



'Four Anchors' for False Creek!

The results from the independent auditor have come in: False Creek Harbour Authority (FCHA) has scored extremely well in its recent Clean Marine BC audit.

As a result, at the annual conference of the Harbour Authority Association of BC in January, Georgia Strait Alliance presented FCHA with its new **Clean Marine BC Eco-Rating**—the first BC marina to receive a "Four Anchor" rating. (Five anchors is the highest possible rating under the new program.)

Numerous speakers at the conference cited FCHA's activities and policies as examples of environmental best practices. In fact, FCHA had already been recognized as a leader in environmental facility management, receiving Fisheries and Oceans Canada's National Environmental Stewardship award in 2008.

While Westport Marina in Sidney was certified two years ago under the pilot stage of Clean Marine BC, FCHA was the first BC facility to sign up for the full-fledged program after we launched it a year ago. Over the past 18 months, FCHA has been working hard to bring their policies and procedures in line with the Clean Marine BC Policy.

Among the many changes they have made at their Fisherman's Wharf facility in downtown Vancouver are the installation of a sewage pump-out station and a major upgrade to storm water management, with oil absorbent filters in all storm drains.



False Creek Harbour Authority photo

False Creek Harbour Authority scored 'Four Anchors' in an audit for Clean Marine BC.

They've also upgraded all their lighting to be energy efficient, and improved recycling efforts. Along with recycling paper, plastic, cardboard and waste oils, they have implemented a program to collect unwanted or broken electronics for reuse or recycling, as well as fluorescent lights, batteries and propane tanks.

FCHA is also using recycled and refillable office supplies and providing important education to its diverse

customer base. The educational efforts have included participation in GSA's popular Bilge Pad distribution project, information and articles in FCHA's seasonal newsletter and new environmental signage—along with many hours on the docks, talking with boat owners about ways to protect the harbour's environment.

Congratulations to all the folks at False Creek, including the Board of Directors, Manager Art Childs, Assistant Manager

continued page 2

- The southern resident killer whales have recently had a **baby boom**—great news for the endangered animals! The three pods gave birth to five new calves in 2009, and a sixth was spotted in January. Although the young whales have many challenges ahead (for example, finding enough Chinook salmon to nourish them), and about 50% of killer whale calves die in their first year, researchers believe they are all still alive, so far. The births bring their population up to 88 individuals.

What's New in the Strait?

- Metro Vancouver is building a sustainability academy focused on sewage treatment and resource recovery, in partnership with UBC and with federal and provincial support. The **Annacis Centre of Excellence** (dubbed "Poop U." by the media), to be located at the Annacis Island wastewater treatment plant, will explore technologies for using human waste as a resource while reducing the impacts of sewage discharges and fighting climate change.

Four Anchors *continued*

Mike Loy, and former staffer (now manager at Ladner Harbour Authority), Chris Lougheed. (See photo page 11.)

Despite the great things FCHA is already doing, they'll be continuing their efforts to further improve their environmental performance. As Mike Loy says, "We're going after those five anchors now!"

Several more facilities are now undergoing their Clean Marine BC eco-rating audits and we expect the results to be back shortly (see sidebar).

The Clean Marine BC Policy appeared in the Summer 2009 issue of Strait Talk and is available online.

Clean Marine BC is growing

So far, nine marinas are officially participating in the CMBC program; all have signed the Clean Marine BC Policy, but most have not yet received their Eco-Rating. Here's the status as of early February:

Independent audit completed and Eco-Rating received:

- False Creek Harbour Authority (rating: Four Anchors)
- Westport Marina (rating: Three Anchors)

Audit checklist completed, awaiting independent audit to earn Eco-Rating:

- Maple Bay Marina
- Shelter Island Marina

Working on improvements towards undertaking the Eco-Rating audit:

- Canoe Cove Marina
- Gorge Harbour Marina
- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority
- Taku Resort and Marina
- Van Isle Marina

Check our website for updates

Strait Thoughts: Turning Twenty!

by Christianne Wilhelmson,
Managing Director

In 1990, a group of caring and concerned citizens recognized that the Strait of Georgia was under threat—and that no one was speaking on her behalf. In April of that year, they invited local officials and First Nations to join them in publicly launching a new campaign to "Save the Strait". Georgia Strait Alliance was born.

In the years since then, a long list of people have worked, volunteered, donated money, goods and services, and otherwise assisted GSA in more ways than we can measure. Their hard work and care means that 20 years later, we have a lot to celebrate—and we hope you'll join us!

