



DFO forced to pay in orca case

by Christianne Wilhelmson

For almost 20 years Georgia Strait Alliance has used the strength of the courts to ensure that laws created to protect the marine environment are effectively implemented. Ever since our first legal case in 1993, we have been able to bring a variety of concerns before the courts—and as indicated by recent rulings on the protection of killer whales and Nooksack dace, our legal actions are important to the health of aquatic wildlife.

These actions are made possible thanks to the excellent lawyers at Ecojustice, who provide us with pro bono representation, and GSA's donors, who help pay for the additional costs that are unavoidable in a legal case. Normally, courts order the losing party to reimburse the winner for these costs, but in cases involving public interest groups, courts rarely do this—so that even when we win a case, we never expect to see our costs refunded.

Now the unexpected has happened. In a surprise ruling in late April, the federal court awarded \$80,000 in costs to Ecojustice and its nine clients, including GSA, related to our fight for habitat protection for orcas under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. This means we will be receiving all the disbursements we have paid out over the past two years!

The ruling is wonderful news, but the reasons for it are even more surprising and meaningful. In simple terms, the court took the federal government to



task for its actions during the legal proceedings, saying the government had wasted the court's time in not working with us to find solutions.

In making his ruling, Justice James Russell agreed that the government forced us into litigation, relied on procedural arguments rather than any substantive evidence, and declined our efforts to negotiate a settlement that was in the best interest of the orcas—and that it acted this way “for no other purpose than to thwart the applicants’ attempts to bring important public issues before the court”.

At various points in his ruling, Justice Russell indicated that the government's evasive approach had caused our lawyers to waste a significant amount of time preparing for court. He included reference to a specific incident in which

they spent two days presenting evidence only to have the government Counsel agree to all our points; he stated that this was not only “a failure to admit a waste of time, but also a waste of the Court's time and judicial resources.” Most notably, he ruled that the government “behaved in an evasive and obstructive way and unnecessarily provoked and prolonged the litigation in this case”.

The earlier judgements in both our Nooksack dace and orca cases had made it clear that the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) was not appropriately implementing the *Species at Risk Act*, to the detriment of the species the *Act* was meant to protect. With this latest judgement, DFO has been chastised again, this time for wasting court time.

Ironically, we remain before the courts because DFO appealed part of the ruling on our orca case from last December—an indication that the government prefers to waste taxpayers' money trying to avoid implementing the *Species at Risk Act*, rather than fund DFO to do its job of protecting marine habitat and wildlife. It's worth asking, now that the government has been repeatedly reprimanded by the courts, when will they finally show the leadership needed to protect at-risk species in our coastal waters?

To learn more about our legal cases to protect at-risk species, see www.GeorgiaStrait.org/speciesatrisk.

Celebrate the
Sea Raffle

See page 11



Strait Thoughts: British Columbians really care

by Christianne Wilhelmsen,
Executive Director



If you are reading this newsletter, I know one thing for certain: you care about the health the Strait as much as I do. All of us at GSA—staff, contractors, board members and volunteers—have a deep and passionate connection to this region, which is why we work so hard to increase the understanding of the Strait of Georgia's importance to our health and well-being. But being immersed in this work all the time, it can make you believe that everyone shares our concerns and our passions. Do they?

It's a good question. Does everyone believe as we do that the Strait needs more protection, that oil spills are a major risk and that ocean acidification is something that is already impacting our region? GSA determines its priority issues and campaigns as a result of the information and input we get from a variety of sources, including scientists, our members and supporters, and the wider public through outreach, events, direct meetings and our growing Georgia Strait Map (see page 7). But how truly representative is this information? Recently, we took advantage of a polling opportunity to ask if our concerns were shared by most British Columbians.

In polling done in April 2011 by the collaborative project Organizing for

Change (www.organizingforchange.org), of which GSA is a founding member, we discovered that indeed, concerns for these issues were very high. In particular, when asked if they thought that Georgia Strait needed more protection, 70% of respondents said it did. In addition, 66% felt that "definitely" or "probably", not enough was being done to protect our coastal waters in light of the impacts from climate change.

And how do British Columbians as a whole feel about one significant step that could be made to protect our coastal waters—the declaration of a National Marine Conservation Area in the Southern Strait of Georgia? It turns out that 75% strongly or somewhat support this proposal, which is a message we will carry to the provincial and federal governments to show them how important this level of protection in the Strait is to all in the province.

And are British Columbians as concerned as GSA members are about oil spills in this region? If you read the story about tankers on page 8, you'll clearly see that the answer is a resounding YES!

As for ocean acidification—the 'silent sister' of rising sea levels and warming ocean temperatures, the other major

impacts of climate change—the poll results made it clear that the majority of British Columbians still don't know enough about this issue and the threats to the region. Specifically:

- 60% hadn't heard, or weren't sure if they'd heard of ocean acidification
- 56% didn't think or weren't sure if there was an impact locally
- over 60% did not know that the marine environment can be a more effective carbon sink than land-based grasslands and forests.

(Watch for info on ocean acidification and its effects on our region in our next issue of *Strait Talk*; in the meantime you can learn more at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/oceanacidification.)

