



Georgia Strait Alliance

WINTER NEWSLETTER

2019

Caring for Our Coastal Waters

www.GeorgiaStrait.org

We're turning 30

Our world and local waters have changed dramatically since Georgia Strait Alliance was formed by a small group of engaged citizens living in communities on the South Coast. We've seen changes for the better as threats were addressed and we've seen new challenges rear their head. But one thing that hasn't changed is our unwavering commitment to marine conservation in the Salish Sea.

Driving all of our initiatives is the protection of the local marine environment and the sustainability of the Strait of Georgia and its adjoining waters.

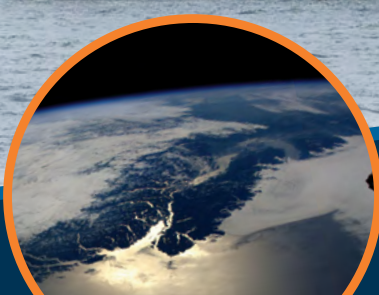
This matters more than ever in a time of massive climate change. Local consequences of a warming climate and ocean include sea walls in Vancouver being destroyed by storms, rising sea levels and floods putting homes underwater along the Fraser River,

and acidification of the Strait that is causing losses in shellfish crops along Vancouver Island.

With the support of people like you, we have been able to strengthen our roots and grow to become an ever more effective regional environmental voice, with an impact that belies the size of our organization. And because of you, we continue to envision a future for our region that includes clean water and air, healthy wild salmon runs, rich marine life and natural areas, and sustainable communities—a vision we will strive to achieve, together.



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Unwavering mission and vision

by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director

When Georgia Strait Alliance was founded nearly 30 years ago, the reason was simple: the region was under threat from development and urbanization and there was an attitude of disregard, even disrespect, towards the Strait and to the communities along its shores. The people who lived here, and who shared a deep love and connection for this place, stepped up to speak with a united voice to defend these waters – and “Save Georgia Strait Alliance” was created.

Since that time, the awareness for the richness and importance of this unique inland sea has grown, pulp pollution has declined, protection for at risk species like the southern resident orca has increased, a moratorium on the expansion of open net cage fish farms exists, there is a reduction in local pollution from recreational boats, and soon sewage pollution in our region will decline.

We achieved these victories through a collaborative approach, which brings a broad range of people together

who all care about this region – and who advocate together for change.

While our effectiveness is clear, the threats to this region are ongoing, which is the reason for Georgia Strait Alliance to continue to be an ardent advocate for the region.

The mission then, as it is now, is to promote the sustainability of these waters and south coast communities by identifying threats and advocating for long-term solutions to them. Our vision remains unchanged: clean water and air, healthy wild salmon runs, rich marine life and natural areas, and sustainable communities. And it is through our campaigns and programs that focus on the issues of our time, including the climate crisis, that we continue to strive towards that vision.

As we look to celebrating all that we have accomplished in 30 years, know that we are more committed than ever – thanks to your support – to ensuring that the Strait and its communities have a defender for decades to come.



OUR MISSION

To protect and restore the marine environment and promote the sustainability of Georgia Strait, its adjoining waters, and communities.

SPECIES PROTECTION

Working to protect habitat and species

An orca update

This year, several protection measures – the boldest yet – were put into place for the 73 remaining endangered Southern Resident orcas. The 2019 measures are relatively broad ranging and are designed to mitigate several key threats. They include:



No-go zones in key feeding areas

remove vessel threats from where orcas frequent to find prey, giving the population the disturbance-free conditions they need to find sufficient food to eat.



Reducing overall Chinook salmon harvest

so that more fish are available for Southern Residents.



Restrictions on whale-watching

provide disturbance-free areas with reduced noise levels so whales can sleep, eat and communicate.

There are only 73 orcas in the three Southern Resident pods (J, K and L), putting the population at its lowest in thirty years

The biodiversity crisis, highlighted by the United Nations, makes it clear that governments must take action to prevent species collapse. Georgia Strait Alliance will build on the momentum from the 2019 measures and continue to advocate for increased protections for endangered Southern Resident orcas.

