow the money to pay for the Trans Mountain project without having its stock downgraded to 'junk' status. With ever-rising project costs, and an oil market that has changed significantly—and some say permanently—since Kinder Morgan first proposed the Trans Mountain project, the company has also announced it is seeking a joint venture partner and pursuing an IPO (initial public offering) in an effort to offload some of the costs and risks of its BC pipeline.

In short, Kinder Morgan is more vulnerable to certain risks than other companies, and if delays and costs increase past a certain point, the company could decide to walk away from the Trans Mountain project.



PEOPLE

Power on the streets, water, and land

Kinder Morgan has been called BC's Standing Rock. This is about more than protecting our home from oil spills; it's an iconic struggle over the future—for Canada and the world. This is about being part of the generation of Canadians who works to understand and embrace true reconciliation; and who stands up to the powerful oil industry and has the courage to say: your time is over.

Determined citizens joining powerful Indigenous-led resistance, when combined with a flashpoint like the one we saw on Burnaby Mountain, can be an unstoppable force. Right now, we are building a movement that can be ready when the time comes.



Photo: Maciek Lulko

STATE OF THE WATERFRONT: Preliminary analysis is done

Georgia Strait Alliance hosted a workshop in March where interested stakeholders in the [Waterfront Initiative](#) reviewed, and provided comments and feedback on the preliminary analysis of the data. This data will be used to create the initial report, providing a useful snapshot of the current state of what we know about the health of Vancouver’s waterfront—and what still remains unclear.

The data collected and analyzed include demographic (income, age, population density); the types and number of access points to waterfront nature (transit, bike lanes, parks); the diversity of waterfront businesses; the abundance and quality of ecosystems; the options for transit; and the use of land along Vancouver’s waterfront

The final report will be released in early summer.

What is the baseline report?

It’s a report that highlights our current understanding of the state of Vancouver’s shoreline. It uses numerous indicators, spanning from ecological to economic considerations, which are measurable and were selected by network members because they are representative of the health of Vancouver’s shoreline.

What areas are considered?

A collaborative network of more than 200 individuals, from upwards of 60 organizations, identified five themes to focus on that will help us get closer to a

healthy and resilient waterfront. These themes include working on the waterfront, transportation, ecosystems, living on the waterfront, and access to nature.

The goal

Georgia Strait Alliance is leading this initiative so that planning around the waterfront considers jobs, recreation, housing, transportation, economy, community and ecology—and so that planning is built around a common vision and commitment. The baseline report is a significant component because it will serve as the starting point against which future trends in health will be measured.

Why waterfronts?

Waterfronts are natural resources. They’re public commodities that so many of us love to enjoy. But without adequate planning and care, they might look very different than they do today, and may not function as well as they should. Georgia Strait Alliance is spearheading the development of a vision for the sustainability of the near and long-term future of BC’s southern shorelines, starting with Vancouver.

Georgia Strait Alliance is leading the way towards better waterfront planning across the region



Worlds away from ‘world-leading’

Only a name change to spill response in BC

In the push to get the Kinder Morgan project approved, both the federal and provincial governments made a lot of promises about improving spill response on the West Coast. The gaping holes in BC’s spill response capacity have been called out for years, and both governments promised to plug the holes and make BC ‘world-leading.’ But here on the ground, nothing has changed, with the exception of a pipeline approval. We are still worlds away from having ‘world-leading’ spill response.

The province passed legislation in May 2016 that intended to improve planning and response to spills on land through regulations that were still to come. We saw some [major problems with the proposed package](#), including handing over too much control to industry, and failing to provide for effective response to a bitumen spill—and hundreds of you wrote in requesting that these be addressed. A year later, none of the promised regulations have been established, and none of our concerns about the overall framework have been addressed. In other words, BC’s much-touted, land-based spills regime is largely still waiting to be implemented.

The federal government’s Oceans Protection Plan, announced weeks before the Kinder Morgan approval in November 2016, looks great on paper. It contains commitments to long-overdue measures such as more capacity for the Coast Guard, a bigger oil pollution fund, and stronger roles for Indigenous and local communities in spill response. While these are all welcome and much needed, the flashy announcement contained no specifics on funding or timelines, and six months later, we’re still waiting.

Even if all of the new measures promised by both levels of government are fully and thoughtfully implemented, many essential features outlined in a report commissioned by the Province to determine what ‘world-leading’ would look like are nowhere to be seen.

Simply calling something world-leading does not make it so, and certainly not overnight. Right now, BC’s capacity to respond has not changed, and no one has come up with new technology to effectively recover sunken bitumen.