What does this all signify? It means that British Columbians, even those outside our region, value the Strait of Georgia and want to protect it from all sorts of threats—and that on some issues, GSA must do a better job of providing educational information. It also tells us that connecting with people—in person, online and via polls—is incredibly important, as we continue to build the powerful community that's needed, here in this region and beyond, to protect the waters that all of us love so much.

In early May a small group of **transient killer whales**, including a young calf, made a rare visit to Vancouver's inner harbour, where they breached and tail-slapped for about half an hour off Stanley Park. Transients eat marine mammals, and instead of living in family-based pods like resident killer whales they form loose, short-term associations. Scientists estimate that there are about 250 on the west coast.

South of the border, the US government has toughened its **regulations to protect killer whales**. Vessels can no longer approach closer than 180 metres and must stay at least 365 metres out from the path of oncoming whales. The rules apply to all boats, including kayaks, but exempt commercial fishing boats and container ships and tankers travelling

What's New in the Strait?

in established fishing lanes. In Canada, vessels must stay at least 100 metres away from killer whales or risk stiff fines and jail time. Southern resident killer whales are an endangered species with their population currently estimated at just 86 individuals.

In response to a Senate committee the federal government has cancelled its plan to further de-staff **lighthouses**. The decision is good news for west coast residents, fishermen, boaters, pilots and mariners who want lightkeepers to remain because of the critical role they play in marine safety for coastal communities. Since 1970, the number

of staffed lighthouses in Canada has decreased from 264 to just 50 (27 of which are in BC).

Thousands of fish, including juvenile salmon, were killed when a drunk driver flipped a tanker-truck on the Malahat in April. In excess of 40,000 litres of gas and 3000 litres of diesel poured into the Goldstream River, necessitating removal of contaminated soil and dead fish, a shellfish closure in Saanich Inlet and an ongoing cleanup. The timing was disastrous in terms of salmon's life cycle, though the full impacts won't be known until 2014, when the current run of chum salmon are due to return. Goldstream's ecosystem could take years to recover.

In March a **chlorine leak** occurred at Canexus Chemicals on Burrard Inlet. The ▶

Planned Giving: donating through insurance

In our continuing series on ways to support Georgia Strait Alliance through planned giving, we look this time at the benefits of insurance policies. This simple tool allows a charity to benefit from your estate for just a few dollars a month.

One of the challenges about planned giving can be how to deal with the tension that may arise when we want to ensure that the needs of family and friends are met, while also trying to honour the charities we believe in. It can sometimes feel like we simply don't have a large enough estate to do both. However, that's where insurance policies can help. Here are two different ways you can make insurance policies part of your estate planning *and* help those charities you care about.

1. GIFT OF LIFE INSURANCE POLICY PROCEEDS

When we purchase life insurance policies, we name a beneficiary to receive payment at the time of our death—usually a spouse or other family member. Instead, you can make GSA (or any other charity) the beneficiary of your life insurance policy (either by purchasing a new policy or changing the beneficiary of an existing policy). Upon your death, the insurance company will pay the proceeds directly to the organization you have chosen. The charity will then issue a tax receipt to your estate in the amount of the policy. (Note that you will not receive charitable donation receipts while you are still alive.)

The greatest advantage of this option is that you are supporting the charity of your choice for a modest monthly sum, while still ensuring that the totality of your estate can go to those closest to you. Your heirs will also benefit in a couple of additional ways: the tax receipt that we issue to your estate will help to reduce the income tax owed by the estate, and the proceeds from the insurance policy will not be subject to probate fees.

2. IRREVOCABLE TRANSFER OF LIFE INSURANCE OWNERSHIP

In this case, in addition to making the charity of your choice the beneficiary of your life insurance policy, you also transfer the full ownership of the policy to that charity. By doing this, you receive an immediate charitable donation receipt for the cash value of the donated policy. You will also receive annual charitable donation receipts for any premiums that you continue to pay after the transfer to keep the policy in force.

This option carries the same advantages to you as the first option, plus one extra advantage: it provides you with tax benefits today.

If you are unable to continue paying the premiums for any reason, you can contact the organization named as beneficiary



Photo by Lisa Osoba

to see if they would take on the premiums, or you could surrender the policy for its cash value, which would go to the organization (since it owns the policy). To avoid this situation, you may choose a policy where premium payments end after a clearly defined and relatively short period of time, or you can make a one-time lump sum payment.

Endowment Fund

The greatest benefit of life insurance is that your small outlay of funds today can result in a large bequest for a charity later on—and a lasting legacy for you.

You can name Georgia Strait Alliance as the beneficiary of your insurance policy, or if you prefer, GSA's new Endowment Fund could be named as the beneficiary—either way, your gift will be greatly appreciated and it will help to ensure a sustainable future for the marine environment of our region.

You can learn more about our Endowment Fund at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/endowmentfund. As always, please seek financial planning/tax advice before finalizing this, or any other type of gift, to a charity. Or contact the GSA office for details regarding specific bequests: 250-753-3459 or gsa@georgiastrait.org.

Our thanks to www.givegreencanada.ca for the information contained in this article.

What's New *continued*

North Vancouver plant manufactures chlorine, and is situated in a major urban centre and high risk earthquake zone. Metro Vancouver Port Authority has extended Canexus' lease on the property until 2032. Once its current expansion is completed

it could produce close to 200,000 tonnes of chlorine per year (an estimated 2,400 rail cars). According to US Navy research, chlorine from a 90-ton railcar could injure or kill 100,000 people. Chlorine is used in the pulp and paper industry and household cleaners and plastics.