Discover

our list of simple, everyday actions that you can do to support the recovery of orcas.

www.georgiastrait.org/ActionsforOrcas

Did you know?

In the United States, the federal government has proposed expanding the designation of critical habitat for orcas so it is seven times larger than it is today.





Let's keep contaminants and microplastics out of the Salish Sea

Join us in advocating for an upgrade to tertiary wastewater treatment at the Iona Plant.

www.georgiastrait.org/TreatOurSalishSea

photo: Iona jetty, Gord McKenna

The four stages of wastewater treatment



Preliminary

Removes larger floating material, like branches and plastic, as well as grit, through screening and grit chambers.



Primary

Removes floating and suspended solids and sludge via skimming and settling tanks.



Secondary

Breaks down up to 85% of the suspended solids and toxins through the use of bacteria and biological oxidation.



Tertiary

Targets specific contaminants, including nitrogen, ammonia, phosphorus and some metals that are removed through biological and chemical processes. It further removes pathogens to raise the quality of the water to domestic and industrial standards, allowing treated wastewater to return to local estuaries and be safe for drinking.

Additional treatment is possible at various stages in the wastewater treatment process, through the addition of other technology and processes like oxidation and fine filtration.

Engaging with effluent

At Georgia Strait Alliance, we continue to fight for better sewage treatment in the region as the public consultations on Metro Vancouver's Iona Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade continue. And you can play a role by advocating for more than the bare minimum.

Federal regulations mandate that the upgrade must be finished by 2030. Current plans are for an upgrade to the minimum national standard of secondary treatment. If Metro Vancouver moves to tertiary treatment it can significantly improve the quality of the discharge that is released directly into the Strait of Georgia, near the mouth of the Fraser River—home to a biodiverse ecosystem that salmon, orca and other marine life depend on.

Did you know?

With tertiary wastewater treatment, 60%-70% of chemicals and pharmaceuticals are filtered, reducing the bio-accumulation of toxins in marine life such as endangered Southern Resident orcas.





photo: © Naturecolors - Adobe Stock

Indigenous-led oversight of fish farms

In the late 1990s, Georgia Strait Alliance, along with our coalition partners, worked with First Nations to raise the alarm over the risks to wild salmon from open net-pen salmon farms. Because of these decades of advocacy, which continues today, we were thrilled to learn that the 'Namgis, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis and Mamalilikulla First Nations have signed an agreement to oversee 17 fish farms, operated by Cermaq and Mowi, in the Broughton Archipelago, the traditional and ancestral territories of these First Nations.

Under this agreement, there will be monitoring of fish health, sea lice, pathogens, disease agents and diseases before and after fish are introduced into the fish farms.

Smolts that test positive for the piscine reovirus will not be transferred into saltwater and corrective measures include the removal of fish from farms if sea lice treatment is unsuccessful.

The announcement follows a commitment from the B.C. government to close at least 10 of the 17 remaining fish farms in the Broughton Archipelago before 2023. Ten will be decommissioned by the end of 2022 and opera-

tions at the seven other farms will end by 2023, unless agreements based on results from this new monitoring program can be reached and licenses secured from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

This is an incredible advancement in achieving our vision of a future without open net-pen salmon farms, with the industry transitioning to using land-based closed containment systems, and the return of healthy wild salmon runs.

Show your support for wild salmon

Add your voice to the Safe Salmon Declaration. It has more than 15,000 signatures calling on the federal government to continue with the commitment to transition open net-pen operations to closed containment facilities on land.

www.georgiastrait.org/ActionforSalmon



We are in a climate emergency. We're running out of time.

Climate change won't wait—and Canadians right here on the South Coast are making it known that we want our governments to invest in renewable, clean energy.

However, our provincial and federal governments are putting billions of taxpayer dollars into subsidies for the oil and gas sector each year, as well as the taxpayer money that is being used to keep Trans Mountain alive.

