



Georgia Strait Alliance

FALL 2017

STRAIT TALK

Caring for Our Coastal Waters

www.GeorgiaStrait.org

ORCAS CAN'T WAIT

The southern resident killer whale population, which relies on BC's southern coastal waters from May to October, is at a historic—and alarming—low. Today, there are 76 orcas remaining in the entire population. For these orca pods, the past few years have been particularly challenging, with scientists and researchers citing a critical shortage in their preferred prey, Chinook salmon, as a major concern.

With the help of supporters and generous donors like you, Georgia Strait Alliance has accelerated and [expanded its efforts](#) to give orcas a voice, to bring awareness to and highlight the severity of the current situation, and to advocate for concrete measures that can restore the species' critical habitat in our coastal waters.

FOLLOW THE MANY WAYS THAT WE ARE GIVING ORCAS A VOICE
www.georgiastrait.org/OrcasCantWait



WATER'S EDGE DAY
page 4



PROTECTING ORCAS
page 6



KINDER MORGAN IS TIED UP
page 8



STRAIT THOUGHTS

Orcas, collaboration and the federal government *by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director*



As I write this, I'm emerging from having spent nearly three days at a symposium focused on what to do to protect the endangered southern resident killer whales. It had all the markings of a positive step forward—participation and support from the three Canadian federal departments that have a role to play in orca protection; First Nations; Tribe, State and Federal representatives from Washington; leading orca and marine mammal scientists; and representatives from the shipping and fisheries sector, among others. Everyone who needed to be at the table was represented so we could, in theory, agree on which urgent actions to take to begin protecting these whales.

But when, as a member of the advisory committee, I saw the first draft agenda, my heart sank. We have 76 southern resident orcas left and I was looking at a plan for more talking. Since the release of the final action plan in April, consultations have been happening so it was hard to understand what could be learned at this gathering that government agencies didn't already know. As a trained scientist, I know how important information sharing is and how investments in

research are critical to our ability to make sound policy decisions, but hosting yet another meeting where we talk about the problem and make no decisions seemed egregious. Our orcas are starving and the government's first line of attack is more research? Courageous action is what we need if we are to save this species.

Did any good come out of the symposium? Yes, it did.

First, I was pleased when, thanks to advocacy from Georgia Strait Alliance and others, the government agreed to add a half-day technical session for more meaningful conversations but, with such a short timeline, it was impossible to come to consensus on a path forward. The gathering also confirmed that we are not alone in wanting urgent action for orcas, and this pressure is coming from environmental groups and scientists, as well as from some industry leaders who have the power to mitigate the impact they are having on orca habitat. We had the opportunity to connect with like-minded people from the shipping, whale watching and fishing sectors, who we will now work with to press the government for leadership. A

collaborative effort across sectors can be very powerful, and these sectors are coming to the table because they know the public is demanding that they consider orcas and marine habitat in their operations.

Another encouraging moment was when both Fisheries and Oceans Canada Minister LeBlanc and Transport Canada Minister Garneau publicly acknowledged that to save this endangered species we must work together and some difficult decisions will have to be made. Georgia Strait Alliance will be holding them to that.

Thanks to your support and support from funders like the Sitka Foundation and the Clif Bar Family Foundation, we're in a better position to hold the government to account now that we have a new staff person to lead our species protection work. I hope you'll enjoy reading about the work Rachael Merrett has done over the past six months when she hit the ground running, as well as learning about the many accomplishments of the rest of our team.

Thank you for making all this possible—and for helping to give orcas a voice.

DOWN AT THE DOCK



What is Clean Marine BC?

What does it mean when yacht clubs, marinas, harbour authorities, and boatyards adhere to the environmental best practices in Georgia Strait Alliance's [Clean Marine BC program](https://www.georgiastrait.org/CleanMarineBC)?

The program, in its 10th year, examines six key areas that support boating facilities to minimize the environmental impacts of their operations. These range from habitat preservation to waste reduction and water conservation. To accomplish this, the anchor-rating audit evaluation considers everything from dock and yard management to parking lots and visitor facilities, including restaurants and washrooms.

Specific elements considered include the construction and maintenance of docks, [pumpouts](#), and fuel docks, as well as how boats are lifted, launched, cleaned and stored. Also measured are the usage of chemicals and water that marinas use in addition to the waste they produce—everything from leftover paint to waste oil, and even pet waste. The program then sets out achievable goals that allow marinas to lower their usage and cut their utility bills. Recently, the program has expanded to provide [training for emergency preparedness and response](#) measures when faced with the possibility of small-scale marine oil spills at their docks.

www.georgiastrait.org/CleanMarineBC

Clean Marine BC examines six key areas:

- Environmental policy & management
- Water quality & habitat preservation
- Hazardous-substance handling & reduction
- Water conservation
- Energy efficiency
- Waste reduction

Beyond the Docks

Several Clean Marine BC-certified marinas have habitat protection initiatives that support the healthy growth of wildlife species, with some even playing significant roles in supporting the recovery of threatened species, such as the Purple Martin swallow, the Garry Oak tree, and eel grass.