Fish farm proposed for Biosphere Reserve

by Michelle Young

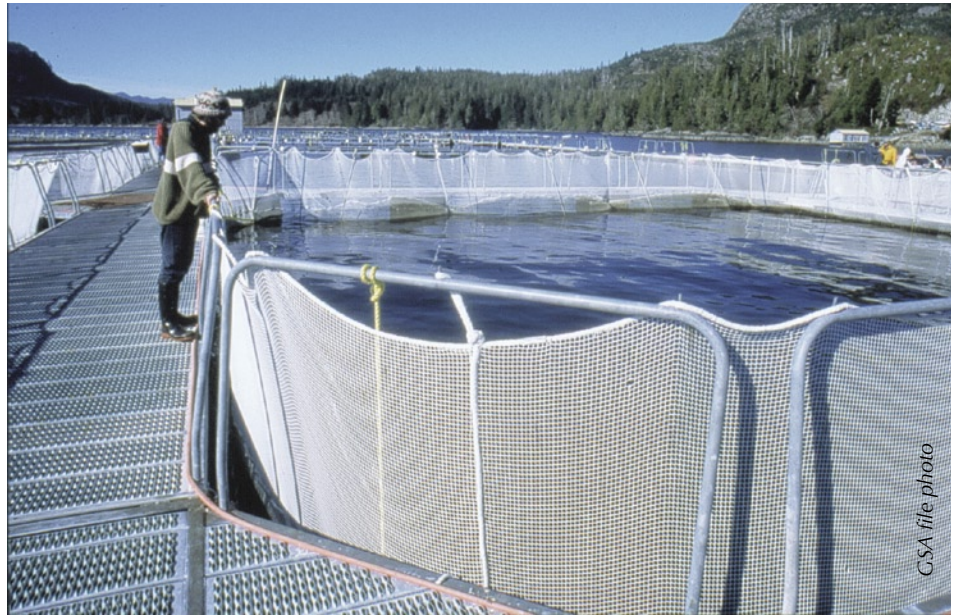
Since the regulation of salmon aquaculture in BC was transferred from the Province to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) last December, we have been watching for the first test of this new arrangement—and now that process has begun with the first new salmon farm proposal. Ewos Canada Ltd. (which operates as Mainstream Canada) has applied to operate a new net-cage salmon farm at Plover Point in Fortune Channel, Clayoquot Sound.

With the transfer in authority, DFO is now responsible for the licensing of salmon farms, management plans, waste management and fish health regulations. However, the Province of BC still issues the license of occupation tenures, which is the first step in the application process.

Beyond the fact that we do not want to see any expansion of the net-cage salmon farm industry in BC, we are concerned about the specific location that is proposed. Plover Point is within the boundaries of the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve, part of UNESCO's worldwide Biosphere Reserve program. The Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve is intended to provide a refuge for the re-establishment of species and to promote conservation and sustainable development—hardly consistent with a net-cage fish farm.

GSA has additional concerns about Mainstream's application, which would locate net-cages, which freely release waste and contaminants into the marine environment, in close proximity to critical fish habitat. There are significant eelgrass beds all along the immediate shoreline, as well as two major kelp beds, which provide important habitat for many marine species.

As a requirement of the application process, Mainstream conducted a stream survey, which we found to be inadequate in a number of ways. The survey covered only 3 km of the Mearns Island shoreline and 1.5 km of shoreline across Fortune Channel on Vancouver Island. Within that very limited area around the proposed fish farm site, seven streams were assessed. Four were determined to be fish-bearing: coho salmon, cutthroat



GSA file photo

trout, prickly sculpin and unidentified trout fry were found. However, the fish were identified by common name only, not by species or sub-species, and the survey did not state if the cutthroat trout found were a sub-species of cutthroat that are officially listed as at-risk.

Independent researchers have done sampling of juvenile wild salmon within the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve. Their results have shown increased sea lice infection rates as the young salmon pass by net-cage salmon farms along their migration routes to the open sea—the same pattern that has been found in all other salmon farming regions in BC where this type of research has been done. Yet Mainstream's proposed tenure boundary is less than 1 km from the mouth of Rollingsone Creek, where the company's own stream survey identified coho salmon.

Georgia Strait Alliance and our partners at the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform are calling on the Province to deny the tenure application for Plover Point and to place a permanent moratorium on net-cage tenures in BC.

If the application for this tenure is approved by the Province, Mainstream will then be free to apply to DFO for a finfish license under the new federal Pacific Aquaculture Regulations. While DFO keeps promising transparency in their regulation of BC finfish aquaculture, they have not followed through on that promise. We have repeatedly requested copies of existing BC finfish licenses along with the conditions attached to each license, and despite many promises over many months, we still have not received any of the licenses. We are increasingly concerned that DFO is not taking seriously the threat that net-cage fish farms pose to wild salmon and fish habitat.

For updates on the Plover Point application and opportunities to voice your concerns on this or other salmon aquaculture developments, visit www.GeorgiaStrait.org/salmon_farmingaction.

