



Georgia Strait Alliance
Caring for Our Coastal Waters

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Welcome all Volunteers!

Georgia Strait Alliance (GSA) recognizes that all volunteers play an integral role in its short term and long term success, so thank you for choosing to give your time and expertise to our volunteer program! We are looking forward to having you join our friendly, dedicated team!

As a volunteer for GSA, you will work alongside our paid staff members, and many other talented volunteers. We believe that outlining a clear picture of our expectations and needs will allow us to meet yours, resulting in a healthy, creative and fulfilling work environment for all.

The following handbook has been created to provide volunteers with a comprehensive look into GSA's history and mission, while developing a strong understanding of our policies and procedures. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook, as it will provide a detailed picture of the exciting adventure you are about to embark on. To retain necessary flexibility in the administration of policies and procedures, GSA reserves the right to change, add to, or eliminate any of the policies described in this handbook.

On behalf of everyone at GSA, we welcome you to our organization and we look forward to working with you to protect our coastal waters!

Sincerely,

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About Georgia Strait Alliance

Georgia Strait Alliance (GSA) is a charitable marine conservation organization whose purpose is: to protect and restore the marine environment and promote the sustainability of Georgia Strait, its adjoining waters and communities.

Our Goals

- Protect biodiversity and wildlife habitat;
- Restore the region's water and air quality;
- Promote the social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of the region's communities;
- Foster understanding and stewardship of the marine environment;
- Raise awareness of the links between the health of ecosystems and human communities.

Background

Through a region-wide approach, GSA has worked since 1990 on a number of fronts to raise public awareness, inform decision-makers, engage people in active stewardship and develop solutions to the myriad of environmental problems that face our region. Environmental issues we've been involved in range from toxic pollution, and marine habitat degradation, to the impacts of poorly planned population growth. As a result of GSA's work, government agencies, mainstream media outlets and key decision-makers throughout the region are beginning to focus efforts on the Strait of Georgia and to realize the extent and urgency of the environmental problems we face.

In addition to our over 1300 individual members, our membership includes environmental, recreational, labour, and community groups, as well as sport and commercial fishing organizations, small businesses, marine industry organizations and many others that together comprise well over 100,000 people. The diversity of our membership has given us a distinctive voice within the BC environmental movement for more than 26 years and enabled us to build many effective partnerships.

Georgia Strait Alliance Program Areas

- Tankers and Spills
- Clean Marine BC
- Waterfront Initiative
- Species Protection
- Education and Outreach

Membership

It is not necessary to be a member of GSA in order to volunteer; however, as there is strength in numbers, volunteers are encouraged to become members to help influence legislative changes that will help protect the marine environment. Membership requires a donation of any amount. Membership allows us to form a society of like-minded people to bring awareness to the degradation of the marine environment.

Definition of a Volunteer and the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers are individuals who, without expectation of monetary gain, contribute their time, service and expertise in the belief that their activity mutually benefits the organization and themselves. They are considered to be valuable team members working alongside paid staff members and other volunteers in the fulfillment of GSA's mission.

The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement consists of three important elements:

1. Values for Volunteer Involvement

Volunteer involvement is vital to a just and democratic society.

- It fosters civic responsibility, participation and interaction.

Volunteer involvement strengthens communities.

- It promotes change and development by identifying and responding to community needs.

Volunteer involvement mutually benefits both the volunteer and the organization.

- It increases the capacity of organizations to accomplish their goals, and provides volunteers with opportunities to develop and contribute.

2. Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers have rights. Voluntary organizations recognize that volunteers are a vital human resource and will commit to the appropriate infrastructure to support volunteers.

- GSA's practices ensure effective volunteer involvement.
- The organization commits to providing a safe and supportive environment for volunteers.

Volunteers have responsibilities. Volunteers make a commitment and are accountable to the organization.

- Volunteers will act with respect for beneficiaries and community.
- Volunteers will act responsibly and with integrity.

3. Organizational Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Standard 1: Mission-based Approach: The board of directors, leadership volunteers and staff acknowledge and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's purpose and mission.

Standard 2: Human Resources: Volunteers are welcomed and treated as valued and integral members of the organization's human resources team. The organization has a planned approach for volunteer involvement that includes linking volunteers to the achievement of the mission, providing the appropriate human and financial resources to support the volunteer program, and establishing policies for effective management.

Standard 3: **Program Planning and Policies:** Policies and procedures are adopted by the organization to provide a framework that defines and supports the involvement of volunteers.

Standard 4: **Program Administration:** The organization has a clearly designated individual with appropriate qualifications responsible for the volunteer program.

Standard 5: **Volunteer Assignments:** Volunteer assignments address the mission or purpose of the organization and involve volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect the abilities, needs and backgrounds of the volunteer and the organization.

Standard 6: **Recruitment Volunteer:** Recruitment incorporates internal and external strategies to reach out and involve a diverse volunteer base.

Standard 7: **Screening:** A clearly communicated screening process is adopted and consistently applied by the organization.

Standard 8: **Orientation and Training:** Each volunteer is provided with an orientation to the organization, its policies and practices, including the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. Each volunteer receives training customized to the volunteer assignment and the individual needs of the volunteer.

Standard 9: **Supervision:** Volunteers receive a level of supervision appropriate to the task and are provided with regular opportunities to give and receive feedback.

Standard 10: **Recognition:** The contributions of volunteers are consistently acknowledged with formal and informal methods of recognition.

Standard 11: **Record Management Standardized:** Documentation and records management practices are followed and in line with relevant legislation.

Standard 12: **Evaluation:** The impact and contribution of volunteers and the volunteer program are continually evaluated to ensure the needs of the organization are being met in fulfilling its mandate.

