

Georgia Strait Alliance—caring for our coastal waters since 1990

the only citizens' group focused on protecting the marine environment in and around the whole Strait of Georgia, Canada's most at-risk natural environment

False Creek Harbour Authority Earns Top Eco-Rating



Photo courtesy FCHA

by Michelle Young

We are thrilled to announce that False Creek Harbour Authority has achieved *Clean Marine BC*'s highest possible environmental best practices rating of "5-Anchors" as a result of its recent independent audit.

False Creek is the first facility ever to win this rating, so this marks a major new milestone in GSA's *Clean Marine BC* program. While it already had a very respectable "4-Anchors" from its initial certification, we're happy to see that the Harbour Authority has taken CMBC's objective of "continual improvement" to heart and raised the bar to 5-Anchors by upgrading their stormwater management, emergency plans, and more.

Mike Loy, Harbour Manager of False Creek HA's Fisherman's Wharf, is deservedly proud of their success:

"Being a Commercial Fishing Harbour on the BC Coast has given us a strong tie to our waterways and the environment. We are honoured to be recognized with a 5-Anchor rating and will stay the course with our continued commitment to the Clean Marine BC Program and the environment."

Clean Marine BC now has nine eco-rated facilities, with another 13 facilities enrolled in the program and working towards certification. Continuing improvement in environmental best practices at these facilities will have a real and lasting positive effect on the marine environment in BC.



Assistant Harbour Manager Mike Turkington and Harbour Manager Mike Loy receiving their CMBC certificate from Michelle Young, GSA's *Clean Marine BC* Program Coordinator.

Photo by Joel Baziuk



Fun at this year's Boat Show

What's GSA's Michelle Young (L) doing with a mermaid, a 1960s castaway and the ill-fated SS Minnow? And why is she having so much fun? You'll find the answers on page 7, along with more *Clean Marine BC*-related news from "Down at the Dock".



Photos by Vivian Sorenson and Michelle Young.

Strait Thoughts: Your voice in challenging times

by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director



In articles and presentations about GSA that I give to groups around the region, I often spend time describing our history, our many accomplishments and the solutions we are finding to the threats we continue to face. Over the years as my own understanding has grown about how Georgia Strait Alliance has achieved so much, I have found myself focusing more and more on my belief that GSA is the voice of the people who support us—a truth revealed in both the work we are doing today and our history. When GSA was founded in 1990, there was no other group tackling issues Strait-wide, so an “alliance” of individuals, organizations and businesses was formed, to be the voice for all those sharing a passion for the waters of our region. Though the “alliance” evolved into a single organization, our role as the voice of this community hasn’t changed one bit.

However, what has changed is the challenge we face every day in being that voice. Our supporters want to be sure that every dollar they give goes to our work, and GSA has always strived to be one of the most effective and efficient organizations in BC. We know that the more we can focus on carrying out our mission, the healthier our region will be, and we’re very proud of how we get the most out of our supporters’ investments.

GSA has always been open and transparent about our funding, and we believe in systems to ensure that everyone supporting a charity knows where each of their dollars goes. But over the last few years, the administrative

It seems that big industry and businesses are demanding—and getting—less red tape. Instead, the tape is being used to tie the hands of social change groups like ours.

burdens of charitable not-for-profits have grown. Weeks of our time must now go into ever more intrusive and over-demanding paperwork—going well beyond accountability and seeming much more like an effort to undermine our effectiveness. Of course the more time we must spend on paperwork, the less time we can spend on the real work (making me wonder if this is exactly the point).

Running a charity is becoming far more complicated than running most businesses. As a BC society and Canadian charity, GSA must report extensively to both levels of government on how our funds are disbursed, and we are required to track how we spend our time—in some cases virtually to the minute—in order to meet stricter and stricter policies regarding what activities charities are allowed to carry out. It seems that big industry and businesses are demanding—and getting—less red tape. Instead, the tape is being used to tie the hands of social change groups like ours.