For up-to-date news and information
www.GeorgiaStrait.org



“Organic” salmon could be anything but

by David Fields

For two years, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has worked behind closed doors with members of the salmon farming industry to develop a standard that would allow net-cage salmon farms in Canada to be certified as “organic”—a tactic that Georgia Strait Alliance very much opposes.

Last August, the initial draft standard was released, covering seaweed and shellfish as well as net-cage and closed containment farmed salmon. GSA and over 40 groups from Canada and the US signed a joint letter opposing the standard on several grounds and expressing concern over the erosion of the “organic” brand if the aquaculture standard were to be approved.

The process, while funded by DFO, is now being coordinated by the Canadian General Standards Board, and the second draft of the standard was released this spring. In response, GSA signed a second letter objecting to an “organic” standard that would allow open net pens, antibiotics, chemicals

including synthetic parasiticides, and unbelievably, up to 100% of the feed to be non-organic.

Our greatest concern is that net-cage salmon farms may be granted “organic” certification without having to make any substantive changes to their current practices. As a result, fish farmers would have to meet a lesser standard than other organic livestock producers, and members of the public who buy “organic” salmon would not receive the assurance offered by the Canadian General Principles of Organic Production, unlike when they purchase other organic products.

Rather than compromising organic standards to fit the needs of salmon farming, GSA and our partners in the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform want to see a transition from open net-cages to closed containment systems.

For more information and to follow developments on this issue, visit www.GeorgiaStrait.org/organicstandards.

Aquaculture Dialogue nearing end

by David Fields

The Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue (SAD) certification standard, initiated by the World Wildlife Fund in 2004, recently completed its final comment period.

Formed to develop measurable, performance-based standards to help minimize the negative impacts of salmon farming, the SAD process has involved over 500 people from the production, feed, academic and seafood buyer sectors as well as non-governmental organizations, including the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), of which Georgia Strait Alliance is a member.

CAAR has a seat on the SAD Steering Committee, where we have been providing information on the impacts of open net-cages and working to achieve a strong standard.

SAD’s goal is to reduce the negative impacts of salmon farming in seven key areas: feed, escapes, nutrient loading and carrying capacity, benthic impacts and siting, disease and parasite transfer, chemical inputs, and social impacts (including labour and community impacts). However, in GSA and CAAR’s view, there are many unresolved issues in the draft standard that has come out of the SAD process, and it remains to be seen whether a rigorous and credible standard will be agreed upon by all parties.

You’ll find our comments on both the GSA and CAAR websites (www.GeorgiaStrait.org and www.farmedanddangerous.org).

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Also available online at www.GeorgiaStrait.org as a PDF with live links.

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As this newsletter went to press, we were preparing for GSA’s **annual general meeting**, held in Vancouver this year. Watch for a report, including info on our new Board, in the fall issue of Strait Talk.



Busy spring for Clean Marine BC

by Lisa Winbourne

GSA's *Clean Marine BC* program has been out in the community this spring spreading the good word about clean marinas and green boating. As the new coordinator for this program, I've been enjoying meeting GSA members and chatting with concerned boaters about clean marine issues.

So, where have we been? For five days in February we displayed at the huge **Vancouver International Boat Show**, which took place in the new, environmentally-responsible Vancouver Convention Centre. (The 2012 Boat Show will return to the soon-to-be remodeled BC Place.)

In early April one of our *Clean Marine BC* facilities, the **Royal Vancouver Yacht Club (Jericho)**, hosted 'Safety Day' for its members. Green boating and wild vs. farmed salmon were the hot topics.

Later that month, in advance of Earth Day, we staffed a display at the **TD Canada Trust's** Kerrisdale bank.

Several chapters of TD's Friends of the Environment Foundation, including Vancouver, have generously supported GSA's *Clean Marine BC* program over the past year, and the Kerrisdale event gave us the opportunity to inform their customers about the work we do thanks to their valued contribution.

During game 6, round 2 of the Canucks' playoff run, Mike Richards and I did a *Clean Marine* presentation for the **Gulf Yacht Club**. We were concerned about our competition that night, but club members showed up in good numbers... and Vancouver triumphed!

Did you catch us at the **Nanaimo Floating Boat** show in early June? It's an excellent show within walking distance

of GSA's home base, well attended by our staff, members and community of green boaters.

In mid-June, the annual **Cowichan Bay Boat Festival** took place, and we salute the organizers for this year's theme, "Zero Waste—how do you recycle?", and for encouraging participants to dress up for the festivities using recycled products. Our hats off as well to the **Silva Bay Yacht Club** on Gabriola Island for embracing the festival's theme and organizing a club cruise to participate.

Later this summer we'll be at the **Vancouver Wooden Boat Festival**, from August 25 to 28 on Granville Island. This event is always a lot of fun and I look forward to meeting many more boaters and GSA members there!

Newest additions to Clean Marine BC

We are thrilled to welcome aboard two new participants in the *Clean Marine BC* program. **Page Point Marina** in Ladysmith and the **White Rock Harbour Board** are the latest members of our growing program. What does their membership mean? They have received a comprehensive environmental best practices manual to ready themselves for an eco-audit of their marina and related services, and they have signed the *Clean Marine BC* policy, pledging to their employees and customers their commitment to greening their facilities and operations.