The plans are still unfolding, so keep an eye on our website, our e-newsletter *Strait Up* and our member mailings for the various ways we will be honouring this special year. The environmental movement does not celebrate its achievements often enough (see p. 5 for how we did our best in January to change that pattern). So we'll be taking some opportunities this year to do just that; look for us in your community and join in some fun!

In this celebratory year, we'll also be paying special attention to the future—because we have learned, through our 20 years of advocacy and educational work, that GSA's mission has never been clearer or the need for our existence more vital. There is growing pressure on the Strait of Georgia—now, along with the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound, officially part of the "Salish Sea"—and never has it been so important for GSA to be here to gauge the threats and take action to curb them.

That is why we are launching our new "mapping and connecting" project, to deepen GSA's connection with communities around the Strait and better understand our region's health (see p. 8 for more). The project is timely,

because during this 20th anniversary year, we'll also be reviewing GSA's overall strategic direction to ensure that our organization continues to lead on the issues that matter most in this region.

As we envision the future threats that the Strait will face, the bottom line is that GSA's years of experience and success will come to naught if we don't have the funds to hire and adequately equip the talented people we need for this vital work. This is why we are very excited to announce our new Georgia Strait Alliance Endowment Fund, established with the help of the Vancouver Foundation and a very generous individual (see next page). This enormous first step will help to ensure that GSA has a sustainable source of funding for years to come.

We are aiming to make the Endowment Fund grow and—once it becomes large enough—be a reliable and consistent source of funding, one that can allow GSA to better weather the vagaries of the economy and address emerging issues more quickly. We invite you to learn how you can contribute to this Fund as part of your legacy planning.

A 20th birthday is worth honouring. In my personal life, turning 20 marked a time of pride in reaching personal goals and the excitement of new beginnings, as I graduated from university and headed off to backpack around Australia. In a similar way, 20 years after GSA was formed, we're celebrating our past and looking forward to the exciting times and challenges that lie ahead. The Strait of Georgia has an effective and experienced voice in GSA—and we hope you'll be with us as we work to ensure that all of our region's citizens can celebrate the joys and beauty of the Strait for a very long time to come.



GSA's New Endowment Fund

GSA is thrilled to announce the recent creation of something we've long wished for: our own Georgia Strait Alliance Endowment Fund. The new Fund will be administered through the Vancouver Foundation, and it has been made possible thanks to a very generous initial donation, made **in honour of Captain William Iain Stewart and Joan Milne Stewart**.

It is our intention—and the desire of Joan and her family—to see the Endowment Fund grow, so that it can become a reliable and sustainable source of funding to support GSA's vital work for many years to come. We invite you to join in this effort (see column).

We wanted to let you know a little bit about the remarkable woman who has made the Endowment Fund possible. We thank Joan's grandson, Iain Stewart, for the following article.

Gazing at the panoramic ocean view from her living room, Joan Milne Stewart reflects on the beauty of BC's coastal waters and their central role in her adult life. Born in the Lower Mainland and married for over 50 years to a master mariner, she understands the delicate balance of our waterways, home to a vibrant commercial shipping industry as well as a teeming array of sea life.

"My late husband Iain was originally from Scotland and spent his working life at sea," said Joan. "When he saw BC for the first time as a young man, he was so impressed he apparently determined right then and there that this was where he wanted to stay." Iain and Joan met not long after that fateful decision and the rest, as they say, is history.

Iain spent the latter part of his career as a BC Coast Pilot, responsible for the safe navigation of commercial ships up and down the coast. "BC has such a complex coastline, and he took the safety of the ships, their crews, and the marine environment very seriously," said Joan.

An avid outdoorsman, Iain Stewart played as hard as he worked. He loved the solitude of cross country skiing through the silent, snow covered forest, or canoeing on a lake's still waters at dusk. His appreciation of BC's stunning natural environment was shared with his family through fondly recalled camping trips and visits to the family cabin at 108 Mile in the Cariboo.

Joan, too, fostered a love of nature in her children. An early proponent of the concept of "reduce, reuse, recycle," she has long recognized the need to be a steward of the environment.

"I've supported a variety of excellent causes over the years, many devoted to the care of animals," she said. "The work of the Georgia Strait Alliance fits well with that focus. Our family has a great connection with the marine environment, and through this endowment I hope to ensure that my 12 grandchildren will be able to continue to enjoy all that it has to offer for years to come."



