



Georgia Strait Alliance—caring for our coastal waters since 1990

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

Dramatic step forward

On May 21, after more than two years of public consultation and discussion with its 22 municipalities, Metro Vancouver's board passed an updated Liquid Waste Management Plan for the region—a dramatic step forward from its previous plan, which had been in place for eight years. The new Plan must now go to the Province for approval.

What does this mean for the Strait?

The new Plan is a good news/bad news story. The good news is how progressive it is in integrating resource recovery into all aspects of the Plan's delivery. In other words, as BC's largest urban region replaces its waste water treatment plants, develops new communities and upgrades its sewage pipes and infrastructure, its officials will be actively looking for opportunities to obtain and use the energy found in sewage—exactly what GSA has worked hard to promote.

What's disappointing is that while Metro Vancouver has committed to upgrading its Lions Gate plant by 2020, its Iona plant may not be upgraded until as late as 2030.

We know from our discussions with Metro Vancouver officials and from the final wording of the Plan, that this slow timeline was not Metro Vancouver's preference. Many community leaders and Metro Vancouver staff

Photo by Mike Wakefield, courtesy North Shore News



GSA's Executive Director Christianne Wilhelmson, overlooking the Lions Gate treatment plant.

wanted to upgrade both plants by 2020, as GSA had urged, but the lack of financial commitment from the provincial and the federal governments was seen as too big a risk. (Historically, the costs of such infrastructure

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Back by popular demand

GSA's summer raffle returns this year, with a *Seaward* kayak as first prize. See page 5 for more information on this and the other great prizes—and how you can get your tickets.



Standup paddler Markus Pukonen recently crossed the Strait to support GSA—read about his adventure on page 7.

Strait Thoughts: Knowing what's at risk

by *Christianne Wilhelmson,*
Executive Director



There are two sets of images from the last few months that I can't get out of my head. One is of the pure joy on the faces of people who told me about seeing dolphins in Howe Sound and a grey whale that—to everyone's surprise—found its way into the inner waters of Vancouver's False Creek. The other is of the utter devastation on the faces of US Gulf Coast residents, facing the impacts of the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. These images represent, to me, two sides of the same coin: what we value and how quickly we can lose it.

The risks to the Strait of Georgia from a large oil spill are growing, as our consumer demands—for both products and fossil fuels—bring more ships into our ports. A mounting concern is whether we are prepared for the accident that is likely to happen as a result.

All of us want to ensure that our coast is protected from anything as devastating as what we are seeing in the Gulf of Mexico. But to turn that desire for protection into effective action by government agencies and industry, we need to create a much higher level of public understanding, all around the region, of what we are at risk of losing. Without such a high level of public concern, our leaders will continue to get away with making decisions based on

short-term economic considerations—leading to that inevitable accident, for which we'll be ill prepared.

GSA's new Community Mapping and Planning project is aimed at exactly this need: to build public understanding of what we truly value in our region—and how easily it can be lost.

As Cathy explains on page 10, we'll be working to intensify this understanding in two ways. One is by creating an online clearinghouse to bring together all the research about the Strait that already exists—a considerable amount of information that is now in the capable but scattered hands of government, community groups and citizen scientists (such as GSA's intertidal volunteers). The other is by the addition of local knowledge that is currently undocumented: what *you* know is special about—and what is threatening—your part of the Strait.

GSA's members have known for years that the Strait is worth protecting, but it's been hard to move our communities and senior governments to take consistent and meaningful action to protect these waters. To do this, we need a deeper, broader and more intense public understanding of what's so special about this place—one that will compel decision-makers to act. Creating that understanding is a central goal of our Community Mapping project.

Twenty years ago, GSA's founders tried to imagine life in our region in 2010. Their hopeful vision was that by then, communities would have wholeheartedly embraced GSA's message and the Strait would be in good hands; our organization would no longer exist because it was no longer necessary. Sadly, it seems it was a somewhat optimistic prediction.

It may feel disheartening that our efforts are still so badly needed, but I look at it a little differently. Some areas of the Strait are indeed in good hands, partly because GSA continues to be there, providing information and support to local groups and individuals who are taking action as stewards of the coastal environment.

I can't predict what the future holds, but through efforts such as our new Community Mapping project, I'm confident that GSA will continue working towards a day when all three million people living in this region are truly stewards of the Strait—and as a result, industry and all levels of government have no choice but to be part of the solution. That's a day I look forward to.