Is your marina part of the *Clean Marine BC* program? If not and you'd like more information please check out the information on our website or contact me at cmbc@georgiastrait.org.

GREEN BOATING NEWS

In a ground-breaking move in April, Washington State banned **anti-fouling paints** that contain copper. The legislation bans the sale of new boats with copper-based bottom paint as of 2018. No paints containing more than 0.5 percent copper can be used on old or new boats starting in 2020. The law, which imposes fines of up to \$10,000 for violations, applies only to recreational vessels up to 65 feet in length. A similar bill, SB 623, which would ban the use of copper paint on new boats by 2015 and on other boats by 2019, is currently being considered in California.

You'll also be interested in knowing that Environment Canada has posted information about some upcoming changes to **emission standards** for recreational vehicles and vessels (MERV—'Marine Spark-Ignition Engine, Vessel and Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Emission Regulations'). The tightened-up standards will start to affect vessels and vehicles in 2012. The new standards have been set out to protect the health of Canadians and Canada's environment by reducing smog-forming emissions and are aligned with those of the US Environmental Protection Agency. For more information contact Environment Canada at www.ec.gc.ca or 1-800-668-6767 and mention the MERV program.



Where all the issues come together

by Cathy Booler

We at GSA are just thrilled to see how far our online map project has come in the past year—from an initial concept to an interactive entity with a life of its own, the project is leaps and bounds ahead of where we imagined it would be!

Our Georgia Strait map, which went live in January, highlights community values in and around the Strait of Georgia and provides a wealth of information about threats to those values and stewardship initiatives to protect the places that we care about.

The online map is a living, breathing representation of life around the Strait of Georgia and the environmental issues that concern our communities. It will continue to grow, but already contains a wealth of information including:

- *environmental stewardship organizations and projects they have underway*
- *relevant government agencies and initiatives*
- *significant landmarks such as estuaries and important habitat areas*
- *lighthouses, sewage outfalls, salmon farms, no-discharge zones, marinas and pump-out stations*
- *an online video tour of salmon farms in the Wild Salmon Narrows area*
- *opinions and ideas from community members*
- *profiles of people involved in helping to protect the region's environment*



Rebecca Adams is working to expand and promote the map.

- *links to scientific and citizen research, environmental education resources and green businesses*

Thanks to support from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development Job Creation Partnership, Rachelle Ray and Rebecca Adams were able to develop and organize the map and get it online in an incredibly short time. Though that support ended this spring, the project continues thanks to funding from the RBC Blue Water Project. Rachelle has moved on to a full-time position with the BC Government, while Rebecca remains with GSA, leading our efforts to expand and promote the map.

We are looking forward to seeing the map grow as we meet people at community events over the summer and learn more about their concerns and activities. With your help, we will further expand the information it provides about the issues that GSA addresses and that our members care about.

In the meantime, we invite you to become part of this growing online community by checking out the map at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/GSmapping. You can use it to learn more about the Strait, connect with other individuals and organizations concerned with protecting our coastal waters, and share ideas and resources.

The map is a place where all the issues that impact our home, Georgia Strait, come together—along with a variety of solutions that we can undertake and promote. It provides an opportunity to tell your own stories, inspire or be inspired, see what others are saying and doing, support projects that are underway and find information. As well, you can participate in the map forum: a place to post events, ideas and questions and to interact with others, sharing information, resources and solutions and working to protect and restore the environment of our region. We look forward to meeting you—online and in person!

For more information contact Rebecca Adams: rebecca@georgiastrait.org.

Georgia Strait Protection Principles

Over the coming year, GSA will be applying some of the information contained in our online map to develop what we are calling “Georgia Strait Protection Principles”. These will be a series of protection statements aimed at ensuring that community leaders think about marine sustainability while making decisions within their city, town or region. We’ll be urging decision-makers to adopt the Principles and commit to using them, in order to incorporate marine habitat protection and restoration values into urban and community planning and development processes all around our region.

Examples of some draft principles we’re considering are:

- ***The protection of the marine environment in our community is of the utmost importance and benefits our economy and social well-being.***
- ***Our community will show leadership in the protection of local streams and waterways by ensuring no further loss of fish-bearing streams.***
- ***BC has lost more than 90% of its estuaries—nature’s lungs. We will work towards protecting local shorelines and estuaries in our community.***

Have any suggestions for other principles that communities should incorporate into their planning and development processes? Email christianne@georgiastrait.org and let us know what you think.

Focusing in on tankers

by Mike Richards

Since 2000, the number of oil tankers moving out through Burrard Inlet and the sensitive waters of Georgia Strait and the southern Gulf Islands has grown by over 500%.

This rapid increase could potentially continue until we see in excess of 250 large tankers (almost four times the current number) traversing our precious waters each year. With Kinder Morgan, which owns the Trans Mountain Pipeline and Westridge oil terminal in Burnaby, planning increased oil transfers from the Alberta Tar Sands, more tankers will be needed to move that unconventional oil to the US and Asian markets.

As well, a process is currently underway to increase the allowable draft (depth of hull below water) of tankers passing through Second Narrows in Burrard Inlet. This change means an increased amount of oil in each ship leaving the port.

As tanker traffic and the volume of oil grow so do the risks of a major spill, which could be devastating to our region's marine environment and quality of life. This is why GSA recently decided to increase our staff team in order to dedicate some of our time to the tanker issue.