Joan Milne Stewart has long recognized the need to be a steward of the environment.

You can help by...

A CASH GIFT

- By mail: you can donate by cheque, payable to the Vancouver Foundation; be sure to indicate "Georgia Strait Alliance Endowment Fund" in the memo line. Mail to the Vancouver Foundation, #1200, 555 West Hastings St., Box 12132, Harbour Centre, Vancouver, BC V6B 4N6.

- Online: at www.vancouverfoundation.ca, click on "Donate Now" and select "Georgia Strait Alliance Endowment Fund".

Either way, you'll receive a charitable tax receipt from the Vancouver Foundation for the full amount.

A GIFT OF SECURITIES

Donating publicly-traded securities to our Endowment Fund can reduce your capital gains tax as well as giving you a useful tax credit for the full market value of the donated securities. Securities can be donated to GSA through the Vancouver Foundation; in order to ensure their acceptance and proper transfer, it is important that you contact the Foundation's Development and Donor Services Department for the necessary information and transfer forms (call 604-688-2204).

A DEFERRED GIFT

You can make a deferred gift directly to the Georgia Strait Alliance Endowment Fund as part of your legacy planning. Deferred gifts can include bequests, RRSP or RRIF beneficiary designations, life insurance, charitable remainder trust or gifts of residual interest. Please contact the Vancouver Foundation (604-688-2204) or GSA (250-753-3459) for details on how to do this.



Photos courtesy of the Stewart family.

Joan's twelve reasons for supporting GSA's work: her grandchildren.

Celebrating the steps to success:

Victoria approves its plan while Vancouver ponders choices

They aren't pouring the cement quite yet, but the **Capital Regional District** (CRD) took an enormous step forward just before Christmas, approving a plan that will finally bring sewage treatment to Victoria.

The plan lays out the basic structure of the new treatment system and leaves open the possibility for many future improvements. In particular, the CRD will be working with communities to find the best sites for the five (or possibly more) new treatment plants in order to create the greatest benefit, particularly for using the sewage as a source of heat and energy. The plan has been sent to the Province for approval, which is expected soon.

The magnitude of this accomplishment cannot be underplayed. The CRD has come close to taking this step in the past, but had never quite made it this far. For close to 40 years, its dominant theme was denial that its raw sewage could possibly have any impact on our coastal waters—with occasional discussion of treatment as something they should perhaps consider. Finally, in 2006, armed with scientific evidence that harm had already been done and that the risks of continuing to discharge toxins were becoming unacceptable, BC's Minister of Environment acted—mandating that

Victoria treat its sewage.

After a lot of hard work by the CRD, community leaders, environmentalists and other members of the public, sewage treatment is finally on its way. Now, we need to ensure that this progressive plan continues to develop—becoming a showcase for environmental responsibility and advanced technology.

On the other side of the Strait, **Metro Vancouver** is in the final throes of approving its sewage plan. As we go to press, its Board has still not made a final decision on when to upgrade its primary treatment plants that serve the North Shore (Lions Gate) and Vancouver (Iona).

Last fall, Metro Vancouver's Waste Management Committee (WMC) approved an updated plan aimed at recovering resources from sewage, and they recommended that the region commit to upgrading both the primary plants by 2020—an improvement over the previous plan, which had aimed at 2020 for Lions Gate and 2030 for Iona.

Regrettably, the Board did not embrace the WMC's leadership, and has delayed approval of the plan. So our efforts will continue to get a commitment from all levels of government to support these upgrades by 2020 at the latest.

“For leading municipalities and private corporations, consideration for the environment goes beyond compliance with regulations to pollution prevention and a precautionary approach. Leading municipalities now recognize that the cost of protecting the environment is dwarfed by the cost of not protecting it, over the long term. In addition, thoughtful municipal leaders recognize that the environmental legacy left for future citizens is the responsibility of current decision makers.”

From Strategic Commitment to the Environment by Municipal Corporations—A Best Practice by the National Guide to Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure (National Research Council and FCM, 2003), at pp. 1-2.

To add your voice to the call for federal financial support for the plan, please sign our petition at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/2020treatment (if you received this newsletter in the mail, you'll find a copy enclosed).