Step forward *continued*

projects are split equally among the three levels of government).

The timeline for Iona is hugely disappointing. However, we commend Metro Vancouver for clearly stating its interest in wanting to deal with this embarrassing source of pollution sooner rather than later, and we support any efforts to get the senior levels of government to pay their share of the costs.

To sign our petition asking for the federal government to commit funds for plant upgrades, please visit: www.GeorgiaStrait.org/2020treatment

—Christianne Wilhelmson

Minimum standards... eventually

After more than six years of consultation, debate and discussion, Environment Canada recently released its draft wastewater regulations, with the goal of bringing secondary treatment to all communities, nationwide. Though this minimum standard is badly needed, what is worrying are the long timelines given to implement these upgrades. As a result, some communities will be allowed to continue discharging under-treated sewage for up to 30 years.

Georgia Strait Alliance and T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation have voiced our concerns as members of the Core Advisory Group in this federal process, and along with other environmental colleagues, we recently made a 25-page formal submission to Environment Canada. (You can read our media release and submission at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/federalsewage)

This lack of leadership at the federal level is regrettable—as is the unwillingness to back up new regulations with funding. Nevertheless, GSA will continue working to find a way forward for communities that, like Metro Vancouver, want to complete their upgrades well in advance of the national timelines.

Strait Profits

Saving Georgia Strait one dollar at a time

As a charity, the idea of having money grow on trees (or seaweed) is very appealing—it would enable us to concentrate on our mission rather than having to constantly search for the dollars needed to do this important work. Alas, no such species exists!

So, instead of looking for the elusive 'money tree', part of our renewed sustainability focus has included planning our new business partnership program, Strait Profits. In developing this program, we've taken inspiration from some dollars I've found in the Strait. Sand Dollars that is—the logo for this exciting new program!

Where I grew up in Australia we did not have these intriguing critters, so when I first saw them here I was curious. Many folks come across their white skeletons washed up on the beach, but by contrast, the live animals are usually

dark purple or black. They are found on soft bottom sediments, just below the mean low water mark. Sand dollars are actually a flattened type of sea urchin, with their spines on their underside, allowing them to burrow or to slowly creep through the sediment. Their mouth is at the centre of the five-pointed star on their underside and they use podia (feet) to move food along the five grooves that form the star. Their modified spines and podia give them a velvety texture and appearance.

In our travels around the Strait our family is always looking for sand dollars. Usually we only find a few here and there, but recently we've found a couple of huge beds—one on Gabriola Island and the other on Jedediah Island. A friend tells me there are also some large beds in the backchannels of Prideaux Haven. I'm sure there are also a lot of

other sizeable beds elsewhere around the Strait.

Seeing dense beds of these amazing little creatures has reminded me of the real wealth of the Strait of Georgia—the abundance of life that these waters support.

With help from like-minded businesses, we can keep this region ecologically healthy and wealthy. That's why we've launched our new Strait Profits program.

Businesses who sign on to Strait Profits contribute a percentage of their profits to Georgia Strait Alliance. The program is structured so that during good times these businesses can be generous, and when times are lean their contributions are scaled back. Participating businesses will be publicly recognized in a number of different ways.

If you know of a business that may be interested in joining Strait Profits, please ask them to contact gsa@georgiastrait.org or call 250-753-3459. More information, including a detailed program guide, is available at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/straitprofits —Mike Richards

Vote early, vote often!

Would you like to help GSA in a big way, but you're short of time and cash? Here's a great way you can help over the summer—requiring only a brief moment of your day.

The RBC Blue Water Project recognizes the importance of protecting water as one of our greatest natural resources. As part of this project, RBC's Granfondo/Whistler event has shortlisted 10 charitable organizations, including GSA, and they will be allocating portions of \$25,000 to the charities based on the total number of votes each receives (with a maximum of \$5000 to any one organization).

Between now and September 10, when the contest closes, you can cast your vote—or better still, dozens of votes, as the online voting procedure allows one vote per IP address each day.

By casting your online vote for GSA, you could help us win \$5000! Please cast your vote now, and every day until Sept. 10, at www.rbc-granfondonwhistler-bluewaterproject.com/

Read all about it!