Georgia Strait Alliance Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Volunteer Rights

- To work in a healthy and safe environment
- To be given a suitable assignment based on your interests and skills, as well as GSA's needs
- To be provided appropriate training and support to carry out your role
- To be recognized for your contribution
- To be given the opportunity to provide feedback on your volunteer experience
- To be given the chance to grow and develop as a volunteer through participation in other GSA activities and events

Volunteer Responsibilities

- To be on time and to carry out duties promptly and reliably
- To give as much notice as possible if you cannot make your volunteer commitment

- To ask questions if you are unsure of anything
- To respect confidentiality
- To liaise regularly with GSA's Volunteer Coordinator, ensuring that your volunteer hours are recorded
- To be courteous to clients, staff, and other volunteers

Benefits

As an active volunteer at GSA you will receive:

1. Training and support.
2. A letter of reference upon request.
3. The opportunity to learn and to take on responsibility.
4. The opportunity to engage and network within your community and within the larger marine conservation community.
5. Personal fulfillment from serving in a meaningful and valuable way.
6. Recognition and appreciation of your contribution.

Use of Organizational Affiliation

Volunteers may **not** use their organizational affiliation in connection with partisan politics, religious matters, or community issues contrary to positions taken by the organization.

Volunteer Confidentiality

Volunteers will agree to keep all matters relating to the work of GSA completely confidential, and are not to disclose or use such information in external settings.

Volunteers and the Media

Volunteers are asked to direct any formal media requests about GSA to the Executive Director or Communications Associate as they are the sole spokespersons for the organization. Volunteers are not to speak publicly about GSA to any media outlets unless otherwise directed.

Volunteer Conflict of Interest

All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of accuracy, truth and integrity. They must continuously act in GSA's interest and work towards the priorities of the organization. In the unlikely event that a situation comes up that comprises a volunteer's ability to fulfill their responsibilities due to a conflict of interest, this must be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

Volunteer Criminal Record Checks (CRC)

Under the British Columbia Criminal Records Review Act, individuals who work with children or vulnerable adults directly or who potentially have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults must authorize a Criminal Record Check for their authorized organization. GSA provides a variety of programs and events to individuals of all ages and abilities and as such volunteers may be required to obtain a CRC.

Each volunteer will be asked to submit a letter for a Criminal Record Check to your local RCMP if there is the opportunity for engaging in activities that include interacting with the

community. They will require you to show 2 pieces of ID one government issued and the other needing to show your birthdate (ie. Driver's License, Care Card (if different than your Driver's License), Birth Certificate, Passport). We understand that these do take some time to receive back from the RCMP, so you can submit the complete form once you have received it back. There is no cost for volunteers to get a CRC completed.

Record Management

The protection of the personal information collected is of utmost importance to GSA. All personal information of each volunteer will be kept secure and confidential at all times. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure that all personal information is kept up to date, (ie. emergency contact information) and that any changes are communicated to the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

Healthy Workplace Culture

GSA endeavours to maintain a safe and respectful work environment for all its volunteers and employees. Regular health and safety checks of the facility are carried out according to Occupational Health and Safety regulations.

i. Bullying and Harassment

GSA recognizes the right of everyone to a safe and healthy environment. As such, bullying and harassment in any form is neither accepted nor tolerated in the workplace.

Bullying and harassment includes any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards a worker that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated, but excludes any reasonable action taken by the manager relating to the management and direction of workers or volunteers. Sexual harassment in the workplace is defined as unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job-related consequences of the harassment.

ii. Whistleblower Policy

This policy is intended to encourage employees and volunteers to report suspected or actual occurrence(s) of illegal, unethical or inappropriate events (including behaviours or practices) without retribution. An individual who notices this form of conduct should immediately report the suspected or actual event to the Volunteer Coordinator. This person shall receive no retaliation or retribution for a report that was provided in good faith – that was not done primarily with malice to damage another employee or the organization.

iii. Smoking/Alcohol/Drug Policy

GSA does not tolerate volunteers in the workplace who are under the influence of liquor, illicit drugs or any other intoxicant. Such behaviour can lead to the termination of the volunteer's services.

iv. Emergency Procedures

Will be made available where necessary.

v. Injuries or Illness

No matter how slight the injury may appear at the time of the incident, all accidents must be reported to the Volunteer Coordinator, or appropriate staff member immediately.

Should you be ill and unable to make your scheduled shift or fulfill your volunteer duties, it is essential to get in contact with the Volunteer Coordinator immediately so that an alternate can be found.

Disciplinary Action or Termination of Services

In the extremely unlikely event that a volunteer does not fulfill their job duties, or should they fail to follow the outlined GSA policies and procedures, they may be subject to disciplinary action. This action will be displayed in a progressive manner, allowing time for clear expectations to be re-affirmed and for changes in the volunteer's performance to take place.

Disciplinary action will follow the below sequence:

1. Formal Verbal Warning
2. Formal Written Warning
3. Termination of Services
4. Immediate Termination of Services should the infraction be of a severe nature

Volunteers Questions or Concerns

At GSA, we recognize the invaluable and immeasurable role that volunteers play in the fulfillment of our mission. We could not do this without you! If at any time you have any questions or concerns regarding your role or any other item, please do not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss.

GSA Team Contacts

Christianne Wilhelmson – Executive Director – christianne@georgiastrait.org

Cathy Booter – Data & Digital Systems Manager - cathy@georgiastrait.org

Michelle Young – Financial Coordinator/Clean Marine BC Program Coordinator – michelle@georgiastrait.org

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Andrew Radzik – Energy Campaigner/Tankers Program – andrew@georgiastrait.org

Gillian Der – Community Organizer – gillian@georgiastrait.org

Rebecca Adams – Graphics and Web Development - rebecca@georgiastrait.org

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