Polling conducted in April by the collaborative environmental project, Organizing for Change (<http://organizingforchange.org>) showed that there is clear public concern about the risk of major spills in our region. Despite the fact that fewer than 1 in 10 people polled knew that tanker traffic had increased significantly in our region, 56% of respondents said they thought it 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' that there would be a major oil spill in Georgia Strait, and 65% did not believe that current oil spill response plans are adequate to protect the marine environment.



Photo by Laurie MacBride

Accident waiting to happen? Massive tankers like the 240 metre-long one below must squeeze through the narrow span of the CN Rail Bridge and under the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge while navigating the tidal currents and shallows of Second Narrows.

Like many public concerns, the tanker issue is not black and white. One reality is that we are currently stuck in a fossil fuel-based economy and until there is a significant shift in the status-quo, we will continue to need oil to feed our hunger for consumer goods, transport and energy. Another reality is that the oil travelling through our sensitive waters in these tankers is being exported, which begs the question, does this oil contribute significantly to our quality of life here in Canada?

Another grey area and a paradox is that if public concerns result in blocking the Northern Gateway (Kitimat) pipeline and tanker project, there will be pressure to move that oil through Vancouver instead. So ironically, reducing the risk of major spills in northern BC could cause a steep rise in the risk in our region.

Clearly we need a risk analysis that takes in the concerns and perspectives of all those who live around our region. The folks who currently oversee tanker transits have done risk analysis from their own perspectives and areas of expertise, and have determined that any risk that exists is worth the benefits it will bring. But it's still somewhat hazy exactly

what those benefits might be, and who is benefiting. While regulators and the industry may have done considerable work on this issue, to date there has been a failure to include the majority of citizens who live, work and play in the region affected by these tankers. And citizens of this region are very interested in this issue.

Without a doubt this whole issue needs to be examined very seriously, which is why GSA has begun that process. Since early this spring we've been researching the complexities and having very constructive meetings with some of the players including the BC Chamber of Shipping, BC Coast Pilots, Port of Metro Vancouver, Council of Marine Carriers, BC Shipping News, Islands Trust and Ecojustice.

We are also looking into the recent application to the National Energy Board by Kinder Morgan to increase the allocation of oil piped to its Westridge Terminal in Burnaby, and along with Ecojustice, we will be making a submission on the application, likely in conjunction with the Islands Trust.

In the meantime we will be asking the powers that be to stop any further increases in tanker traffic until a broader and more comprehensive community discussion on this critical issue can be carried out. We will keep you posted on the work as it progresses; keep an eye on our website for the latest updates.

For more information, contact me at mike@georgiastrait.org.



Photo by Peter Baker

Shipping industry going green

by Mike Richards

Several shipping organizations in BC have signed on to the Sbi-national *Green Marine* program. Along similar lines as GSA's very own *Clean Marine BC*, the *Green Marine* program is a voluntary environmental certification program for the marine transportation industry. *Green Marine* originated in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, but has since spread to other parts of Canada and the US. Its mission is "to make the marine transportation industry even greener" and its vision is "to lead the marine transportation industry to environmental excellence".

BC companies who have signed on to the program include Seaspan Marine Corporation; Smit Marine Canada Inc.; Island Tug and Barge Ltd. and the Prince Rupert Port Authority. Kudos to all of them! Congratulations also to Stephen Brown from BC Chamber of Shipping and Phil Nelson from the Council of Marine Carriers who have recently joined the *Green Marine* Board. With their involvement we hope to see a growth in commitment to Environmental Best Practices in West Coast shipping. For more information on Green Marine visit www.green-marine.org.

Preparing for the Big One

Over the past three years, GSA has been involved in a stakeholder process to review planning and preparedness for a marine oil spill in the transboundary areas of Washington, BC and Alaska, and to recommend any necessary improvements for joint response and planning. The effort has been sponsored by the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force.

The final report has now been released and makes for interesting reading. Among its key findings, it lists the importance of involving local, tribal/First Nation, state and provincial governments in federal spill planning, preparedness and response; the need for improvements in wildlife rehabilitation coordination and volunteer management; and the fact that significant logistical challenges exist relating to response on remote shorelines, especially in winter. The report also deals with jurisdictional challenges and inadequacies that could hamper an effective response to a major spill. It includes 17 pages of recommendations to a wide range of government and public agencies, industry, planners, response organizations and others.

You can download the report at: http://oilspilltaskforce.org/docs/notes_reports/Final_US_Canada_Transboundary_Project_Report.pdf.

Process problems threaten sockeye inquiry

by Christianne Wilhelmson

For the past year, GSA and our colleagues in the Conservation Coalition, represented by Ecojustice, have been heavily involved in the Cohen Inquiry into the Decline of the Fraser Sockeye Salmon.

This important Inquiry has a difficult task: to sift through a growing mountain of documents and lists of witnesses, on a broad range of topics in order to identify what problem, or more likely series of problems, led to the 2009 collapse of Fraser sockeye—and to provide a road map to solutions and the renewed health of these salmon stocks.