An ongoing need for GSA is to get information about our campaigns and education programs out to the public, and we regularly work with

media of all types to accomplish this. Over the years our work has made it into most newspapers in the region, along with regional and national radio and television, and even a cover story in *Maclean's* magazine.

Nevertheless, we were more than a bit "over the moon" when GSA was recently profiled by the *Globe and Mail*, in an article on the challenges faced by Canadian charities over the last few years. Not only was this the cover story in the paper's national edition, but our Executive Director, Christianne Wilhelmson, was featured in the large, front-page photo! The article focused on GSA as a charity that has had to make hard decisions, but as a result, is making it through the economic crisis and becoming stronger by putting more efforts into long term sustainability. You, our members, should be proud of the role you have been playing in getting us through such a difficult time.

If you missed the article, you can catch it at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/globeandmailarticle



Four Eco-Rated marinas—more to come!



As a result of verification audits conducted this spring, two more marinas have won their Clean Marine BC Eco-Rating: Maple Bay Marina on Vancouver Island, and Shelter Island Marina in Richmond.

This means that four BC marinas can now fly the Clean Marine BC flag. (Westport Marina in Sidney and False Creek Harbour Authority in Vancouver had already earned their Eco-Ratings.) Congratulations to all!

Each of these Clean Marine BC Eco-Rated marinas have made a commitment to pursuing environmental best practices and have embraced the goal of continual improvement.

They have also opened themselves up to public scrutiny through an independent environmental audit process which delves into a wide range of aspects of operations, identifying areas in which the facility is doing well and other areas that they need to address. Each facility will be reassessed within three years.



Photo by Mike Richards

Auditor Rich Ballantyne (R) with Maple Bay Marina's General Manager David Messier, during the marina's CMBC verification inspection.

The Clean Marine BC program continues to evoke keen interest across the province. The latest facilities to join

the program are Vancouver Marina (Richmond) and the Royal Victoria Yacht Club. Welcome aboard!

Join the party!

This year we're kicking up our heels— all year long! GSA is celebrating our 20th Anniversary, and because our members are geographically dispersed all around the region, we're planning several events in different communities rather than a single big party. We hope that this way, many of our members will be able to attend at least one party—or perhaps several!

We kicked off the celebrations on May 7 at our AGM in Courtenay (see page 6), and held a second celebration on the Nanaimo waterfront on June 5 (photos right).

We're planning events in Victoria and Vancouver this fall, and one more gathering in the Comox Valley, where GSA has a long history.

If you live in the **Lower Mainland**, please join us on **October 28th** for a celebration in Vancouver. Watch our website for the details on this and other upcoming 20th anniversary events: www.GeorgiaStrait.org/events

We hope you'll join us, to kick up your heels and help celebrate 20 great years!

20
years!
1990 - 2010



Craig Minaker of Dolphin Insurance, sponsor of the June 5th event.



Editor Dale Miller (L) and his crew from Pacific Yachting magazine.



Photos by Lisa Herman

GSA members Anne Kerr and Jean-Michel Hanssens at the Nanaimo celebration.

The **Big 20 Raffle:** your **Big** chance to win!

Georgia Strait Alliance's **Big 20 Raffle** is now underway! With donated prizes totalling over \$3400 in value, and only 3600 tickets printed, it's well worth getting your tickets today!

FIRST PRIZE (\$2295 value) is the newest thermoform craft from **Seaward Kayaks**, the fast and extremely stable AmNik 14.5 TX. This fun family kayak includes double hatches, sealed bulkheads, padded seat, adjustable backrest, rudder stay with tie-down and much more. Capable of holding all your gear, this 55-lb kayak will enable you to enjoy the beauty and wildlife of the Strait.



Amnik
14.5 TX

SECOND PRIZE (\$590 value) is a stunning glass platter created by **Tammy Hudgeon Glassworks**. Brightly coloured with wildlife of the Strait, including oystercatchers and fish, it's sure be a coveted addition to any home.



THIRD PRIZE (\$450 value): Take the time to recharge with a weekend getaway package for two, including daily meals and use of recreational facilities, at **Yellow Point Lodge's** top of the line penthouse suite. Nestled on the east coast of Vancouver Island and overlooking the Gulf Islands, this family-owned lodge has a 270-degree ocean view and has been renowned for its hospitality for nearly 80 years.