Check our website in the weeks ahead to find out if we'll be seeing secondary treatment in Vancouver and the North Shore by 2020 and to keep up with the latest news in Victoria:

- www.GeorgiaStrait.org/vancouversewage
- www.GeorgiaStrait.org/victoriasewage



Photo courtesy City of Vancouver

A heat pump recovers thermal energy from sewage at the new False Creek Neighbourhood Energy Utility

Saving resources!

While Metro Vancouver may be slow in upgrading its primary sewage treatment plants, the **City of Vancouver** has taken a lead in resource recovery from sewage.

Its new Southeast False Creek Neighbourhood Energy Utility, which opened in January, is using wastewater to produce heat for all new buildings in Southeast False Creek.

Sewage is pumped into the facility and passed through heat pumps to heat water, used to provide heat and hot water. The sewage is then pumped into the city's collection system and goes on to the Iona treatment plant in Richmond.

The energy produced at the new Utility will provide heat and hot water for the Athletes Village along with thousands of homes and businesses—meeting about 70% of the neighbourhood's annual energy needs, and reducing carbon emissions by more than half of what they would be if heating with natural gas. As well, the Utility will use surplus solar energy generated on the roof tops of several buildings at the Olympic Village buildings.

The neighbourhood plant is the first of its kind in North America.



Lara Tessaro, John Werring, Peter Ronald, Christianne Wilhelmson, Mr. Floatie, Tyler Ahlgren, Jim Mclsaac, David Lane.

In late January, GSA joined with community leaders, government officials and other local supporters of sewage treatment—including Mr. Floatie who keeps popping up in these photos!—to celebrate the Capital Regional District’s submission of its sewage treatment plan to the Province. It took a broad range of individuals to bring Victoria to this point, and though the work is not yet over, the occasion was a great chance to honour how far the region has come in the last few years in its commitment to sewage treatment.

Photos by Lara Tessaro and friends.



Gagan Leekha, Claire Hutton, James Skwarok.



John Werring, Mr. Floatie, Lisa Matthaas.



Zoë Nott.



Mayor Dean Fortin (Victoria), Saanich Councilor Judy Brownoff (Chair of the sewage committee).



Lara Tessaro, Jim Mclsaac, David Lane.

Susan Howatt and MLA Rob Fleming (Environment Critic and former Victoria Councillor).



Susan Howatt, Claire Hutton, Mr. Floatie, Christianne Wilhelmson.

Mr. Floatie and MP Denise Savoie (former City Councillor)



Fish Farming—the year to turn it around!

by Ruby Berry

Something curious has been happening lately in our salmon aquaculture campaign: we've been getting support from unusual sources for a transition to closed containment. Hopefully this is an indication that we may finally be reaching the critical mass that will lead to real change!

Over the past year, our educational outreach has taken us to communities along the Fraser River, far from the coast and the immediacy of open net cage salmon farms. The awesome journey of our wild Pacific salmon links us to people along the Fraser Canyon and Thompson River, which is why people in these communities are now raising their voices and joining us in calling for a rational solution to the problems caused by net cage salmon farming.

Together, we've been speaking out about the need for new technologies that can provide economic support to coastal communities and reduce the challenges

to young wild salmon trying to survive to adulthood. A number of Members of Parliament, from BC's Interior as well as the coast, have been hearing from their constituents about the need for federal support for closed containment systems.

Here at home, Strathcona Regional District Directors agreed upon a condition for their approval of the proposed new salmon farm at Gunner Point, at the northern end of our region: that the farm be moved out of net cages, into closed containment, as soon as economically viable. While this condition is subject to interpretation—and as we've pointed out to the Regional District, Gunner Point is a poor site for any salmon farm, even a closed system—it seems clear that the Regional District Directors see the future of the industry to be in closed systems.

There are indications that some key players in the food industry would agree. A number of suppliers, including BC's

Overwaita Food Group, recently made a commitment to sourcing sustainable seafood and phasing out salmon grown in open net cages (which should help increase the demand and availability of salmon grown in closed systems). Look for sustainably sourced seafood in your local Save-on-Foods, and let your grocer know you support this step!

This shift is happening south of the border as well. The Monterey Bay Aquarium recently awarded its first green rating for farmed salmon to the closed containment salmon farmers at Sweet Spring Coho in Washington State.

By far, the most dramatic shift seems to be within the aquaculture industry itself. Three small-scale closed containment salmon farms are currently operating in BC, and some exciting projects are in the works. A number of entrepreneurs, with closed system projects in various stages of development, are currently seeking funding and government support.