It's time for the federal government to truly lead by focusing on renewable energy and meaningfully reduce our greenhouse gas emissions—and Georgia Strait Alliance is adding the voice of South Coast communities to the pressure being put on government.

TRANS MOUNTAIN & CLIMATE

Our climate, our planet

The B.C. provincial government's new report, *Preliminary Strategic Climate Risk Assessment for British Columbia*, outlines the most relevant risks to our home province. For coastal communities, there are some significant risks—likely or probable—and we will use this information to inform what we, at GSA, will do going forward.

FINDINGS

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON SOUTH COAST

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

Decreasing pH means increasing acidity and decreasing availability of minerals in coastal waters.

Without available calcium and other minerals, the populations of creatures that depend on being able to make their own shells are expected to decrease. In the Strait, oysters, clams, mussels, barnacles and other crustaceans are expected to suffer, reducing their benefits to the ecosystems.

SEVERE COASTAL STORM SURGE

Four out of five B.C. residents live in coastal areas.

A severe storm (such as the 500-year winter event) that coincides with a king tide, after sea level rise, would have a significant impact on people and property, incurring more than \$24 billion in economic losses and major fatalities.

SALT WATER INTRUSION

Salt from ocean water will increasingly be present in surface and groundwater.

Aquifers in the Fraser River Delta that currently supply critical agriculture and drinking water will become less useable.

SEVERE RIVERINE FLOOD

The currently named 500-year-flood on the Fraser River could be five times more likely by 2050.

This event on the Fraser River would cause more than \$22 billion in losses, impacting 30% of the population, and causing unpredictable ecosystem stress to critical and already stressed salmon runs.

By working together, we can slowly and eventually halt the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in our region.

Visit our website to find out how you can take action now!

www.georgiastrait.org/ClimateAction

Municipalities TAKE ACTION

Community members, GSA and allies have encouraged 25 municipalities in B.C. to put their communities first in the fight for corporate responsibility from fossil fuel producers.

Bowen Island, Richmond and Vancouver are the newest municipalities to vote in favour of asking the Carbon Majors to pay their fair share of climate costs.

Notably, City Council in Vancouver instructed the Mayor to engage with municipalities beyond provincial borders to discuss the possibilities of shared legal strategies across Canada.

In addition, at the Union of B.C. Municipalities Convention in September, a City of Victoria Councillor announced that lawyer Joe Arvay of Arvay Finlay will prepare a legal opinion on options for local governments to recover their climate costs from global fossil fuel companies.

Community members have been joining together to bring this idea to their local representatives, activating an additional tool in support of their work. Now, there are a number of legal tools coming together to encourage and pressure the Carbon Majors to assess how their business model is impacting our coastal communities and the planet.

Today, municipal governments that represent 32 percent of B.C. residents have voted to or have taken action to hold fossil fuel companies accountable.

More delays for Trans Mountain

The B.C. environmental certificate for the project is under a court-ordered review after successful court challenges by the Squamish Nation and the City of Vancouver.

While this is taking place, the Province's Minister of Environment has said that no new permits will be issued. The project is currently facing delays at the federal level as well, with no detailed route approved in B.C. These delays are not sufficient to stop the Trans Mountain project, but they are slowing the project down. Upcoming First Nations challenges against the project approval are soon to be heard by the federal Court of Appeal.

For Georgia Strait Alliance, we're taking this opportunity to remind the Province that it should be carefully considering the risks of a possible oil spill, which include ecosystem impacts, economic considerations, and potential human health risks. These risks have been glossed over in past reviews, and are extremely important to the coastal communities that are being asked to shoulder some of the greatest threats of this dangerous project.

Do you want to get involved?

FIND OUT HOW

www.georgiastrait.org/ClimateAction

Graphic does not show actual resident locations



Working to minimize the impacts of recreational boating

Over the summer we were very busy increasing the reach of our Clean Marine BC program. We've recently certified both salt and freshwater facilities, creating a positive impact on our interconnected and interdependent waterways.

We have also recently visited more marinas around the Strait – on Thetis Island, Pender Island, and from Sayward to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island – introducing them to Clean Marine BC as a way to take our mission of marine conservation to boaters.