Yellow Point Lodge
...it's about time

Tickets are just \$6 each or 3 for \$15, and are available:

- by credit card: 250-753-3459 or raffle@GeorgiaStrait.org
- by cheque: 195 Commercial St, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5G5
- at GSA's booth at various events over the summer (check our website "Events" page)
- at our Nanaimo or Vancouver offices.

The draw will take place Tuesday Sept 14th at 4:00 pm at GSA's Nanaimo office, 195 Commercial St. Full details are on our website.

Chances are 1 in 3600 (total tickets for sale) to win a grand prize.
BC Gaming Licence #24380

Know your limit, play within it.

Problem Gambling Help Line 1-888-795-6111 19+ to play!
www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca

New faces at GSA

A big welcome to GSA's two summer students who will be leading our community outreach in the region over the next few months.



Jessica Hopkins

(jessica@georgiastrait.org) comes from Lillooet; she now lives in Nanaimo where she is a student at Vancouver Island University, studying fisheries and aquaculture. Over the years she has watched salmon runs dwindle to a trickle and that has left her passionate about the need for conservation. Her plan is to return to her community to work in fisheries management.



Leah Chesterman

(leah@georgiastrait.org) is from the Sunshine Coast. She has completed a year and a half of the Green Building and Renewable Energy Diploma at Vancouver Island University and has now shifted her focus to obtaining a BA in Global Studies. She is fascinated by water infrastructure issues such as grey water reuse, rainwater collection and solar aquatic sewage treatment.

Photos by Lisa Herman

Celebrating 20 years!

As part of our 20th Anniversary celebrations we've developed an exciting new video slide show about GSA's first two decades, illustrating GSA's colourful history and many successes over the years. Created by Laurie MacBride, the show is just under 10 minutes long, with beautiful music by Suzanne Ciani and hundreds of great images from GSA's past and present. You'll recognize many faces—*perhaps your own!*—and enjoy reliving some of the highlights from GSA's past, including the Save the Strait Marathons, Youth Canoe Flotilla and lots more.

You can catch the video at any of our 20th anniversary events this fall, and if you'd like to see a Flash version of it in the meantime, you can find it at: www.GeorgiaStrait.org/show-20years

2010 Annual Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting was held on May 7 in Courtenay. In addition to the regular business and board election, the evening included the first of several 20th Anniversary celebration events being held by GSA this year.



A new Board was elected at the AGM. Shown here (L to R): Anne Murray, Frank Tester, Melinda Skeels, Brent England, Don Bulmer and Shaena Lambert. Missing from photo: Suzanne Siemens, Darren Blaney, Stan Boychuk. Anne, Melinda and Don are new to our Board; the others are entering the second year of their term. Our thanks to outgoing board members, Matt Kirchner and Margy Ransford, for their longtime service and tremendous dedication to GSA.



A highlight of the AGM was the address by longtime member and past Director Wayne Bradley, who opened by reflecting on the tragedy in the Gulf of Mexico as "the most dramatic affirmation imaginable of the need for the Georgia Strait Alliance". Wayne recounted some of GSA's history, and eloquently described what he sees as the three foundations of our success: GSA's collaborative approach to leadership; how we have brought people into "direct and meaningful contact with nature"; and the "incredible commitment that GSA staff has shown to working for a sustainable world". Wayne raised a toast "to the beauty, bounty and great health of the Salish Sea and the Strait of Georgia which lies therein" and to "a remarkable organization... moving on with great success".



Retiring Director Margy Ransford, with the 20th Anniversary cake.

Photos by Laurie MacBride and Alan Wilson



(Above) Christianne surveys the goodies for the party, laid out by hardworking volunteers including Julie Edwards and (right) Chris Nott.



Daring paddle for GSA

by Christianne Wilhelmson

I'll be the first to admit it: when I got a call from Capilano University student Markus Pukonen early this year saying he wanted to standup paddle across the Strait, I questioned the sanity of such a proposal. I was excited that he wanted to raise awareness about GSA and the harm being done from the discharge of sewage into our waters, but standup paddling across the Strait? It just didn't seem possible!

But it seems I didn't know Markus!

After a false start in mid-April, Markus successfully guided his standup paddleboard across the Strait two weeks later, on April 28th. He left in the dark at 5:15 am from Whytecliff Park in West Vancouver, and arrived in Nanaimo Harbour 10 hours later, at 3:15 pm. During this adventurous day, he found himself wedged in between the east- and west-bound Horseshoe/Departure Bay ferries, and he narrowly avoided the Duke Point/Tsawwassen Ferry as he neared Entrance Island, just outside of Nanaimo.