Clean Marine BC has

23 certified marinas, yacht clubs, wharves and boatyards, with another 26 facilities working towards certification.



Follow @CleanMarineBC

WATER'S EDGE DAY

a community waterfront festival



The fourth annual Water's Edge Day, hosted by Georgia Strait Alliance at Vanier Park in Vancouver, was the wettest yet, but a few bursts of showers didn't dampen the experiences of several hundreds of people who got out on the water during the last day of September.

People of all ages enjoyed dozens of land and water-based activities—at no cost! There were canoes, kayaks and dragon boats; touch tanks with sea critters; arts and crafts; live music; First Nations storytelling; information sessions on community-supported fisheries and the impact of plastics in our oceans; as well as children's entertainment, face painting, and a special visit from the Coast Guard, who opened their vessels for special tours.

www.georgiastrait.org/WatersEdgeDay





Water's Edge Day is part of Georgia Strait Alliance's Waterfront Initiative, which is a Vancouver-wide project working to ensure that the shoreline is integrated, diverse, thriving, sustainable and, most importantly, accessible to everyone.

www.georgiastrait.org/WaterfrontInitiative

Special thanks to our event sponsors Port of Vancouver, Boldt Communications, and City of Vancouver, as well as to media sponsor The Tye and event co-host Vancouver Maritime Museum. We would also like to thank the Bullitt Foundation, RBC Blue Water Project, Real Estate Foundation of BC and The McLean Foundation for their continued support, and to acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

photos: Gavin Kennedy



VANCOUVER FESTIVAL of OCEAN FILMS

Festival explores World Oceans Day and Orca Awareness Month

Hosted by Georgia Strait Alliance, this year's Vancouver Festival of Ocean Films featured a panel discussion with marine experts and filmmakers. Conversation touched on cross-border marine protection, how noise is impacting whales, and industry competition for access to ocean resources.

Feature films included:

SONIC SEA (2016). *As more sounds are filling our seas, more marine life are dying.*

ATLANTIC (2016). *Oil and politics.*

The Vancouver Festival of Ocean Films celebrates everything our oceans give us: a place for adventure, sport, resources, economic development and pure enjoyment.

www.georgiastrait.org/VFOF



IF WE PROTECT THE ORCA, *we protect the Strait*

Southern Resident orcas are on a path to extinction, however, the federal government has yet to put in place all of the urgent and concrete measures that are necessary to reduce the three main threats to orcas' critical habitat. The federal government-led Orca Symposium, held in Vancouver in October, failed to meet its objectives of establishing the actions, key players, roles and responsibilities in the recovery of the endangered orca.

Georgia Strait Alliance knows that orcas can't wait any longer and we're doing everything possible to make the government recognize the need for actions that will protect Chinook salmon stocks, reduce acoustical disturbance from vessels, and address the levels of toxic contaminants in our waters. These are the measures necessary for this majestic, iconic and intelligent species to regain a healthy population.

A positive signal

In late October, the federal government announced its intention to enact an enforceable requirement for all water-based vessels to maintain a minimum distance of 200 metres from southern resident killer whales (SRKWs) beginning next spring.

This policy will strengthen the current guideline for vessels to respect a distance of 100 metres from SRKWs, and it will bring Canadian regulations into alignment with those implemented in the United States in 2011.

Georgia Strait Alliance hopes this is an indication that the government is ready to make concrete and hard decisions in the short term to address the three main threats to the recovery of SRKW:

- a lack of their preferred prey (Chinook salmon),
- noise and disturbance from vessels, and
- toxic contaminants.



Georgia Strait Alliance has given orcas a voice over the past few months by:

- Initiating a collaborative network with key environmental and conservation NGOs to amplify our efforts to protect orcas.
- Submitting a [detailed response](#) to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in response to the Department's scientific review of recovery strategies for southern residents.
- Encouraging supporters to participate in [DFO's online public consultation](#), with ideas and suggestions about specific things to tell the government to include in orca recovery measures.
- Participating as a member of DFO's Advisory Committee in the development of the Orca Symposium, part of the Oceans Protection Plan, in Vancouver in October.
- Leveraging the Pacific Northwest's Orca Awareness Month in June to [educate and connect](#) with individuals and communities about the threats facing orcas.
- Publishing opinion pieces on orcas in local and regional media, as well as [online](#).
- Highlighting the crisis of severely depleted salmon stocks by creating a [call-to-action](#) for supporters to submit letters to DFO's Minister LeBlanc to request strategic closure of Chinook fisheries.
- Creating a [video campaign](#) that urges people to tell Prime Minister Trudeau and Fisheries Minister LeBlanc (by tagging them on social media) their reasons why it's important for the federal government to act now to save orcas.

www.georgiastrait.org/OrcasCantWait

photo: Eric Middelkoop



photo: Center for Whale Research

Alki & Sonic

The importance of family is a special characteristic of resident killer whales, with the bonds between orca mothers and their offspring being some of the strongest in the animal kingdom. This is a picture of first-time mom, Alki (J-36), and her young son, Sonic (J-52).