And for the first time, it's not just small independent companies showing interest in closed containment. BC's largest aquaculture company, Marine Harvest Canada (owned by the Norwegian global giant, Marine Harvest) has announced that they will be developing a closed system, commercial-scale pilot project here in BC. Marine Harvest has agreed to work with GSA and our partners in the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform to design a system that addresses our many concerns about net cage fish farming.

GSA has been calling for the transition to closed containment for almost 15 years, and now this call for change is echoing across local and regional governments, senior government committees, the scientific community, retailers and more.

Perhaps the tide really is turning, at last. Is closed containment inevitable? We hope so—but we're not so naïve to think it's time to put our feet up and relax. GSA will keep working hard on this issue, and with your help, this could be the year we turn it all around!

Emergency measures needed immediately

While the progress on closed containment is very exciting, we need emergency measures—immediately—to protect wild salmon. GSA is calling for the removal of net cage farms along the wild salmon migration route bordering the north and east sides of Quadra Island.

We are using the term “Wild Salmon Narrows” to describe this route and the surrounding area, located at the northern end of the Strait of Georgia. The term describes the area well, as it is made up of narrow, constricted passages that wild salmon must take on their journey as juveniles to the open sea and as spawning adults, back to their birth rivers. Unfortunately for the wild salmon, these routes are thickly lined with open net cage salmon farms—a perfect environment for the proliferation of sea lice and disease, which can be deadly to young wild salmon.

Recently we received support in principle from a think-tank of prominent scientists, who gathered at Simon Fraser University to discuss the possible causes of the 2009 Fraser River sockeye collapse, and what steps are needed to protect this iconic species. Among the scientists' recommendations was a call for the experimental removal of salmon farms from wild salmon migration routes—what we've been calling for in our Wild Salmon Narrows Campaign, although we are insisting it must be a permanent removal, rather than experimental. A growing number of citizen's organizations have signed our Wild Salmon Narrows Declaration. You can learn more at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/wildsalmonnarrows.

On the road for wild salmon

Over the past eight months GSA has been traveling with the Save our Kids Salmon, who have been turning up in BC communities here on the coast and along the Fraser River—all the way up to Quesnel! They have found many friends and supporters along the way, as you'll see in these photos, which show a few of the events they've attended.

Throughout this journey, our colourful fishy friends have been talking about the

impacts of net cage salmon farms and why it's so important to remove the farms from wild salmon migration routes. They're feeling increasingly urgent, as their young will be leaving the rivers over the next few months to begin their perilous life in the sea. The Save Our Kids Salmon are hoping that by then, at least one migratory corridor through the Wild Salmon Narrows region will be clear of sea lice-producing fish farms.

You can help them by signing the petition: www.georgiastrait.org/wildsalmonnarrows.

You can also follow the continuing journey of the Save Our Kids Salmon at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/saveourkids.



At the Wild Salmon Circle Rally in Vancouver.



In Campbell River, asking the Strathcona Regional District Directors to turn down a zoning bylaw for two new open netcage salmon farms.



Visiting the office of Cariboo-Chilcotin MLA Donna Barnett.



At Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Chuck Strahl's office in Lillooet.



Attending the Salmon in the Canyon Festival, in Lillooet.



Spawning the next generation at the confluence of the Fraser and Quesnel Rivers.

Photos by Ruby Berry, Michelle Young, Judy Bodaly

Connecting for a healthy Strait

Throughout Georgia Strait Alliance's 20 years of advocacy and education in the Strait of Georgia, we have taken pride in working at the community level at the same time as we address public policy at the regional, provincial and even national levels. We've managed to do this through being involved in community-based events every year and through working with and supporting local groups in their conservation efforts.

This tradition has kept GSA connected to communities and to the on-the-ground issues, both small and large, that affect our region. But too often, time and resource constraints have limited our ability to be as deeply connected to local efforts as we would wish.

This is why we're excited to announce that, thanks to the generous support of the Vancouver Foundation, we are

launching a new project: "**Mapping the Region and Connecting the People**". Over the next two years we'll be gathering and sharing information on the many diverse and creative community-based mapping initiatives that are underway in the Georgia Basin—initiatives that can collectively highlight the current state of the Strait and the threats it faces. We will be visiting many communities, to learn what you value about our spectacular inland sea and to explore the many growing pressures on it.