Charitable and not-for-profit organizations exist because so many of us have a deep passion for issues

that affect our communities, but don’t have enough time to advocate and educate fellow citizens and leaders. Instead, we donate to charities who act on our behalf. This is an essential part of our democratic process and one that is being undermined each and every day.

A healthy and protected Georgia Strait is good for our economy and our communities, but the Strait can only be healthy if GSA continues to be a defender and voice for those communities. In this time of increasing pressure on our resources, we hope you will step forward and put your support behind our work. Please take time now to let your elected officials know that efforts to silence civil society are unacceptable, and at election time, ask each of the candidates in your community what they will do to nurture democracy and support charities who play such an important role.

GSA needs to grow, both to tackle new and ongoing threats to the region *and* so that we have the organizational strength to handle the strong waves that have already arrived or are coming our way. If you haven’t donated recently, please re-commit to GSA by donating online at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/donate. If you are a recent donor, please consider becoming a monthly donor. And if you are a monthly donor, please share this newsletter with someone you know who loves the Strait as much as you do—and ask them to give.

Our ‘alliance’ remains strong and your voice will be amplified and represented as long as we are here—and we will be, with your support.

“What’s Not to Love About a Seawall?”

Climate change is coming to our waterfront, and it’s time to think about how we manage it. An informative and thought-provoking new blog post by Waterfront Initiative Lead Sebastian Merz: see “GSA Blog” section at www.GeorgiaStrait.org

What’s new on our site

The benefits keep growing for marinas that enrol in the **Clean Marine BC** program. Check them out at <http://www.GeorgiaStrait.org/cmbcbenefits>

Three years after the earthquake and tsunami that preceded the explosions and meltdowns at the nuclear reactors in **Fukushima**, radioactive releases to the air and ocean continue. Many people are concerned about public health and environmental impacts here on our west coast, so in response to public requests and to the vast amount of misinformation available on the internet, GSA has a new webpage with useful links and resources at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/fukushima

Working for Vancouver's waterfront

by Sebastian Merz

In early February, I heard one of those stories that remind me of why I ended up in Vancouver and on the shores of the Strait of Georgia. Just outside Nanaimo Harbour, passengers on a ferry bound for Vancouver witnessed a spectacle that could have been featured on BBC's Planet Earth: a pod of orcas hunting white-sided dolphins.

For someone who grew up in Central Europe, such wildlife sightings in the vicinity of our urban communities remain an almost unfathomable event. Having joined GSA as Waterfront Initiative Lead last November, I am very excited to make even the smallest contribution to ensure that sightings like this remain a very real possibility around the Strait of Georgia.

The waterfront is where we can see many of the impacts that our activities on land and at sea have on the Strait: habitat loss as a result of sea level rise and urban sprawl, or pollution through storm water overflows and industrial toxins, to name but a few. That is why we at GSA believe that we need to pay more attention to how we use and design our waterfront. Today, Vancouver's shoreline is affected by planning decisions, but there is no overarching plan or vision for what we want the waterfront to look like. In discussing this notion with many partners and stakeholders over the past few months, it would seem they agree.

The Waterfront Initiative started the year strong as we secured new funding from the Vancouver Foundation's Greenest City Community Grant, adding to funding already received from the Bullitt Foundation. Over recent months, we have spent the bulk of our time talking to people in industry (such as shipping and real estate), government, civil society and other sectors who have a stake in a vibrant Vancouver shoreline. And there is a lot of interest on their side in getting involved in creating a vision for our waterfront. We're very glad, for example, that the City of Vancouver is supporting the initiative with time, advice and expertise.

In the coming months, we will continue our outreach and look to add new members to this network. Our first task at this stage is to listen to stakeholders and learn what their interests, concerns and ideas are for the future of our shoreline. In early April, we will host a workshop with our partners to identify key issues that need to be addressed through the development of this vision, along with a strategy to protect, restore and revitalize the waterfront.