The Inquiry goes beyond simply identifying what threat caused the collapse, be it pollution, climate change, salmon farms, or a combination of these and more; it also includes a much-needed examination of how Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) manages fisheries, particularly sockeye. DFO transparency is therefore a key issue, along with the fundamental problem of DFO having two conflicting mandates: promoting salmon farming while also being responsible for protecting wild

fish and the marine environment from the impacts of fish farms. It's vital, therefore, that these important issues be part of the conversation and final recommendations.

Though we fully support the Inquiry and believe it has the potential to help to finally address the real threats to sockeye salmon, we have increasing concerns about its process. As participants in the inquiry, we were required to sign an undertaking to keep information confidential where that is in the best interest of all involved. However, confidentiality is being applied as a very broad brush, potentially impacting the ability of the Inquiry to be effective.

We are also deeply concerned that the Inquiry is relying too heavily on the opinions of government, in this case DFO, to come to its conclusions. For many months, our coalition has been suggesting a long list of external witnesses on a variety of topics, only to see panels consisting of just DFO or other government officials. If the Inquiry is going to develop meaningful recommendations, it cannot rely

primarily on witnesses from the same agency that may be a big part of the problem.

Because of the undertaking we had to sign, we find ourselves in the difficult position of not being able to tell you more than the very little we have said here. However, GSA and our coalition partners will continue our effort to ensure an open and transparent process—which is what a public inquiry should be.

At the end of the day, the Inquiry must come up with meaningful recommendations on both science and management, and these recommendations must be enacted—otherwise the Inquiry will have been a waste of all our time and taxpayers' money.

We are still months away from the final recommendations, but it's not too soon to say that unless changes are made to the process, the end result could leave us right where we were in 2009: with our wild salmon stocks at risk for reasons we haven't yet been willing to understand or address.

Back door deal to violate marine park

by Christianne Wilhelmson

At various times in our more than 20-year history, GSA has spoken out against the sinking of old military ships and airplanes as artificial reefs for divers. The reasons are many: from a lack of scientific evidence that this type of artificial reef will improve habitat for aquatic species, to a failure to monitor contamination by the vessels after they are sunk. We've also argued that there are more cost effective and ecologically sound ways of managing military waste than dumping it in our coastal waters.

Last year, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) rejected a proposal by the Artificial Reef Society of BC (ARSBC) to sink the HMCS Annapolis in Halkett Bay Marine Park, off Gambier Island, stating that sensitive marine habitat would be destroyed by the ship if sunk (*Strait Talk*, Summer 2010). We all breathed a cautious sigh of relief, hoping that reason had won out. Unfortunately we were wrong.

In March of this year the BC Government accepted the Annapolis as a gift from the ARSBC—despite the opposition to the proposed dumping by DFO and by local residents, and despite the fact that BC Ministry of Environment staff had twice earlier refused the gift. Our understanding is that the Ministry now plans to scuttle the vessel, as initially planned by the ARSBC, in Halkett Bay.

We find this 'back door' strategy unacceptable, especially considering how much opposition there has been, both by the public and DFO, to dumping the ship in our local waters. A public process for making the final decision must be put into place so that all voices can be heard.

GSA has made it clear to the BC Government that we do not support this project, nor the circuitous way the ARSBC went



Photo courtesy of Save Halkett Bay Society

The Province now plans to dump the Annapolis—despite the fact that this would destroy sensitive fish habitat.

about trying to achieve its goal of sinking the ship. We also strongly oppose the intentional dumping of old ships—or any other wastes—in or near marine parks, which are supposed to be “protected” areas.

In addition to our many valid historical arguments against sinking old ships as artificial reefs (read about them at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/artificialreefs), an important new study by the Basel Action Network underscores the full costs, as well as the missed opportunities, of sinking ships as artificial reefs (“Jobs and Dollars Overboard: The Economic Case Against Dumping U.S. Naval Vessels at Sea”: www.ban.org/Library/jobs_and_Dollars_Overboard.pdf).

GSA will continue to urge decision makers to immediately abandon this ill-conceived project and to find a more suitable process for the disposal of military waste. We will keep you posted on the latest developments on our website.

Ending “waste” on the North Shore

If you've been following the work GSA has done over the years to promote the recovery of useful resources from sewage treatment, you may have noticed how frequently we've had to look outside of BC, and even outside of Canada, to highlight examples of what is possible.

This is why we're excited to tell you about a recent consultant's report that shows what could happen right here in our own region, on Metro Vancouver's North Shore, if the Lions Gate primary treatment plant is upgraded to a system based on resource recovery (*Integrated Resource Recovery Study—Metro Vancouver North Shore Communities*, Fidelis Resource Group).