We'll also be creating a one-stop, online portal that will provide easy access to information about the Strait of Georgia. With your input, we will also be developing guiding principles to help communities all around the region carry out local planning in a way that respects and supports the long term health of Canada's most at-risk natural environment: our collective home, the Strait of Georgia.

Film nights benefit GSA

In November, despite a torrential downpour, 85 hardy souls braved the storm and cozied up inside Nanaimo's Avalon theatre to see the acclaimed film, "Saving Luna". The film tells the heartwarming but tragic, true tale of Luna, the young killer whale that, separated from his family on the rugged west coast of Vancouver Island, seemed determined to make humans his surrogate family. Suzanne Chisholm, co-director, was on hand to provide further insight into the controversial and complex story.

In January, Gabriolans gathered at the Roxy Theatre to watch Damien Gillis's powerful new film, "Farmed Salmon Exposed: The Global Reach of the Norwegian Salmon Farming Industry". GSA's Michelle Young was on hand to lead the discussion that followed on the industry's impacts in BC and the prospects for real change to protect wild salmon.

Proceeds from both evenings went to support GSA's work. For making the events possible, we thank: Brandy Lindskog, the Avalon Theatre, Carie McAlister, The Roxy Theatre, Suzanne Chisholm, Michael Parfit and Damien Gillis.

If you'd like to host a screening of "Farmed Salmon Exposed" in your community, please contact Michelle Young (michelle@GeorgiaStrait.org or 250-753-3459).

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

New opportunities on the beach

Laurie MacBride photo

Do you like being on the beach and getting to know the resident critters? Do you find yourself enthusing to friends about the local marine life? If so, you might like to become one of GSA's citizen scientists!

Depending on volunteer interest, we plan to hold two training sessions this summer in an effort to extend our popular intertidal studies to the **Nanaimo/Gabriola** area and the **Comox Valley**. If you live in one of these areas, consider signing up, to learn what you'll need to know to participate in GSA's annual intertidal surveys.

GSA volunteers carry out the surveys at major low tides each spring and summer, identifying and counting the plants and animals they find within square "quadrat" frames laid out along the beach at specific tide heights. We follow a well-established scientific method, and most studies take about three hours. The data that we collect is entered into the online Community Mapping Network database.

We have three types of volunteer positions available:

- **team leaders**, who organize the dates, locations, equipment and team participation,
- **team members**, who complete the surveys, and
- **data entry volunteers**, to enter the collected data.

Come out and get your feet wet this summer! If you are interested in the central Vancouver Island training sessions, or if you would like to join our existing **Victoria** or **Pender Island** teams, please contact Cathy Booter (cathy@GeorgiaStrait.org or 250-753-3459).



Spring maintenance—the Green Way

by Mike Richards

Ahhh... The snow (what little we had) has melted and spring is in the air. That means it's time to think about getting our boats ready for another summer on the water. Not surprisingly, most boaters have a bit of work to do, so now is the perfect opportunity to look at "greening up our act".

With interest in all things environmental sweeping the globe, it's worth thinking about how we can get our boats ready while doing our part to keep our waters and families healthy. After a long winter without much activity, the grime and mould may have taken hold, engines will need some attention and systems will need checking. Depending on where we keep our boat and how much we've used it over the winter, the amount and type of work will vary—but it can all be done in a green way.

SLIME AND GRIME

The products we use to clean our vessels generally contribute to grey water discharges or, if the boat is cleaned onshore, stormwater runoff—and both can pose a threat to the marine and aquatic environments. Most boat cleaners contain toxins like phosphates, chlorine, inorganic salts and metals. Even the grey water that we produce during boating season from our sinks and showers can contain harmful chemicals from soaps, shampoos and detergents.

You can make your own non-toxic solutions for various cleaning jobs by consulting Georgia Strait Alliance's Guide to Green Boating (which can be downloaded free of charge from www.GeorgiaStrait.org).

If you prefer to use commercial products, look for independent certification showing these are environmentally responsible—for example, the logo from Environment Canada's "Environmental Choice" Ecologo program, with its distinctive design of three doves in a maple leaf. Many other "green" claims on labels can be deceiving.

Some products use the term "biodegradable", which can be misleading. Being biodegradable simply means that the product will break down into its individual components over time; it doesn't tell us how long this will take or how harmful the process or the end products will be. In fact, sometimes what a biodegradable product breaks into can be worse for the environment than the initial product! This kind of information is not normally readily available, so it's buyer (and marine ecosystems) beware!