By partnering with boating facilities and recreational boaters, Georgia Strait Alliance is expanding the effectiveness of its marine conservation efforts as it works to protect B.C.'s cruising waters for generations to come.

PHOTOS

Top left: Recycling at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, photo by Scott Lang.

Top right: Presenting Lions Gate Marina with their Clean Marine BC flag (left to right: Wesbild CEO Kevin Layden, North Vancouver MP Jonathan Wilkinson, Marina Manager Donny Mekilok, GSA Executive Director Christianne Wilhelmson and Wesbild Business Development Manager Ardeshir Yeganegi). Photo courtesy of Lions Gate Marina.

Bottom: Touring Pender Island, photo by Michelle Young

CLEAN MARINE BC

There is a lot happening DOWN AT THE DOCKS!



Kelowna Yacht Club is the first facility in the province's Interior region to obtain CMBC certification.

By enrolling in CMBC before construction, the **Victoria International Marina** was the first to be built by following Clean Marine BC recommended best practices, including constructing their docks of concrete with encapsulated floatation and encapsulated steel pilings.

They join 10 other facilities in achieving the distinction of our program's top 5-anchor rating: False Creek Harbour Authority, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (4 facilities), Maple Bay Marina, Royal Vancouver Yacht Club (2 outstations),

Royal Victoria Yacht Club, and West Vancouver Yacht Club.

Lions Gate Marina is the first in North Vancouver to fly the Clean Marine BC flag. At the facility's flag-raising event, our executive director Christianne Wilhelmson was joined by Jonathan Wilkinson, MP for North Vancouver.

Saltspring Island Sailing Club doubled its eco-certification to four anchors in its re-certification. An improvement of two anchor ratings has only ever happened twice in the 12 years since CMBC has been operating in B.C.

Our **Green Boating Guide** is now available in French—for the first time!

Clean Marine BC allows boaters to easily recognize and choose facilities that are integrating environmental protection into their businesses.



LEARN MORE
www.georgiastrait.org/CMBC

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Water's Edge Day

More than 1,200 people enjoyed Water's Edge Day at Kits Point in September on a day where the sky went from grey to sunny! Thanks to our community partners, lots of people got on to the water, while our visitors on land enjoyed live music and plenty of activities just for kids!

Big thanks to our great partners and sponsors, particularly to Port of Vancouver, DP World and the Vancouver Maritime Museum, for their support.



photo: Julia Spitale

Festival of Ocean Films

For the first time in 10 years, all of the powerful and inspiring documentaries at our Festival were by B.C. filmmakers. Audiences in Nanaimo and Vancouver were treated to films that explored topics about our coastal and inland waters—from salmon and herring to humpbacks and oil spills. Audiences also got to hear from many of the filmmakers who participated in Q&A sessions after the screenings.

Sips & Songs for the Salish Sea

We teamed up with our incredible sponsor Lighthouse Brewery Company for an evening of song, community, art, conversation and brewery tours to celebrate salmon at the Brewery in Victoria.



photo: Andrew McCartney

Me Love Bingo!

Part game night, part variety show, this Hallowe'en-themed evening brought together over 80 people from Vancouver to raise funds and friends for marine conservation. Thanks to our volunteers, guests, sponsors, and our host Kyle Loven, we raised almost \$4,500 and enjoyed a fun-filled evening to remember!

photo:
Cathy Booter

Special thanks to sponsors: Harbour Air Seaplanes, Lighthouse Brewing Co., Geo Cider Co., Vancouver Canucks, Patagonia, Arc'Teryx, Fanny Bay Oyster Bar & Shellfish Market, Vancouver Art Gallery, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver Farmers' Market, Saul Good Gift Co., Tega Tea, Chambar Restaurant, Deep Cove Kayak Centre, Nature's Path Foods, and Long Table Distillery.



Another kind of personal philanthropy

Leaving a gift in your will is a simple action you can take now that can have a lasting impact on our local waters for future generations. It may surprise you to learn that a gift can also be a very practical addition to a financial or estate plan when tax issues are taken into consideration.