"Denman Island Chocolate loves the Georgia Strait Alliance. It's a given that, being on a small island, we value the ocean around us, and GSA is consistent in its action and advocacy on behalf of issues that imperil Georgia Strait. Right now there are so many threats to our beautiful marine environment and GSA's activities are more important than ever." Daniel Terry, DIC



Vancouver's waterfront is more than seawall and beaches

Photo: colink/Flickr, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

A fascinating aspect of this work will be to look at a part of the waterfront that is perhaps not the first that comes to mind when you think Vancouver: the shoreline along the Fraser River. This is a working waterfront and we hope that won't change. Through this initiative we want to find ways to ensure there is balance in creating space for industry, people and ecosystems along the shore.

One of our goals for this year is to create and disseminate a report on the current state of the waterfront. This report will help us develop a Waterfront Action Plan with concrete steps and measurable goals. Another highlight will be hosting an event to celebrate the waterfront and engage citizens in telling us what it means to them and what they want its future to look like.

Make sure to check our website and follow us on social media to get all the updates on the Waterfront Initiative: www.GeorgiaStrait.org/waterfrontinitiative

Program support by...

GREENEST CITY FUND



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Strait Talk

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Things get real on the Kinder Morgan campaign

by Alexandra Woodsworth

Kinder Morgan's formal application to expand its Trans Mountain pipeline has been a long time coming. Back in 2010, GSA was one of the first to alert the public to the fact that Kinder Morgan would be seeking to expand pipeline capacity and tanker traffic in our region. Since then we have seen a slow trickle of information about the project emerging from the proponent and its regulators, and a rising tide of concern from communities, First Nations, businesses and environmental groups.

In December 2013, the long pre-game show finally came to an end when Kinder Morgan submitted its 15,000-page Facilities Application to the National Energy Board (NEB), triggering the beginning of the official government review of the project. Early in the new year, the NEB quietly opened a 28-day window to apply to participate in the review—much sooner than we had anticipated.

However, GSA and other environment and community groups had been planning for this day well in advance, so we were ready. Everyone swung into action, reaching out to our supporters, holding workshops and webinars, and producing online guides and videos. Our goals were to let people know that they had to act right away if they wanted to go on record with their views about the proposal, to encourage as many people as possible to take part in the process, and to help them through a fairly daunting online application form.

In the interest of “streamlining” reviews of projects such as Kinder Morgan's proposal, the federal government has made a series of changes that effectively restrict public participation in the NEB process. Now, you need to prove that you are either directly affected by the project or have relevant expertise before you are allowed to participate at all.

As an average concerned citizen, it would be easy to read the application form and feel that you must either be a pipeline engineer or live right over the pipeline route to have your say—and that's not right. A major oil spill would touch the lives of most British



What's at risk if we allow a dramatic increase in shipping traffic?

Photo by Bryan Nordley

Columbians in some way, and even in the absence of an accident, we all have a stake in the future of our resources, our economy and our environment. So GSA and our colleagues worked hard to help concerned citizens make their way through the complicated application process—and it paid off.

In the end, British Columbians were not silenced by the difficult process and the short application window. It's inspiring to see that over 2000 individuals stepped up to participate, alongside dozens of First Nations, municipalities, businesses, environmental, community and recreation groups—including several from south of the border.

So what happens next? The NEB will decide who gets to participate, and whether applicants are allowed to speak at the hearings as an “intervenor” or merely submit a letter of comment.

In our application, GSA requested intervenor status, and if granted, we aim to represent the voices of Georgia Strait residents, communities and businesses who are concerned about the impacts of the project but can't be present at the hearings.

Thank you so much to all who signed up to take part in the NEB review, and who reach out to us every day to ask questions and express concerns about Kinder Morgan's pipeline and tanker plan. Stay tuned for help and advice on the next steps in the NEB process, and for more opportunities to speak up to protect our coast, our communities and our climate. You can contact me at: alexandra@GeorgiaStrait.org

LNG: coming soon to Georgia Strait?

