



Georgia Strait Alliance

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Caring for Our Coastal Waters



2020

www.GeorgiaStrait.org

We must do better. Starting now.

When we began writing this newsletter, the world was still reeling from the blunt impact that the COVID-19 pandemic was having on our lives and our work. While the impacts were felt differently, all of us were struggling, together, to find the path forward. Many plans for the immediate and longer term had, and continue, to be pushed aside and, like you, the team at Georgia Strait Alliance did a lot of pivoting and adaptation as our plans for the coming year were sent sideways.

We found that, as always, staying focused on our core mission and continuing to develop long-term, climate-forward solutions to marine threats and habitat protection in this incredible region is our way of supporting coastal

communities. We also adapted to the current reality of increased physical distancing and we became actively involved in conversations about building a post-COVID-19 economy: one that is more just and that doesn't rely on environmental harm or leave marginalized communities behind; one that is built on economic drivers that don't contribute to the climate crisis, but tackle it.

But as we looked towards this just future, global, national and local voices – from Black and Indigenous communities in particular – made us stop to reflect on how Georgia Strait Alliance is doing its work and its role in supporting a white supremacist culture, within the organization and in the region at large, and how this is causing harm.

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The work of Georgia Strait Alliance focuses on the connection between the marine environment and healthy, sustainable and resilient coastal communities, and this continues to be our focus as an organization. But this work is being done by an organization where the staff and board do not reflect the demographics in this region of B.C., and by an organization that has ignored the reality that environmentalism is intersectional: it builds links between power structures, injustices and harms being done to racialized and marginalized communities. GSA must take proactive steps to give voice to these communities, and to not perpetuate these harms because environmental justice can only be built on the foundation of a more just society.

Our society is not just, supportive or equitable for Black, Indigenous and other communities of colour, and we recognize that this organization has rested comfortably on entrenched and rarely analyzed structures of white privilege.

Within the organization's Board, staff and volunteers, there are varied levels of learning, understanding, expertise and lived experiences with systemic racism and racial injustice. We are taking a long overdue look inside and starting to have critically important conversations

about the organization's role in supporting structures and actions that are exclusionary and cause harm.

Georgia Strait Alliance is committed to defining and implementing meaningful changes in the way the organization functions, and to doing the work necessary so that the organization and its efforts to advocate for the region are welcoming, safe and will not continue to cause harm, which includes creating space beyond what we imagine right now.

We are committed to this journey and it's one we would like to undertake and share with each of you, so you can play an active role in these changes and keep us accountable.

We are passionate about being strong advocates for greater protection of the Salish Sea, which includes becoming better allies and advocates for the health of all of its communities.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Christianne Wilhelmson and Lesli Boldt
Executive Director & Board President

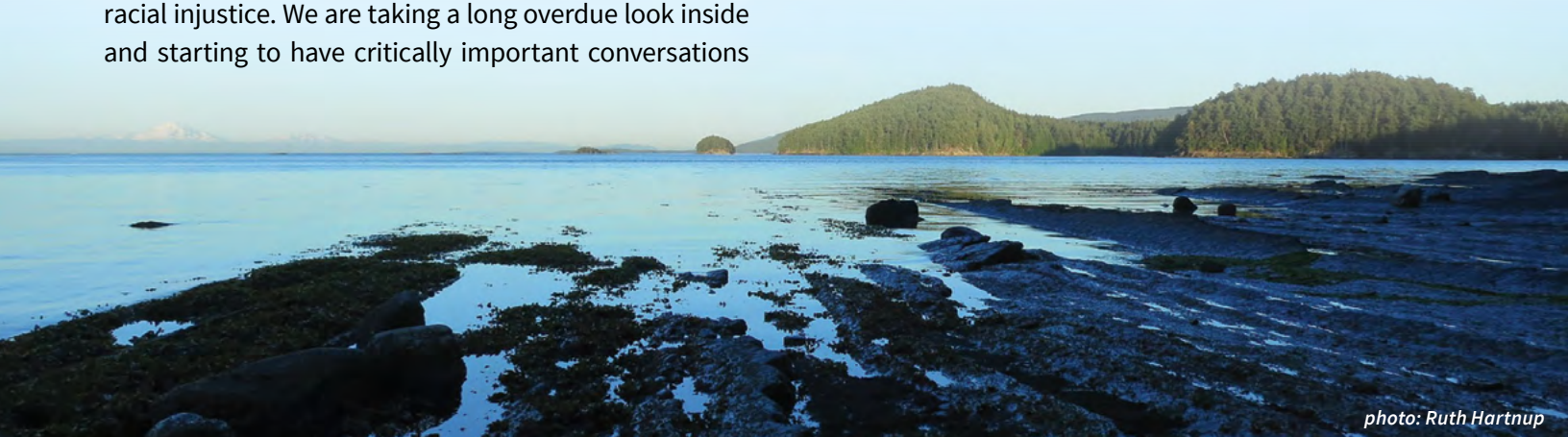


photo: Ruth Hartnup

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

BIODIVERSITY

At the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference in April, Georgia Strait Alliance led a plenary session on the benefits of having a **coordinated transboundary approach** for the protection of endangered Southern Resident orcas—and we did it digitally!