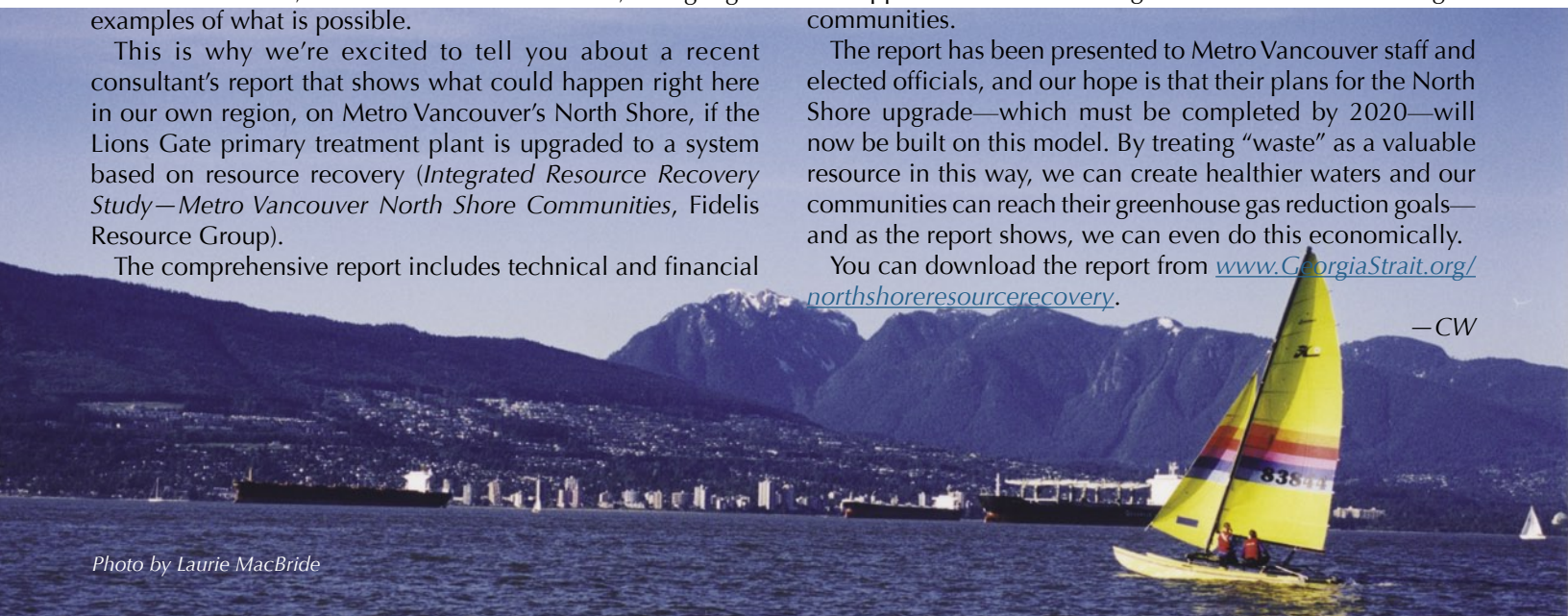
The comprehensive report includes technical and financial

analyses and recommendations, and was created using Metro Vancouver's own data on wastewater flows and needs, so is not simply theoretical—it is a factual representation of how this approach would look right here in one of our largest communities.

The report has been presented to Metro Vancouver staff and elected officials, and our hope is that their plans for the North Shore upgrade—which must be completed by 2020—will now be built on this model. By treating “waste” as a valuable resource in this way, we can create healthier waters and our communities can reach their greenhouse gas reduction goals—and as the report shows, we can even do this economically.

You can download the report from www.GeorgiaStrait.org/northshoresourcerecovery.

—CW



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DRAW: Wednesday September 14, 2011, 3 pm at the GSA Nanaimo office: #201-195 Commercial St., Nanaimo, BC V9R 5G5

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Sewage is hot in Powell River

In April the City of Powell River launched a public consultation on its Liquid Waste Management Plan, in response to mounting public concerns over a proposal by the City to have the local paper mill take over the treatment of municipal sewage.

The "cotreatment" option would see the City get rid of its three existing treatment plants and instead, pay Catalyst Paper to treat city waste in the mill's treatment plant. It would also require the city to build a new "pretreatment" plant to treat the waste before it goes to the mill, build new sewer lines and retrofit the mill's old clarifier pond in order to store raw sewage when the mill shuts down temporarily or treat it when the mill shuts permanently. The plan also says that dumping raw sewage into the ocean would be an option when the mill is completely shut down for maintenance.

Citizens have been told by Ministry of Environment officials that if Catalyst treats Powell River sewage, only the industrial standard for pollutants would have to be met rather than the higher, municipal standard. As well as the environmental risks of the proposal, residents have voiced concerns about the financial risks, especially if the mill closes on short notice—as many pulp and paper mills have done around the region in recent years. If so, the city could have no alternative but to dump raw sewage into the ocean while a new plant is being built. You'll find more information at: [www. http://prwaterwatch.wordpress.com/](http://prwaterwatch.wordpress.com/).

Swipe a card for GSA!

Although most of us try to use low-impact transportation options, a car often feels like a necessity—especially as we set off for summer vacation. Did you know that by using a simple affinity card along your route—both this summer and throughout the year—you can help Georgia Strait Alliance?

Every purchase you make at a Husky or Mohawk station—whether for gas, diesel, propane, repairs, convenience store items or a restaurant meal—can help raise much-needed funds to support our work to protect the Strait.

When you swipe your **Georgia Strait Alliance affinity card** at a Husky or Mohawk station, GSA will receive 2% of your purchase as a cash rebate, regardless of the size of the transaction.

If you don't yet have your free affinity card, be sure to call or email us today (250-753-3459 or gsa@georgiastrait.org).

To find the Husky or Mohawk stations near you or along your route, visit: www.myhusky.ca/station_locator.html.



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Thanks to all who provided support from Feb. 1, 2011 through May 20, 2011, including others not listed here due to space limitations.

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