

Georgia Strait Alliance

WINTER **NEWSLETTER** 2026

Caring for the Salish Sea, together

The Salish Sea has a way of reminding us that nothing exists on its own. Water flows from mountain streams and rivers into bays and inlets, carrying nutrients and life from the watershed to the sea. Herring feed salmon, salmon feed orcas, and healthy coastal waters sustain the people and communities who call this place home. Everything is connected.

Over the past year, we have seen that connection reflected in the people who care for this place. Indigenous Nations are leading stewardship and renewing relationships with their lands and waters. Communities are finding new ways to prepare for a changing climate. Scientists, advocates, boaters, fishers, and conservation partners are sharing knowledge and building solutions. And people across the region continue to ask an important question: what can I do to help?

At GSA, our role is to help connect those efforts: bringing people together, building relationships, sharing knowledge, amplifying voices, and creating opportunities to turn concern into action. Sometimes that means standing up for the species and ecosystems that cannot speak for themselves. Sometimes it means creating space for Indigenous leadership, supporting communities as they prepare for a changing climate, or bringing coastal perspectives into decisions being made far from the water. We create spaces for conversations, help amplify voices, support local action, and bring the perspective of the Salish Sea into broader discussions about its future.

We are a small but mighty organization, but this work has never been ours alone. It belongs to the many people who lend their time, knowledge, generosity, stories, and voices. As we look ahead, we carry that spirit with us. From watershed to sea, we are part of one connected story—and together, we can help shape what comes next. Thank you for being a part of it!





GET INVOLVED

Visit our Get involved page to see the latest events, actions and ways that you can get involed to protect the Salish Sea.

georgiastrait.org/get-involved



Panelists, russ elliott, Chief Jim Hornbrook, Edem Luymes, and Candela Cerpa at Salish Sea at a Crossroads discussion & letter writing event. Image: Maithili Devadas

Orca Action

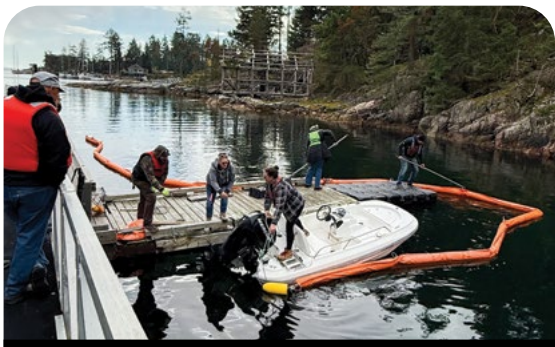
Fall and winter have brought an even busier season for Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) and Salish Sea protection. While GSA remains actively involved in provincial litigation over Roberts Bank Terminal 2 (RBT2), the federal government's legislative agenda has required us to shift gears. Bill C-39 and Bill C-5 represent legislative steps toward overhauling Canada's regulatory approval system for major infrastructure and resource projects, with a focus on accelerating development and attracting investment. Bill C-5 also introduced Projects of National Interest (PONIs), creating new pathways for major projects such as the Pacific Link Pipeline and RBT2 to move forward.

We focused on helping communities understand what these changes mean for environmental protection, Indigenous rights, community wellbeing, SRKW, and democratic decision-making. GSA brought together Indigenous, legal, academic, and environmental leaders through events and panels, helping communities navigate this rapidly changing landscape and take action. Our call to protect the Species at Risk Act's jeopardy clause—a fundamental safeguard for SRKW—generated more than 5,000 actions, followed by more than 1,400 actions against the Pacific Link Pipeline and around 1500 for RBT2's PONI designation. Thank you for taking action with us!

The challenges are growing, but so is our collective response. Together, we'll keep showing up, speaking up, and turning concern into action for a healthy Salish Sea and the communities, salmon, herring, and orcas that call it home. And we're not slowing down, with our advocacy continuing in Ottawa and beyond!

Marine Contaminants & Governance

We continued building practical capacity to protect the Salish Sea through spill preparedness, boater outreach, water quality advocacy, and wild salmon protection. This year's annual Clean Marine BC Spill Response Training took place in ƛaʔamɛn (Klah ah men) - Lund with instructors from Waterways Environmental. We brought together 19 participants from



Clean Marine BC Spill Response Training in ƛaʔamɛn (Klah ah men). Image: Jacob Banting



Orca Club

The Orca Club at West Sechelt Elementary continues to support GSA through fundraising and advocacy, having raised nearly $5,000 toward their $10,000 goal by 2030!

Thank you to our Salish Sea champions!

Friends of the Salish Sea

GSA supporters, friends, and partners gathered for a special fundraising evening at the waterfront home of board member Gina Lazarowich and her partner Tony on Bowen Island. Joined by MP Patrick Weiler, MLA Jeremy Valeriote, and Mayor Andrew Leonard, we shared conversations about the future of our coast and communities. Guests also enjoyed a marine spill response demonstration by Nigel Bennett of Aquaguard.

7 boating facilities including fuel docks, harbour authorities, marinas, and local aquaculture teams, strengthening local readiness for marine spill response.

We ramped up boater outreach across Victoria and the Saanich-Gulf Islands, with two staff connecting directly with boaters to promote practices that reduce the environmental impacts of boating. More than 500 Clean Boater Kits were distributed this summer, including spill-prevention tools and our popular Guide to Green Boating. On Cortes Island, Cortes Community Docks opened an education pod featuring GSA materials at a popular boating destination and gateway to Desolation Sound Marine Park.