What would drive this documentary film student to take on such a task? "I did this because I have the opportunity to help create a healthier future for my 14-month-old niece," said Markus. "We all need to dedicate more time, money, and energy to caring for the ocean that supports our lives in so many ways." Markus believes it makes no sense to dump our waste in the same waters that feed us and that we play in, and that taking action by supporting Georgia Strait Alliance is one thing everyone can do.

We congratulate Markus for taking on such a challenge. Not only was this a physically demanding feat, but he also garnered significant media attention for GSA and our efforts to bring better sewage treatment to the region.

Photo by Sarah Dombrose



Markus had to avoid the behemoths of the Strait.

In the year when we're celebrating our 20th anniversary, Markus' paddle is a great reminder of—and addition to—GSA's history, which includes many examples of people taking to the water, in all sorts of craft, to protect our inland sea. Among these courageous folks was now-Member of Parliament Fin Donnelly, a GSA Lifetime Member who, in the 1990s, completed four solo swims across Georgia Strait and one across Juan de Fuca Strait, raising funds and public support for GSA.

To our knowledge, Markus' journey was the first-ever crossing of Georgia Strait by a standup paddler, and we hope others will be inspired by his efforts to take their own form of action to protect the Strait. Soon, we'll all be able to share in his adventure, as he will be turning the video footage from this paddle into a short documentary film. Check our website in the fall for more information.

GSA's new Board of Directors

STAN BOYCHUK lives in Victoria. He previously served as Executive Director of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust and is now working with the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve program. He lived for over two decades in the Yukon where he worked on aboriginal issues and human resource management.

DON BULMER is a Certified Financial Planner with extensive experience in estate and charitable gift planning, and works as Portfolio Manager and Senior Wealth Advisor. He recently climbed Mt Kilimanjaro to raise funds and awareness for Alzheimer's, enjoys skiing, marathon running, and spending family time at his boat-access cabin on Indian Arm. Don lives in Vancouver.

BRENT ENGLAND lives in Saanichton. A Chartered Accountant, he also holds a degree in Marine Biology. He is a boater, SCUBA diver and member of the Power & Sail Squadron's teaching core.

DARREN BLANEY is on the Steering Committee of the Coast Salish Gathering and a Director of the First Nation Technology Council. He served 12 years on Homalco First Nation's Council including six years as elected Chief, and he has been active in GSA's Salmon Aquaculture campaign.

SHAENA LAMBERT is the author of two books of fiction, including one which was a finalist for the Rogers Writers Trust Fiction Prize and the Ethel Wilson Award and was chosen by the *Globe and Mail* as a best book of the year. She grew up in Horseshoe Bay and now lives in Vancouver.

ANNE MURRAY is Vice-President, Community and Environmental Affairs for Vancouver Airport Authority and an Adjunct Professor for SFU's School of Resource and Environmental Management. She lives in Vancouver and enjoys cycling, canoeing, hiking and camping.

SUZANNE SIEMENS is a Chartered Accountant and co-owner of Lunapads International, which manufactures and markets environmentally responsible personal care products for women. She lives in North Vancouver and enjoys paddling and dragon-boating.

MELINDA SKEELS is an associate with a North Shore law firm where her practice is focused on aboriginal and environmental law. She grew up on Bowen Island, spent her university years in Victoria and now lives in Vancouver. She is an avid sea kayaker.

FRANK TESTER is a UBC Professor with degrees in environmental design, social work and geography. He works on social and environmental issues in Nunavut, has co-authored several books on Inuit social history and has written about BC environmental issues. He lives in Vancouver and has a small farm on Denman Island.

Seizing every opportunity

by Ruby Berry

Starting in December of this year, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) will have primary responsibility for regulation of fish farms. This will be a big change, but it won't mean that all decisions around fish farms will be made in Ottawa. Still in the hands of the Province are decisions around issuing and revoking foreshore tenures, which all water-based operations require in order to operate. As well, the Strathcona Regional District in northern Georgia Strait holds a unique authority over zoning within its waters, where about a quarter of all BC's fish farms are located.

So the ability to protect wild salmon and its environment will continue to rest in the hands of your elected representatives—at all levels.