On average, Southern Residents make their home in the Salish Sea for six months a year, but they also rely on other areas of the Pacific Northwest. They roam, seeking Chinook salmon along the West Coast from Northern California to Southeast Alaska. That's why it's essential for Canada and the U.S. to have coordinated cross-jurisdictional participation in policies and in establishing unified standards that support comprehension and enforcement of protection measures.

A coordinated Canada-U.S. approach could include:



- ✓ **Have representatives from each country** sit on one another's working advisory groups to share lessons learned.
- ✓ **Have the same approach distance standards** on both sides of the border so they are clear and enforceable.
- ✓ **Sharing the Whale Alert System**, developed in Canada, for use in U.S. waters.
- ✓ **Coordinating policies** for orca protection and other species at risk.
- ✓ **Having whale watchers** on both sides of the border adhere to similar agreements.
- ✓ **Considering impacts of development projects** on the entire Salish Sea ecosystem, not only on one side of the border.

A lifeline for orcas

Our strong and sustained advocacy work is making a difference for the remaining 72 Southern Resident orcas. The endangered population spends significant time in the Salish Sea, where their habitat has gotten busier, noisier and more contaminated, making it difficult for them to find prey, communicate and stay healthy. The population's most recent loss was registered in the last few months with the disappearance of L41 (Mega), a 42-year-old male orca.

In an effort to protect these orcas, this year's federal regulations expand on the previous year, which were the boldest we had ever seen. Together, with our allies, our work contributed to the implementation of strong new action, including the requirement for all vessels to now maintain **year-round distances of 400 metres** (the length of four football fields) **from all orcas along B.C.'s south coast** from Ucluelet to Campbell River.

Georgia Strait Alliance continues to push the government to go further. We are urging decision-makers to listen to government and independent scientists, whose data says that more action is needed to reverse the decline of the Southern Resident orcas.

Find out what's new on page 8



Thank You!

Thousands of you wrote letters supporting the inclusion of tertiary wastewater treatment at the Iona Plant

Learn why this is important
www.georgiastrait.org/treatoursalishsea



Wild Pacific salmon need your help

Habitat destruction, overfishing and unsustainable open-net pen Atlantic salmon farms are threatening the health of wild salmon. Ask the federal government to keep its promise to remove these harmful fish farms from B.C. waters and transition them to sustainable land-based operations that will create and retain coastal jobs. Sign Safe Salmon's Declaration in defence of wild salmon.

www.safesalmon.ca

photo: Flickr user Anoldent

Stopping plastic and sewage pollution in oceans

We've advocated directly to all levels of government to increase wastewater treatment levels and for a national stormwater framework. This was our input into a consultation for the creation of a Plastics Action Plan for Canada.

Why? Because stormwater and effluent (or treated sewage discharge) from many of the region's wastewater plants have two major things in common: (a) they contain contaminants and microplastics even after undergoing various types of treatment; and (b) they flow directly into the local waterways.

Recently, our collective voices have called for better treatment for Metro Vancouver's wastewater. We wrote letters, shared stories and attended community meetings. Metro Vancouver is scheduled to meet in the summer to make a decision about replacing the Iona plant.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for the latest news, campaign updates and for more ways we can do better for the Fraser River!





photo: Murray Foubister

A new threat to orcas & salmon

Alongside three other conservation groups, with representation by Ecojustice, we presented our concerns last spring as an intervenor to the federal review panel for the proposed \$2-billion Roberts Bank Terminal 2 in Delta, B.C. Our submission centred on issues related to marine contaminants, while other groups focussed on the impact of underwater noise and harm to biodiversity.

On March 30, the federal panel quietly released its conclusions, without having issued a previous draft that would have allowed for public feedback. The panel's report echoed what we heard when the National Energy Board made its recommendations on the Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline.

Watch this short video
and take action!

www.georgiastrait.org/no2T2

An overview of the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project

This project would convert 177 hectares of intertidal and subtidal habitat on Roberts Bank to enable a 50 percent increase in container shipments. The negative environmental impacts outlined by the panel, specifically due to the project and the associated marine shipping, include:



Having a significant adverse cumulative effect on the Southern Resident orcas, an endangered species since 2003.