With the rush to develop BC's liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry, new projects seem to get announced every week. They have been mainly confined to the north coast—until now.

Along with the Discovery LNG project (in the early stages of development in Campbell River), and rumours of a potential export facility in Port Alberni, the Woodfibre LNG project proposed for Howe Sound has now progressed to the stage of consultation and environmental assessment.

GSA was part of a coalition that successfully fought off an LNG facility on Texada Island several years ago, and it seems we need to come together once again. Do we want the Salish Sea to become a fossil fuel superhighway, exporting oil, coal, LNG—and climate change—to the world? If the answer is “no”, it's time to get organized.

Photo: www.GlobalSecurity.org



Spill map shows what's at stake

by Alexandra Woodsworth

One spill from a tanker laden with oil from **Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline** could blanket the BC coast. That message is abundantly clear when you look at the Salish Sea Spill Map, a research project we launched last October with our partners at Raincoast Conservation Foundation.

Last fall, we released 1644 'drift cards' at nine locations at higher risk of an accident along the tanker route, which runs from Burrard Inlet, through the Gulf Islands, past Victoria and western Vancouver Island then out into the Pacific Ocean.

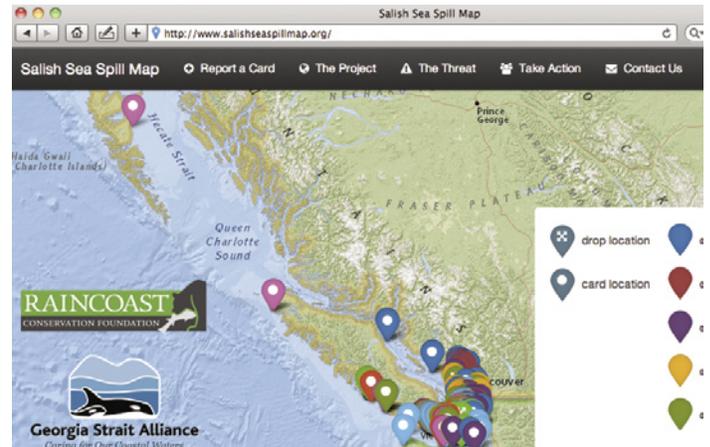
The cards are small pieces of bright yellow plywood, each carrying a unique serial number and an important message: 'this could be oil.' Drift cards have been used for decades by academic and government researchers to track ocean currents and map the path that a potential oil spill might take.

The project launch last fall garnered significant media interest which, along with the use of social media, allowed us publicize the project and ask the public to be on the lookout for the cards and report any they find on a specially built website.

To date, over 500 cards have been found and reported, and they tell a pretty scary story—revealing how far and fast oil could travel, and what iconic places could be affected.

We learned that oil could encircle Vancouver Harbour in less than 24 hours, and could travel from the mouth of the Fraser River to Victoria in just 4 days. Oil from a spill in the Strait off Greater Vancouver could reach Tofino (a distance of 300 km) in 3 weeks. National Parks, killer whale migration routes and the treasured beaches of the Gulf Islands would all be affected.

Then in February, a card washed up on a remote beach in Haida Gwaii, having made an amazing 1000-kilometre



Our spill map, derived from the drift card project. Check it out at www.salishseaspillmap.org

journey. That card's arrival tells us that virtually the entire BC coastline could be affected by oil spilled along the Kinder Morgan tanker route.

This spring we are doing a second set of drift card drops, including one on the US side of the border with our allies at the Friends of the San Juans, to gather more data about potential spills under different weather, wind and seasonal conditions. The project will also allow us to look at the hot spots where these cards are collecting, and start investigating what is at risk in those locations, such as the critical habitat of southern resident killer whales and popular recreation areas.

With this project we are able to provide alternate (and, not surprisingly, more worrying) spill scenarios to the models submitted by Kinder Morgan in its application to the National Energy Board. We are also reaching a random sample of people out exploring the shoreline—more than just the "usual suspects" of environmentalists. Most important of all, the project is making the threat very tangible: if the spill we all fear *does* happen, it could be your beach, your boat, your favourite fishing spot that is coated in toxic tar sands oil.