Remember, if you are cleaning your bilge, the oily waste needs to be properly disposed of, and not just pumped overboard.

WHAT DOES "CLEAN" REALLY MEAN?

You can reduce the potential harm from cleaning products by reducing the amount you use. Often the amounts recommended on product labels are excessive, and a much smaller quantity will do the job just fine. It's worth noting that all surfactants (the ingredients that make the bubbles) can harm fish and other marine life, no matter what their source—so it's crucial to use only what is necessary.

Mike Richards photo



Mike Richards' Epic V during its annual spring haulout.

Other questions to ask yourself are how often and how well does the job need to be done. "What does clean really mean? Do I want just a clean boat? Or do I want a clean boat and healthy waters too?"

BABY YOUR BOTTOM

For those of us who keep our boats in the water year round, spring usually brings a haul-out and some bottom work. If you are applying anti-fouling paint, use a hard type or an eco-friendly alternative. See our website for more information.

If possible, haul out at a facility that is Clean Marine BC certified or that at least has signed onto the Clean Marine BC Policy. See our website for an up-to-date list of these marinas.

EASY ON YOUR ENGINE

By keeping your engine maintained and free of leaks you'll save on fuel and oil—and you'll keep hydrocarbons out of the water and reduce your toxic air emissions. Always use absorbent pads when changing fluids and filters.

IT'S A WRAP

If you've used shrink-wrap to protect your treasure, make sure you recycle it. Consider using a reusable boat cover next year instead.

Whether you moor your boat in fresh or saltwater or keep it in a dry land facility or on a trailer at home, be sure to use environmentally friendly practices and products to do all your spring cleaning and maintenance. That way we'll keep the waters we all love in tip-top shape.

(adapted from an article in Canadian Yachting)

There are many useful online sources for information on green boating products and practices. Here are a few of our favourites:

www.GeorgiaStrait.org
www.ecologo.org
www.epaint.com
www.alexmilne.com
www.oillift.net
www.ecover.com
www.seventhgeneration.com

From Georgian Bay to the Georgia Basin: Protecting our watery world

This is the second in our ongoing series of articles about some of the amazing people behind GSA's work.

by Lisa Herman

GSA's Salmon Aquaculture Campaign Coordinator, Ruby Berry, fell in love with the aquatic world at an early age. She grew up in Ontario, spending her summers in and around Georgian Bay, learning to treasure those waters and the life they held.

In fact, fighting for the survival of BC's wild salmon, as Ruby does today, is not that much of a stretch from her early aspirations. She began by studying chemistry, hoping to become involved in environmental remediation of the Great Lakes. But, says Ruby, "I couldn't stand the thought of spending so much of my life in a lab!" Nor was she inspired by the type of studies that made up the remediation effort at that time. So she changed her mind about a career in science.

Ruby has always been passionate about social change as well as the environment, so has made it a priority to be engaged in activism in one way or another for most of her life. Before leaving Toronto in 1985 she had been involved over many years in various social action movements. When she arrived in BC in 1987 (after a year of sailing in the Mediterranean and Key West, and another year studying in Chicago), she settled in Clayoquot Sound—and quickly found herself immersed in forestry issues.

Living on a floathouse in the Sound, she built friendships with local fishermen and became steeped in the culture of BC's coastal fishing communities. She began working in a series of varied jobs within the commercial fishing industry, eventually settling in the Comox Valley. It was during this time that she came to understand the environmental and economic issues threatening BC's wild marine ecosystem and salmon fishery.

In 2006 Ruby was seeking a new career path when she happened upon GSA's posting for a Salmon Aquaculture campaign coordinator. She was already familiar with GSA through its strong public profile in the Comox Valley, and when she saw the posting, she says, "It was as if the job description was tailored to fit my resume!" It also helped that several of her close friends had been personally involved in GSA and had described their experiences in a very positive light, extolling



Ruby Berry, champion of wild salmon.

GSA's "culture" as well as the importance of its work. Needless to say, Ruby was a perfect fit for the job and has been with GSA ever since.

Nowadays, living on the Strait of Georgia with the Comox estuary as her front yard, she says she has come full circle, back to living out her childhood passion for the aquatic world. She has always been emotionally and spiritually attached to the water; she says that living near the water or working on it are essential to her well-being. Her rare spare time is divided between exploring the shores and waters of the estuary in her kayak, and turning her yard into a permaculture sanctuary.