So how do we get these folks to make decisions that will support the health and future of wild salmon?

When GSA makes presentations to community groups about the impacts of open net cage salmon farms, we're often asked, "What can I do?" Lately my answer has been, "Take advantage of every opportunity you can think of." What I mean by this is that we need to be addressing this issue in a great many different ways and on many different levels—coming at it from all angles possible.

That's essentially how GSA approaches this campaign. We have a clear goal and strategies to get there, but in addition we need to be opportunists, taking advantage of every chance possible to let people know about the issue—and encouraging them to inform not only their friends, but also their elected officials, because that's where change will happen.

As a result, our work takes on many different forms. Just to give you a small sample, in the past couple of months we have:

- made a presentation to the federal Standing Committee for Fisheries and Oceans
- met with senior federal bureaucrats
- developed criteria for a new closed containment project fund
- participated in a multi-stakeholder/multi-government closed containment workshop



Lindsay Richards (left), 12, and his mother EJ Hurst holding the GSA banner on the lawn of the BC Legislature at the culmination of the Get Out Migration in May—a walk from Sointula to Victoria to demand the removal of net cage fish farms from BC waters. Lindsay passed up the opportunity of a weekend of skiing to join the Migration, saying “Mt. Washington will always be there, but the wild salmon might not be.”

- appeared all over the province in salmon costumes, raising awareness on this issue
- taken part in the Get out Migration
- been interviewed for television, radio, video clips and print media
- written articles for publications
- staffed booths at community events
- made presentations to community groups, local governments and service clubs

During our travels around the province, we've marveled at the splendour of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. We've had the pleasure of developing new relationships with interior as well as coastal indigenous Nations as well as other groups—all extremely concerned that the fish farms may be killing wild salmon as they pass the farms on their way from their rivers to the open ocean.

We've also learned more about technology than we ever imagined existed for growing fish, both in open netcages and closed containment. Advice, support, information and inspiration come to us from all over the globe.

The most enjoyable days in this campaign are those all-too-rare times that we get to spend on the water, researching the spread of sea lice, investigating samples of the ocean floor around the farms and gathering data on the status of individual farms. It's tragic to see the evidence of damage from fish farms, of course—but at the same time, it's wonderful to be out on the waters of Georgia Strait. Most of the time, though, you'll find us at our desks or in meetings of some sort, working to find new, vibrant ways to inspire meaningful action to address the issues.

Thanks to you, our message has been getting through. Media attention on this issue has grown, closed containment has become a household concept, and the vast majority of BC citizens have demonstrated that they want the open net cage farms removed from our waters.

But we're not done yet. How do we convince the decision makers to take the decisive steps that are needed? By each of us taking advantage of every opportunity we can think of!

continued next page

Have Your Say

Here's an idea:

It's a popular belief that a population the size of British Columbia makes up a community that is so well connected, that there are only three degrees of separation between any two people. That means that you know someone who knows someone who knows, personally, each of our elected representatives. So call your friends and contacts and tell them your concerns, and ask them who they know and who they can call. We all have lines of influence that are available to us, if we just choose to use them. Now is the time to activate these lines. All of us can be "opportunists", keeping this issue in the limelight until our elected officials take the reins and fund closed containment, and begin moving the open net cages out of the ocean.

For more ideas visit our website's Salmon Farming page and click on "What you can do". You can also email michelle@georgiastrait.org to join our campaign update email list, which will keep you informed of new developments and ways you can help move government and industry towards positive change.

In addition to its soon-official role as the government agency in charge of fish farm licensing and regulation, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for protecting wild fish and the marine environment. DFO could choose to make salmon farming regulations so effective at protecting the natural environment and wild salmon, that open net cages would no longer meet the required standards.

Without a sea change in terms of political will, however, this optimistic scenario is highly unlikely—given that DFO has had the responsibility for protecting wild fisheries for a very long time, but has not yet acted to control damage by fish farms. It's therefore important that DFO receive strong public input as it develops its new aquaculture regulations. Watch our website for news of opportunities to have your say, expected for at least a month this summer.

—RB

Strait News

Since at least April 21, traces of fuel and crude oil have been leaking into the ocean daily from Chevron's refinery on Burrard Inlet. The company noticed the leak in a routine inspection and set up soaker pads and absorbent booms to prevent the contaminants from spreading in the Inlet. Chevron has vowed to stop the leak, but as we went to press had still not been able to pinpoint its source.