When calves are born into resident pods, they generally remain in the same pod for the rest of their lives. While mothers are the primary caregivers, all members of a pod participate in rearing calves, helping to feed, teach and play with them. "Calves seem to love getting nudged around by their moms, and it's an activity that can be seen when they have time to socialize. In this picture, Alki is playing with her calf. It's remarkable to witness this kind of interaction," says Rachael Merrett, Species Protection Coordinator at Georgia Strait Alliance.

However, the future for the survival of southern resident killer whales is at a critical juncture. Drone photographs taken in May by the Vancouver Aquarium's Lance Barrett-Lennard revealed that Alki and her son were alarmingly thin—they had the poorest body condition of all the whales seen. Hunger is pervasively prevalent in the pods this year because Chinook salmon is returning to the Fraser River at record-low levels. This is having devastating effects on southern residents as Chinook comprises up to 90 percent of the whales' diet.

Sadly, Sonic is believed to have succumbed to malnutrition, [passing away in September](#). He was two-and-a-half years old.

#OrcasCantWait



KINDER MORGAN *is tied up*

Despite Kinder Morgan's determination to start construction on the Trans Mountain expansion project in September, the company has yet to execute anything more than the installation of a safety boom at Westridge Marine Terminal in Burnaby, and the installation of mats in Swift Creek and other watercourses to deter spawning chinook, which the National Energy Board promptly halted due to lack of authorization. No other significant work has begun, pushing Kinder Morgan off its construction schedule. The company continues to still lack a number of municipal and provincial permits, and has yet to meet a number of federal pre-construction conditions. Each missing permit adds delays, and each of these delays produces doubt with investors and creditors, putting the credibility of Kinder Morgan and its ability to get the pipeline built on the line.

FEDERAL COURT CLAIMS

There are 15 claims against Kinder Morgan in the Federal Court of Appeal, with most focusing on the flawed process of the National Energy Board. The last federal court review of a pipeline led to overturning the approval of Enbridge's Northern Gateway. That approval and that pipeline were eventually rejected by the federal government. To significantly delay Kinder Morgan's project from moving forward, or possibly see the project approval turned over entirely, plaintiffs would have to win only one of their claims, which include:

- Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Living Oceans Society, represented by Ecojustice, argue that NEB and Cabinet failed to uphold the Species at Risk Act for the endangered southern resident orcas.
- The cities of Vancouver and Burnaby argue that the NEB process failed to consider alternatives to the proposed project, didn't adequately test evidence and provided insufficient reasons to recommend the project.



photo: Dogwood BC

*Action without authority:
The NEB promptly halted Kinder Morgan's
installation of anti-spawning mats*



photo: Coast Protectors

Ottawa paid the Coldwater First Nation \$1,292 in 1952 for rights to the easement that was then transferred to Kinder Morgan at no cost

transfer that it granted to Kinder Morgan in 2014 to allow the Trans Mountain pipeline to cross the Coldwater First Nation reserve in BC to consider the current and ongoing impact of the pipeline on the First Nation's use of lands and drinking water aquifer.

- The Tseil Waututh First Nation argues the NEB failed to examine the impacts of increased marine shipping, and the Squamish Nation argues that the federal government did not adequately assess the risk of a diluted bitumen spill to the waters of the Salish Sea. There are also several other First Nations and Chiefs arguing they were insufficiently consulted, that the project's impact on aboriginal title and rights was not adequately considered, and that the federal government failed to meet its fiduciary duties.

In another lawsuit, the Coldwater First Nation won a case against the federal government's approval of a Kinder Morgan easement transfer. The Federal Court of Appeal ruled that Ottawa must re-determine the

THE PROVINCE & KINDER MORGAN

While the first steps the Province took appeared to be strong and moving in the direction of supporting First Nations and protecting our coast, Georgia Strait Alliance is now concerned with a decline in action on the government's part, and with some of the legal strategies put forward. As an organization, we will continue to work hard for change within a larger coalition of environmental and conservation groups to advocate for the Province to carry out actions that demonstrate its commitment to fight for our coast.

www.georgiastrait.org/StopKinderMorgan





Leaving a legacy to GSA

Choosing to remember Georgia Strait Alliance with a gift in your will is a great way to let your love for nature continue well into the future. Here's how:

Step 1

If you don't have a will already, we recommend you seek professional help from an experienced legal and/or financial advisor to ensure your wishes are honoured. If you already have a will, amending it is fairly simple.