She finds it inspiring to educate people about threats to the amazing marine ecosystem at our doorstep, but admits it can be discouraging to be so

aware of the plight of wild salmon. Ruby says her co-workers are one of the strongest motivating factors to keep working on these issues. "I think that even if we don't win in the end, these are the folks I want to be with—people who care about the incredible world we live in and are dedicated to its preservation."

Ruby's grandchildren are five and seven years old, and she wants them to live in a world with astounding natural ecosystems of "bats and bees, and salmon, and whales"—and this compels her to continue on in her campaign to improve the prospects for our wild salmon. She says the two children are "descendants of an unbroken line of wild fishermen, and it would be a tragedy to see this cultural inheritance disappear".

Ruby is thankful she has been able to travel up the Fraser River recently and engage with local people there about GSA's campaign to protect wild salmon from the impacts of fish farming. She says that the outpouring of support and commitment expressed by people she met was one of the most rewarding experiences she has ever had. "The trip that wild salmon make is awesome and astounding, as is the size and scope of the Fraser River." At GSA, we think Ruby is pretty awesome as well!

Photo by Julie Edwards

Your purchases support GSA

You can now help support Georgia Strait Alliance by purchasing many of your everyday household products through **the ieco community**, an online community marketplace that was created to support non-profit organizations.

The online marketplace sells only natural, healthy and environmentally responsible products that people use everyday (for example, toothpaste, shampoo, sunscreens, lotions, chocolate and household cleaners). The products are all from reputable brands, and they are priced comparatively to the same ones in local grocery stores. Best of all, when you purchase them from the online marketplace, you can donate 15% of the cost of your purchase to GSA. Check it out today at www.iecocommunity.com!



Photo by Elizabeth McLeod, HAABC

GSA's Mike Richards (L) presents False Creek Harbour Authority with its new Clean Marine BC "Four Anchor" Eco-Rating and Flag at the annual conference of the Harbour Authority Association of BC, held in Nanaimo in January. FCHA personnel (L to R): Mike Loy, Art Childs, Randy Cramer and Barry Curic (President). See story page 1.



Photo by David R. Messier

Did you know...

BC's coastal great blue herons return to their nesting colonies every February and March, with nearly half gathering in just five large breeding sites around southern Georgia Strait. In March or April, females lay 3 to 5 eggs and for the next month, both male and female incubate them. Within two months, the young reach their adult weight of 2 to 2.5 kg and are ready to leave the nest. Great blue herons live up to 10 years on average, even as long as 18 years—although fewer than 20% survive their first year.

Hérons are very sensitive to activity near their nests, especially early in the season. Though they can get used to day-to-day human activity, novel noises (such as sudden blasts of horns or chain saws) can cause them to leave their nests, making the young vulnerable to predators such as eagles. You can learn many more interesting facts about these amazing birds, the threats they face and how you can help, at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/greatblueheron.

GET YOUR FEET WET

At Georgia Strait Alliance, there is always far more work than our staff could possibly do, so the value of volunteers is immeasurable and we cherish their time and expertise. Opportunities abound to get involved with GSA, so come out and enjoy the fun! Here are some current volunteer needs:

- If you're not shy, please consider joining a GSA table at upcoming regional events to help promote awareness of the issues affecting the Strait. A great way to get involved for those that enjoy meeting and talking with people.
- Do you like getting down and dirty in the great outdoors? Then you should enjoy participating in our intertidal quadrat studies this spring or summer. Groups already converge on the beaches of Victoria and Pender Island, and we hope to start new groups in the Comox Valley and Nanaimo/Gabriola area as well. See page 8 for more info.
- Tiffany, our giant, eye-catching Salish Sea toilet (crafted by Briony Penn) is in need of paint touch-up—an ideal job for a meticulous Nanaimo-area handyperson.
- Nanaimoites wanting to hone their office skills may want to assist with our ongoing need for data entry or—if you are wanting something a bit more social—help with one of our newsletters or other mail-outs throughout the year.



Call our Nanaimo office for more information or to get involved (250-753-3459), or you can submit a volunteer form via our website (follow the links from "Act").

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One of the best ways you can help protect the Strait is to become a **monthly donor**. A donation of \$5, \$10 or \$20 a month—deducted automatically from your chequing account or credit card—makes a world of difference to our work. And it earns you a **valuable tax receipt**. To sign up as a monthly donor, call or email us today.

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