* * *

Grey whales have made some unusual appearances this spring. In May one was seen feeding near Squamish for a couple of weeks, and another one thrilled Vancouver residents by entering False Creek, making for a great lunch time show for the crowds on shore. When the 16-metre whale briefly entered the inner part of the Creek, officials temporarily shut down marine traffic east of the Cambie Bridge. The whale spent two days feeding around Vancouver's shores.



Photo by Corey Peet

Land-based closed containment for salmon farming—the future is now.

Overwaitea Food Group recently announced that its Save-On Foods outlets in BC are now offering salmon grown in closed containment facilities, and will be phasing out net cage salmon. We applaud Overwaitea for demonstrating that closed containment can be used to grow fish, and that it can be commercially successful. Be sure to check with store staff before purchasing, to ensure that what you're getting is really closed containment-grown (since the stores will be selling net cage salmon as well for awhile)—and let Save-On employees know that you appreciate the effort that the company is making.

For the most up to date news
and information be sure to visit
www.GeorgiaStrait.org

Mapping what's special

by Cathy Booler

Over the summer you will be seeing GSA in various places around the Strait, as we talk with people and gather their input into our new initiative to create a Georgia Strait Community Map.

The Map is the first step in creating a one-stop online knowledge centre about the Strait of Georgia, the people and animals who live here, and the threats we all face. We aim to find out what you and others have to say about the Strait. For example:

- *What places do we love in the Strait?*
- *Where are the important wildlife areas?*
- *What places, issues or threats are we concerned about?*
- *Where are the places where stewardship or restoration projects are making a difference?*
- *What are people's hopes and dreams for the future of Georgia Strait?*

A second step will be to survey scientific and other research initiatives that are underway in regards to the health of the Strait.

We'll be drawing on all of this collected information to develop an online Community Map, which will identify important areas and threats in the Strait and flag emerging issues that need more public attention. Our hope is that it will be a useful tool that continues to grow for years to come.

A further step in the project will be to create a set of Georgia Strait Protection Principles, arising out of the information we gather. We will be providing these Principles to communities

Photo by Laurie MacBride



The Squamish estuary, one of many special places around Georgia Strait.

around the region, as a tool to educate municipal planners and decision-makers on local marine issues and help them to make shoreline and watercourse protection a priority. We hope to get communities to adopt the Georgia Strait Protection Principles and incorporate them into local planning processes such as Official Community Plans.

The project is an ambitious one, to be carried out over several years, funding dependent. But one step at a time! For now, the Community Map is our focus, and we encourage you to get involved. We're sure that you have some unique and important local knowledge to add to the map—to do this, please visit www.GeorgiaStrait.org/communitymap2010

We thank the Vancouver Foundation for their financial support of the first stage of this project.

Ship sinking stopped

Thanks to the vigorous efforts of the community-based group, Save Halkett Bay, and support from Georgia Strait Alliance, the HMCS Annapolis will not be sunk off Gambier Island as planned.

In its review of the Artificial Reef Society of BC's proposal, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans stated that sinking the ship in the proposed site would destroy sensitive marine habitat. In a letter to the Society, DFO marine biologist Bruce Clark stated that "the marine environment of Howe Sound, including the vicinity of the proposed project site at Halkett Bay, is productive and sensitive fish habitat," noting that salmon, steelhead, trout, surf smelt, Dungeness crab and other species use the area. Sinking the ship in this location would have destroyed approximately 1470 square meters of habitat.

While we're delighted with the decision, we cannot rest on our laurels. According to the Artificial Reef Society's website, the group still intends to sink the Annapolis in another location.

In a rare occurrence, about 150 Pacific white-sided dolphins were seen feeding on herring in Howe Sound for about two weeks this spring.

GSA has long opposed the sinking of old ships for artificial reefs. As DFO noted in the Halkett Bay review, there is no evidence that habitat gained compensates for the habitat lost. Our other concerns have not been adequately addressed, including potential long-term contamination of the areas where ships have already been sunk. Until these issues are resolved, we believe that no more ships should be sunk.