We desperately need effective spill response to reduce the risk from existing vessel traffic. Yet measures that are promised as a bargaining chip for a pipeline that dramatically increases spill risk—and that aren’t even effective at recovering bitumen, and that aren’t resulting in changes on the ground—can’t be called ‘world-leading’. BC deserves better.

BC’s much-touted, land-based spills regime is still largely imaginary



COMINGS & GOINGS

Welcome

Rachael Merrett has joined us as Species Protection Coordinator. Hailing from Saskatchewan, Rachael left the wheat fields for whales on BC's southern coast, following her passions for marine conservation and education. She has worked for several years in Victoria's whale-watching industry, volunteers for the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, and is part of the BC Marine Mammal Response Network.



Three new directors have joined the Board:



Aaron Nabata is assistant controller at SilverCrest Metals. He is a Chartered Professional Accountant, with public practice and industry experience that focuses on financial reporting and auditing and assurance. Aaron has taken the board position of Treasurer at Georgia Strait Alliance. He was born and raised on the West Coast, growing up on Vancouver's beaches. He loves to cycle, hike, consume political news and read non-fiction.

David Isaac is principal at First Nations Emergency Responders, and president of W. Dusk Energy Group; an Indigenous-owned firm that works with communities to build solar, wind, hydrokinetic and harmonic energy projects. He has also served as interim Executive Director for the Centre for Native Policy and Research. David is dedicated to developing Indigenous businesses in the environmental and clean-tech industries. He is Mi'kmaq, and was raised in Vancouver.

Leslie Nolin is president and CEO of The Organizational Culture Group, which is a training and development firm focused on creating engaged and compassionate service cultures. She has also worked in publishing, and television. She is a past board member of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. Leslie is an avid boater, water skier and scuba diver. She lives in Lion's Bay with her husband.



Goodbye

Dan Straker, Waterfront Initiative Lead, did a tremendous job gathering and preparing the numerous pieces that have gone into the very soon-to-be-released State of the Waterfront report. He also helped to grow and strengthen the Waterfront Initiative network. We wish him well in his new role at an environmental consulting firm.

Katie Rasmussen, who was Marine Planning Coordinator, has decided to return to her home province of Saskatchewan. Despite her short time with us, she helped relaunch our work around the National Marine Conservation Area in the Southern Strait. All the best Katie!



photos: Ken Weiner

WINE ON THE Waterfront

About 50 friends of Georgia Strait Alliance came together at the False Creek Yacht Club one evening last fall to mingle and learn about how our work is adding resiliency to Vancouver’s waterfront.

Inspired by the sparkling lights of False Creek, guests had the opportunity to talk with GSA board members and special guests. Project partners and supporters shared why they value and invest in our work of creating a vision for the future of Vancouver’s shoreline, and GSA staff spoke to guests about the importance of the State of the Waterfront Report.

By all accounts, Wine on the Waterfront was a special evening that inspired us all in our collective commitment to protecting the shoreline and waters we love.

If you would like to host or attend an upcoming gathering, please contact Cheryl Onciul | cheryl@georgiastrait.org.



THANK YOU TO SOME OF OUR RECENT FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...



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YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!

Georgia Strait Alliance is proud of our recent accomplishments, which are possible because of your support, and the support of special people like GSA board member Marisa Cruickshank.

“I learned about Georgia Strait Alliance three or four years ago through people in my professional circles who have shared interests—and I’m so glad that I did. It’s a great organization, and its initiatives align closely with my environmental interests.

I grew up in Vancouver and that may be one of the reasons I’ve always had an interest in protecting the environment and environmental issues. I also have two young sons, who are also growing up here, so the local focus of Georgia Strait Alliance really speaks to me.

As a family we go to the beaches all the time, we go to Water’s Edge Day every year, and I took my preschooler to his first environmental protest last year. As a parent, it’s amazing to offer these easy ways to engage your kids, and to help them start thinking about the environment in small ways. I use these opportunities to talk to my children about the reasons preserving our marine environment is important, and to speak to them more broadly about taking care of the earth and being respectful in ways they can understand.

It’s wonderful to get people to start to care about things early.”

— Marisa Cruickshank, lawyer, donor, and GSA board member



Become a change maker...

Your tax deductible donation to Georgia Strait Alliance is an investment in our shared vision for our local waters, for today and future generations.

To donate today, call 250-753-3459, email gsa@GeorgiaStrait.org or visit

www.GeorgiaStrait.org/donate