Step 2

It's important to include the full name and charitable number of Georgia Strait Alliance in your will. Without this, we may not receive your gift:

- Legal name: Georgia Strait Alliance
- Charitable registration number: 13994-2254-RR0001

Step 3

We recommend you share the following clause with your legal advisor: "I give all or (enter a percentage or fixed amount) of the residue of my estate, a specific cash legacy, or a specific asset, to Georgia Strait Alliance: charitable registration number 13994-2254-RR0001. I request that funds be used for the highest priority need as determined by the Society at the time of receipt of funds."

A legacy fulfilled

Personal philanthropy through a will is one way to ensure that you can continue to make a difference to causes that are important to you. Gifts or bequests can support charities of your choice, while also being useful tools in an estate plan when considering tax implications.

In 2011, Georgia Strait Alliance was bequeathed Harlock Islet—near Victoria's Swartz Bay ferry terminal—by [Stuart Armour](#), a long-term donor who was also GSA's largest individual donor for several years. Harlock Islet has now been sold to a boating couple and proceeds from the sale have been split equally with Ecojustice as per Stuart's wishes.

As an organization, Georgia Strait Alliance is honouring Stuart by investing in the protection of this region that was so important to him, including hiring a full-time staff member to lead our Species Protection program.

Through his gift to Georgia Strait Alliance, Stuart Armour's legacy and memory are playing a role in the health of the Strait, its communities and its marine habitat



photo: Macdonald Realty Victoria

Find out more at www.georgiastrait.org/LegacyGiving

COMINGS & GOINGS

Introducing . . .

Andrew Radzik, our Energy Campaigner, who is replacing Alexandra Woodsworth while she is on maternity leave. Andrew has worked on municipal, provincial and federal election campaigns, and has been involved in advancing climate-change policy at both the municipal and provincial levels. He's also served as Outreach Director at the Wilderness Committee, and he brings a strong background in grassroots public engagement to Georgia Strait Alliance.



We bid farewell to . . .

Karen Cooling leaves the Board after four years of playing an integral role on our Personnel Committee, helping us to better support our staff and volunteers. We also say goodbye to Board member **Paula Brent**, who brought an energy and passion to our Board and helped support our Communications & Volunteer Committee. We'll miss Paula's great ideas about how to reach and engage with younger generations. We also bid farewell to **Kate Storey**, who played key roles on the Finance and Fundraising Committees for three years.

Donate your Aeroplan miles

As a registered charity, Georgia Strait Alliance is part of an Aeroplan program that lets you donate your miles to our organization.

Why is this important?

It means that staff can take advocacy messages from communities in the Georgia Basin directly to Ottawa and/or take part in broader conversations in-person, ensuring your region and the Strait of Georgia is represented at decision-making tables.

<https://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/charity/389>



STAY UP TO DATE WITH OUR WORK

Sign up for Strait Up

Get timely info on important issues and actions needed to protect our waters with GSA's monthly e-newsletter.

www.georgiastrait.org/StayInformed



Find us on social media

@GeorgiaStraitBC

Thank you to some of our recent funders and partners...



We would also like to thank—Boldt Communications Ltd., and Dolphin Insurance, and we acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

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 donor Mike Waites.

"I moved to Vancouver in 2006 and was struck by the incredible beauty of the Strait of Georgia and where we're living; it's just spectacular. That is what got me interested in understanding some of the things that are going on. I started to pay close attention as my concern grew about the development and expansion of Port Metro Vancouver, and marine traffic and the impact those might have on the Strait of Georgia and on marine life.

The amount of commercial shipping traffic is set to explode and this goes far beyond the Kinder Morgan project—it affects the Strait, orcas and marine life.

We must have responsible development and growth, and sustainable ecosystems—and we shouldn't settle for anything less than that. Even though it's difficult, it's much better to protect what you have than to lose it and try to get it back. It's so terribly difficult to get it back.

We're only here for a relatively short period of time in the overall scheme of things in terms of ecosystem developments. I want my sons to be able to enjoy the Strait and enjoy the thrill of seeing orcas, fish and salmon, and I want their children in turn to be able to do that.

As custodians, it's our job to protect what we have and Georgia Strait Alliance is taking a strong leadership stand on regional issues and making that happen. It's doing great work, and it can make a difference because it has such broad support. For those reasons, I'll be making a donation to GSA at Christmas time this year on behalf of my family. Instead of exchanging gifts, we donate to charities. We sit down by the fireplace and talk about the reasons we select the charities. It's a holiday tradition that creates really, really meaningful exchanges, and they make the holiday season so much richer."

— Mike Waites, donor, retired senior executive



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