To learn more, please read our more recent submission on this issue at www.GeorgiaStrait.org/annapolis

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

Passion for the Strait

by Lisa Herman

At the heart of just about every event, program or initiative that GSA carries out, you'll find our longest-serving staff member, Administrative Director Cathy Booler. She's been in charge of our Nanaimo office since 1994 and over the years has also coordinated numerous programs, including our popular Mid-Island DeTox Challenge (forerunner of our ToxicSmart program), Intertidal Stewardship and, currently, our Community Mapping project (see facing page).

Cathy's passion for GSA's mission, along with her willingness to take on just about anything needed, have made her the consummate multi-tasker. For many years she has organized special events, worked with hundreds of volunteers, managed GSA's computer support and databases, hired and supervised summer students and other office staff, provided hands-on support to staff and board members whenever needed—and carried out myriad other responsibilities.

Cathy grew up in Ottawa, moving to Peterborough to attend Trent University. After completing her Biology degree (Freshwater and Terrestrial Ecology focus) in the late 80s, she headed west with her then-partner and her beloved dog, Maya, intending a winter's adventure in Whistler. A visit to a friend in Victoria left them penniless—and awestruck with Vancouver Island and the ocean. "We were forced to stay for awhile, and never left." A couple of years later they moved to Nanaimo where, Cathy says, she thought she had died and gone to heaven. "It is so beautiful and diverse and the landscape is so different from Ontario. Also, from Nanaimo you can easily get anywhere—not that I get off the Island a lot!"

Cathy became involved with GSA in 1993 after reading articles in the local newspapers about Laurie MacBride (GSA's Executive Director until 2007), and strongly identifying with what she had to say. Cathy had been working with the Waste Solutions Project, focused on organizing recycling resources for Vancouver Island municipalities. Intrigued with what GSA was trying



Photo by Chris Nott

Cathy Booler (right), now GSA's longest-serving staff member, with her stepdaughter and canine friends, on Mt. Benson overlooking Nanaimo.

to do, she soon found herself "dialing for dollars" every evening—helping with our early membership drives, learning to engage people and bring out their concerns and love for the Strait. When the telephone and door-to-door canvasses ended, she spent four months as a full-time volunteer in the Nanaimo office, then became Office Manager in 1994. At that time, she and Laurie were the only staff members, so between them they covered a wide range of responsibilities.

In the 14 years that they worked together, Cathy says she learned a great deal from Laurie. "She was tireless at keeping everything on track in the organization, as well as holding the government accountable to its own laws," Cathy said. "I learned so much from her about running an organization—strategic planning, developing programs and priorities, refining and communicating our message for different audiences—not to mention numerous ways to raise funds."

At the age of 43, Cathy's life changed dramatically with the birth of her long-awaited daughter, Zoe. Before that, she often worked long strings of evenings and weekends, especially over our busy summer outreach season and anytime we've had special events on the go.

Cathy still works very hard for GSA, but nowadays her number one priority—and greatest joy—is to spend time with Zoe, along with her partner, Chris, his

daughter Somme and other family and friends. She also keeps busy looking after her 1913 Nob Hill home, walking her two dogs and participating in community events in Nanaimo. She has long been a great fan of the Canadian folk, blues and roots music scene; thanks to Zoe, children's music shows are now a primary focus.

Cathy's great hope is that public attitudes will evolve fast enough to allow Zoe's generation—and beyond—to appreciate the magnificence and abundance of the Strait. She sees the need for a society-wide change in our lifestyles, systems and economy, "if our earth and oceans are to have a chance in the future."

Towards that end, she says, "we're headed in the right direction, but not fast enough. Great things are going on at many levels. But we need more government leadership on clean energy solutions, and funding for local citizen-driven initiatives to help people live more simply, within the means of our environment."

Cathy has put her heart and soul into her work with GSA, and she confesses that she has burnt out more than once. "But I've always come back to a sense of balance," she says. After all these years, she still feels honoured to work for an organization that is doing such relevant work—even if, as she observes, "GSA often has to fight to be recognized for this important role."

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GEORGIA STRAIT ALLIANCE IS ALSO GRATEFUL FOR **GIFTS MADE IN MEMORY OF** Chad Bennington, and for **GIFTS MADE IN HONOUR OF** Mike Richards' 50th birthday, Tracy Myers' birthday, and David Pinel of West Coast Expeditions.

Thanks to all who provided support from February 2 through May 21, 2010, including others not listed here due to space limitations.

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Photo by Laurie MacBride