Whether you have been supporting GSA for years or are looking at the options available to make your first donation, creating a gift in your will can lead to significant benefits to your estate and to the health of the Salish Sea.

We are grateful to the donors whose recent estate gifts have helped us build and maintain our organizational strength and ensure that we will be here to tackle new threats as they emerge long into the future.

With gratitude we remember: Carol L. MacKinnon, Linda Shattuck, and Jo-Anne Thornthwaite. Their memories live on through the health of our coastal waters and the resilience of our communities.

Please consider discussing legacy giving with your professional financial advisor.

Monthly donors matter!

Donating monthly is an easy and convenient way to deepen your impact on the health of the Strait of Georgia. It provides reliable, cost-effective support that GSA can count on so we have the ability to respond to marine threats and opportunities as they arise.

Are you ready to make a positive impact?

GIVE TODAY
georgiastrait.org/donate



For more information, contact
giving@georgiastrait.org



Monthly donors made 36% of all donations to GSA last year

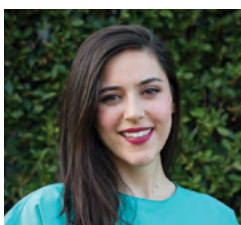
NEW TO THE TEAM

We are welcoming three new people to Georgia Strait Alliance:

Kirsten Mathison has joined as our Public Engagement Coordinator to support the organization as we develop better ways to connect people who live in coastal B.C. and beyond to the beauty that is the Salish Sea. Hailing from the Prairies, Kirsten moved to B.C. to study Geography and Anthropology at the University of Victoria. Previously, Kirsten was the Marketing and Events Coordinator at the Maritime Museum of BC in Victoria.



We are pleased to have **Angharad Davies** and **Stephanie Schiffmacher**, who are both human resources professionals, join our Board this past spring. Angharad works in the not-for-profit sector helping organizations with capacity building and organizational design. Stephanie works at Nature's Path Foods where she focuses on employee engagement and human resources process improvements.



Calling Volunteers

We are looking to connect with volunteers in Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo. With a time commitment of only a few hours every few months, you can encourage effective marine conservation and strengthen your community by participating in activities alongside our staff and other volunteers.

SUPERSTAR volunteer

This is **Rebecca Schijns**.

She volunteers with Georgia Strait Alliance to support community engagement at outreach events.

Region: Vancouver, B.C.

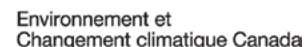


"Taking care of our oceans is our responsibility as a community. Georgia Strait Alliance is a welcoming organization that allows me to connect, educate and empower my community to foster care and protection of the marine ecosystem."

Volunteer with us!
georgiastrait.org/volunteer



Thank you to some of our recent funders and partners...



Thank you also to Stream of Consciousness, Patagonia Vancouver, Denman Island Chocolate, Harbour Air, Tourism Vancouver, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and StratCom. We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia.

YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!

Tasman Fitzmaurice is a first-time donor to Georgia Strait Alliance. For her 26th birthday, she asked her friends to donate to GSA on her behalf.

"I absolutely love Georgia Strait Alliance. It's one of the most vocal organizations that is protecting our waters, our land, our environment. It speaks for people—and for animals that don't have a voice for themselves.

For me, I connect with GSA because of its efforts to protect salmon and whales. Georgia Strait Alliance really showed up on my radar during the summer of 2018 when Tah-lequah's (J-35) calf died, because the organization was really keeping people informed about what was going on with the Southern Resident orcas.

What matters to me is anything that's fighting climate change and getting people aware of what's going on in our own communities and offering ways that people can make a difference themselves, which is what GSA does."

~Tasman Fitzmaurice



The stories and accomplishments that fill the pages of this newsletter were all made possible by your support, and the support of people like Tasman.

Join us

Your tax deductible donation is an investment in our shared vision for our local waters, for today and years to come.

To donate today, call 250-753-3459, email gsa@GeorgiasStrait.org or visit

www.georgiastrait.org/donate



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We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

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