GSA also continued engaging on the future of the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, working with partners to advocate for improved treatment technologies and to better understand their potential implications for water quality and marine ecosystems. At the same time, we continued developing the Derelict Vessels Advisory Circle.

From docks and marinas to treatment plants and coastal communities, we continue building the partnerships and practical tools needed to protect the Salish Sea—one action at a time.

Indigenous Sovereignty & Stewardship

We continue to strengthen relationships and support Indigenous-led stewardship across the Salish Sea. This summer, we were honoured to be invited as witnesses by SȾÁUTW̱ (Tsawout) First Nation for their Journey to Nisqually, landing at Tixen Tswout Beach. It was another meaningful opportunity to stay connected, strengthen relationships, and deepen our commitment to working together for a healthy Salish Sea.

We are also building new relationships with QENTOL,YEN/W̱SÁNEĆ Marine Guardians and Malahat Nation. We were honoured to bring Indigenous representatives from both communities to Ottawa this summer to participate in Whales in Our Nature, elevating Indigenous perspectives on Southern Resident killer whale recovery. The final sessions of Whale Week highlighted Indigenous leadership in ocean stewardship, with discussions on local monitoring, guardianship, and harvesting, followed by a roundtable exploring spatial tools for whale protection and sustainable ocean use.



russ elliott, Beatrice Frank, Briony Penn and Chief Eric Pelkey at the Herring Rising fundraiser in Esquimalt

Together with the W̱SÁNEĆ Hereditary Chiefs, Herring Conservation and Restoration Society and local partners, we also launched Herring Rising, a campaign to protect and restore herring and the ecosystems and communities that depend on them. This fall, we gathered at Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavillon for an evening of conversation, learning, and fundraising, featuring speakers Chief Eric Pelkey, Dr. Sarah Ohayon, and lawyer John Rich. The evening was a powerful reminder that protecting herring means protecting food systems, Indigenous rights, ocean ecosystems, and the future of the Salish Sea as everything is connected from the watershed to the sea.

Out and about across the Salish Sea

Building connections, strengthening community

It's been a busy and vibrant summer and fall for GSA! From Victoria's Dragon Boat Festival and farmers markets to Orca Days on Pender and Saturna, Salt Spring Island, White Rock, qathet, the Ocean Film Festival, and beyond, our team has been out connecting with communities across the Salish Sea. We've met hundreds of people, shared stories, sparked conversations, and talked about how we can protect what we love. Thank you for showing up, sharing your stories, and supporting the Salish Sea. These connections are what keep us going.



Jade Baird and Maithili Devedas at False Creek Festival. Image: Chelsie Xavier-Blower





Hazel de Haas promoting Climate Ready Now! (right) at the Heat Dome Commemoration Walk in Victoria. Image (left): Beatrice Frank

Resilient Coastal Communities

Five years after the 2021 BC Heat Dome, extreme heat, longer fire seasons, flooding, and ecological disruption are increasingly part of life across the Salish Sea. Communities are adapting, but they cannot do it alone. We need investment in climate preparedness, healthy ecosystems, and solutions that address the root causes of the climate crisis.

That's why we launched Climate Ready Now! on June 28 during the Heat Dome Commemoration Walk in Victoria, honouring the 619 people who lost their lives. GSA joined other speakers to reflect on extreme heat and the urgent need for climate-resilient communities.

Climate Ready Now! is about envisioning the future we want, elevating community voices, and building collective power for a thriving, climate-ready Salish Sea. Want to learn more and stay engaged? We'll be in Victoria this fall with a Climate Resilience Dialogue Series, followed by a Storytelling 101 workshop series in the new year. These are exciting opportunities to connect, share stories, and imagine a future together where Salish Sea communities from the watershed to the sea are resilient, connected, and ready for what's ahead.

30 x 30

At the national level, GSA continued contributing to Canada's Nature Strategy, released in April 2026. We participated in the Pacific Dialogue on the Nature Strategy and Marine Conservation, where NGOs, academia, industry, and government discussed the future of marine conservation in Canada. The dialogue explored how federal commitments—including 30x30—can translate into meaningful progress for marine ecosystems. And we brought the Salish Sea to the table!

GSA also partnered with conservation organizations to provide input on Marine Conservation Target initiatives in the Pacific Region, including the Glass Sponge Reef–Rockfish Conservation Area Project and the Scott Islands Marine National Wildlife Area. We supported expanding marine protection through new marine refuges and advocated for stronger protections in Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound.

GSA also joined environmental, fisheries, and conservation leaders at the BC Liberal Pacific Caucus retreat in Victoria, bringing Salish Sea priorities directly to federal decision-makers. Healthy marine ecosystems and thriving coastal communities must go hand in hand with economic development. We called for strong species-at-risk protections as major projects accelerate, meaningful conservation and cumulative-impact assessment in project decisions, and a timely, science-based transition away from open-net pen salmon farming by 2029, developed with Indigenous Nations, communities, and workers.

Cover images: credit Jade Baird (top) and Liz Lane at the People's MOU Day of Action in Victoria (bottom)



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Donate today!

Your support matters. Donate today to help turn hard-won victories into lasting protection for the Salish Sea. Your support will help us work alongside communities, scientists, governments, and First Nations to push for bold action on coastal resilience, climate, orca protection, and safeguarding the entire Salish Sea watershed for future generations.

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