The interactive map will continue to evolve as more data comes in. You can see it at www.salishseaspillmap.org



It's not all hard work! Here, students from UVic taking part in the drift card project enjoy some onboard fun, bundled up against the elements.

Photos by Jill Hirschbold



Program support by...

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Comings & Goings

Photo: Eveline Xia



Late last fall we welcomed **Sebastian Merz** as Lead of GSA's newest program, the Waterfront Initiative. Sebastian grew up in Europe and now lives

in Vancouver, and says he remains awed by the natural beauty of BC and excited to be contributing to its preservation through his work with GSA. With a background in dialogue facilitation and conflict resolution, Sebastian is passionate about the need for collaborative efforts to build more sustainable communities. He holds a MA in political science and is continuing to develop his skills in facilitation, civic engagement and mediation through programs at Simon Fraser University and the Justice Institute of BC. You can contact him at sebastian@georgiastrait.org. For more about the Waterfront Initiative, see page 3.



Ken Coach, president of the communications firm Media Coach Inc., joined GSA's Board of Directors in December. A

Vancouver native, his first career took him across North America, working in virtually all aspects of news and current affairs in both print and broadcast journalism—starting as a reporter for a small Vancouver Island newspaper and working his way up to senior news management positions at CBC and CTV National News. After 20 years in journalism Ken “switched sides” to become a media trainer, presentation coach and outrage manager. Since then he has provided presentations and media training to corporate and academic leaders, politicians, celebrities and many not-for-profit organizations. Ken came to GSA because he liked our solutions-based approach to issues, and since joining our Board he has been bringing his experience and skills in messaging, communications strategy, issues management and media relations to our Communications Committee and helping to implement our Communications Plan.



In February we welcomed **Catherine (Kate) Storey** to our Board. Drawn to GSA by her love of sailing and the

ocean, Kate works at Renewal Funds, a Vancouver-based, social venture capital fund investing in early-growth stage companies that deliver strong social, environmental and financial performance, and focusing on sectors that are critical to a sustainable economy that can support meaningful shifts in consumer behaviour. Earlier Kate worked for a large Canadian investment bank, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada. She is passionate about supporting female leadership and women's basic rights and sits on an advisory committee for the Aboriginal Mother Centre in the Downtown East Side. She holds an MBA (Finance) from Dalhousie U., a B.Sc. (Honours, Biology) from Mount Allison U. and a Certificate in Carbon Finance from the U. of Toronto.

In mid-December we said goodbye to volunteer **Karen Jorgensen**, who returned to her native Denmark to continue her studies after finishing a three-month term with GSA. Karen was a great addition to our Vancouver office, helping with outreach events, blogging and updating our media lists. Her passion for the marine world was very evident and her willingness to tackle any and all projects was much appreciated.

Helping GSA is easy



Aeroplan Miles for GSA

We are very pleased to announce that thanks to the generosity of individuals like you, GSA now has over 100,000 miles in our charitable pooling account with **Aeroplan**. These miles will go a long way in support of our work. For example, we are considering purchasing much-needed computer equipment such as tablets and laptop computers, paying for overnight accommodation during our outreach activities in communities along the Strait, and looking at merchandise for use as prizes for fundraising events and draws. Thanks to all who have donated so far.

If you would like to donate Aeroplan miles, you can do so at <http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/charity/389>

Thanks!



Share the Bounty!

GSA has the opportunity to win a share of money being given away by **Nature's Bounty**. Through a public voting system, we could win as much as \$15,000! But we'll need your help to do it.

Step 1: go to www.sharethebounty.ca/votingdefault.aspx?c=3

Step 2: Register

Step 3: Vote daily for GSA (under the section “animals and earth”)

Step 4: Spread the word!

You can vote for GSA as often as once a day, every day **until April 8th**, so please do so—and share this with your networks via email, Facebook, Twitter or your social media medium of choice!

Thanks so much for your help!



Recyclables: Cash for GSA

If you live near Campbell River, Duncan, Esquimalt, Salt Spring or Sidney, you can allocate the refunds from your recyclables to GSA by taking them to Island Return It Depots.

Just ask the staff at the Depot to donate your refund to Georgia Strait Alliance. You will be practicing the 3-Rs (reduce–reuse–recycle) and supporting a great cause all at once!

For more info and the location of Depots: www.islandreturnit.com/

Down at the Dock Starting the year with a splash!

by Michelle Young

2014 looks to be a very promising year for our Clean Marine BC program. We started the year off with a splash, presenting False Creek Fisherman's Wharf the very first top 5-anchor rating at the Harbour Authority Association of BC conference in January (see page 1). This generated quite a bit of excitement about other harbours joining the environmental best practices program, and the HAABC has expressed their continued support.

That buzz carried over to the Vancouver International Boat Show, organized by the Boating BC Association (formerly BC Marine Trades Association). Marinas were eager to learn how they might become certified, and it was great to see booths from two that already are: Shelter Island and the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club. (The RVYC's Jericho facility is certified and its Coal Harbour facility is enrolled in the program, working to win certification). Hopefully by next year our CMBC group will have grown again!

Other businesses expressed interest in becoming part of our CMBC Benefits program, which offers discounts to certified marinas. It was great to see Sean and Jillian of Dolphin Insurance at the Boat Show; they continue to offer discounted insurance to CMBC-certified marinas. If your business would like to become part of the Benefits program please contact us, and we'd be happy to add any products that will assist our marinas in achieving environmental best practices.

We had many great opportunities to network with new and old supporters



Longtime volunteer, Vivian Sorenson, and Michelle staffing GSA's booth at the Vancouver Boat Show. Photo by Ron Richings

at the Show, and had fun connecting with thousands of boaters. Our *Guide to Green Boating* continues to be very popular, and we are happy that so many people took home great tips on a wide range of green boating topics. If you missed it, the *Guide* is on our website and contains environmentally friendly information on pump-out station locations, green boat maintenance and cleaners, alternatives to toxic bottom paints, and much more.

But the fun didn't end at our booth! Our mermaid Georgia and I made the trip to the show room floor of BC Place, to take a tour of the restored *SS Minnow* and to meet the lovely actor Dawn Wells (AKA Mary Ann) of *Gilligan's Island* fame (see photo page 1). It was a thrill to see that the iconic boat from my youth had not suffered the fate of becoming a derelict vessel. And meeting Dawn was such a treat—with a mermaid in tow, no less!

There's always fun and excitement Down at the Dock—and to paraphrase my favorite 1960's *Castaways*, "so join us here next time my friends, you're sure to get a smile!"

Program support by...



Michelle with Terry McPhail, from the CMBC-certified Shelter Island Marina, hoisting Georgia for a photo.

An Evening with the Strait

THANKS to all those who helped ensure the success of our fall fundraising event, *An Evening with the Strait*, which was held at the Robert Bateman Centre in Victoria. Thanks to GSA Advisory Council members John Cashore and Douglas White for their inspiring presentations, and to all who attended, a special thank you.



Christianne with John Cashore

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Photo by Scott Fraser



Photo by Vivian Sorenson

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

*And we thank all the many **INDIVIDUAL DONORS** and **GSA MEMBERS** too numerous to list, whose support ensures this important work continues.*

One of the best ways to help Georgia Strait is to become a **MONTHLY DONOR**

Monthly donations provide the reliability GSA needs to plan, make strategic decisions and leverage matching funds. A donation of \$10, \$20 or \$25 a month deducted automatically from your bank account or credit card makes a world of difference to our work, and it earns you a valuable tax receipt.

Please contact us to become a MONTHLY DONOR
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Denman Island shoreline © Mike Heller, photokaz.com