Disrupting the migration patterns of Chinook salmon—the main food source for the endangered orca population.



Increasing greenhouse gas emissions at a time when we need strong measures to combat the global climate crisis.



Increasing the risk of an oil spill when Canada's oil spill response doesn't work.



Having the potential to change various aspects of Indigenous peoples' current use and cultural heritage resources.

The decision to protect wild salmon and endangered orcas now rests with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Jonathan Wilkinson, who must decide if the impacts to these species are significant. If so, the federal Cabinet will then decide whether to approve the development project. For approval of the project to be denied, Cabinet must value the permanent loss of marine life and their habitat more than any perceived benefit to the shipping industry.



photo: Cheryl Onciul

From Oysters to Orcas

It's bittersweet to reminisce about this unforgettable evening: enjoying a meal together in close proximity with some of our wonderful supporters, while discussing responsible seafood consumption with special guest Mike McDermid, who helped to spearhead the OceanWise initiative and is co-owner of the Fish Counter.

The generosity of Fanny Bay Oyster Bar & Shellfish Market, which provided delicious crab, mussels, clams, prawns and local hors d'oeuvres, is unparalleled. They opened their venue and prepared delicious sustainable seafood, allowing every single dollar raised to go to our marine conservation activities.

EVENTS & OUTREACH



To adhere to the requirements for physical distancing during the coronavirus pandemic, we re-focused our initiatives to connect with our community online beginning in March. Our goal is to keep you informed and engaged through our digital platforms and with new digital events!

So far we have hosted virtual community coffee breaks, "Orca Story Time" for the kids, and we even shimmied to ocean tunes at a digital dance party! In the works for the summer are some super fun digital events, including art nights, discussion groups, sustainable cooking tutorials, and even podcasts.

Join our online conversations—that's where we are these days. It's where we have been sharing stories and images of the incredible local marine wildlife in the Salish Sea. We hope these may have brought you feelings of joy and hope.

Together—while keeping a safe distance—let's continue to find strength and resilience in appreciating the humanity and beauty of the region's coastal communities and marine environment.

At Georgia Strait Alliance, we're grateful for having the support of such a spectacular community—with people like you—supporting us. As we navigate this pandemic, we know we're in this together, and we want to thank you for ensuring that there's a watchdog to defend the health of the Salish Sea when we get to the other side of this public health crisis.

A strong and resilient Georgia Strait Alliance can protect the Salish Sea, the local beaches, inlets and waters that bring us joy, and from which we can draw strength and peace during these difficult times.

Discover what's coming up next!
www.georgiastrait.org/events



CLIMATE

B.C. takes important steps on climate accountability

Our hard work on climate is paying off in the form of real movement on Provincial climate action!

We're thrilled to be part of the force that changed the Province's Climate Accountability Act—for the better. Now, the Province will have to:

- 1 Set interim targets to reduce greenhouse gases by December 2020.
- 2 Determine sectoral targets for the different parts of the economy by March 2021.
- 3 Listen to an independent body of experts, which requires stronger reporting standards and oversight.

We accomplished these big and significant wins with your help. They're especially sweet because when we first approached the government about these climate elements two years ago, they were not being considered.

Each one of these accountability pieces will make a difference in moving this region closer to the legislated climate goals that the planet so urgently needs.



photo: E.J. Hurst

Looking ahead

We're focussed on having sectors defined in ways that fairly share emissions targets across the economy, and support building the green economy that we need. However, we know the devil is in the details so we're watching the creation of these targets closely, while we continue our work with government officials, and our allies. We remain concerned about the Province undermining climate action through its support for fossil fuel projects, including fracking and LNG terminals.

We can't be in *forward* and in reverse at the same time





CLEAN BC MARINE



photo: Jon Attfield

Boating with the orcas

The federal government has enhanced measures to protect orcas this year, building on some that were implemented last year. This year's measures came into effect on June 1, 2020. They include regulation changes to approach distances and fixed-area closures, as well as voluntary measures that boaters are asked to follow.

APPROACH DISTANCES

Boaters are now required to keep a distance of 400 metres from all orcas along the entire southern coast of B.C., in waters between Campbell River and Ucluelet, all year round, and 200 metres from all orcas in the rest of Canadian Pacific waters.

FIXED AREA CLOSURES

These mandatory no-go zones for boats around Pender Island, Saturna Island and Swiftsure Bank have been extended until November 30, with exemptions for human-powered vessels that remain within a 20-metre corridor of the shore (and 400 metres away from orcas); for safety; and for vessels engaged in Indigenous food, social and

ceremonial fisheries. Changes have been made to the shape of these sanctuaries to reduce complexities for understanding and enforcement of these zones, which scientific data shows are high-use foraging areas for Southern Resident orcas.

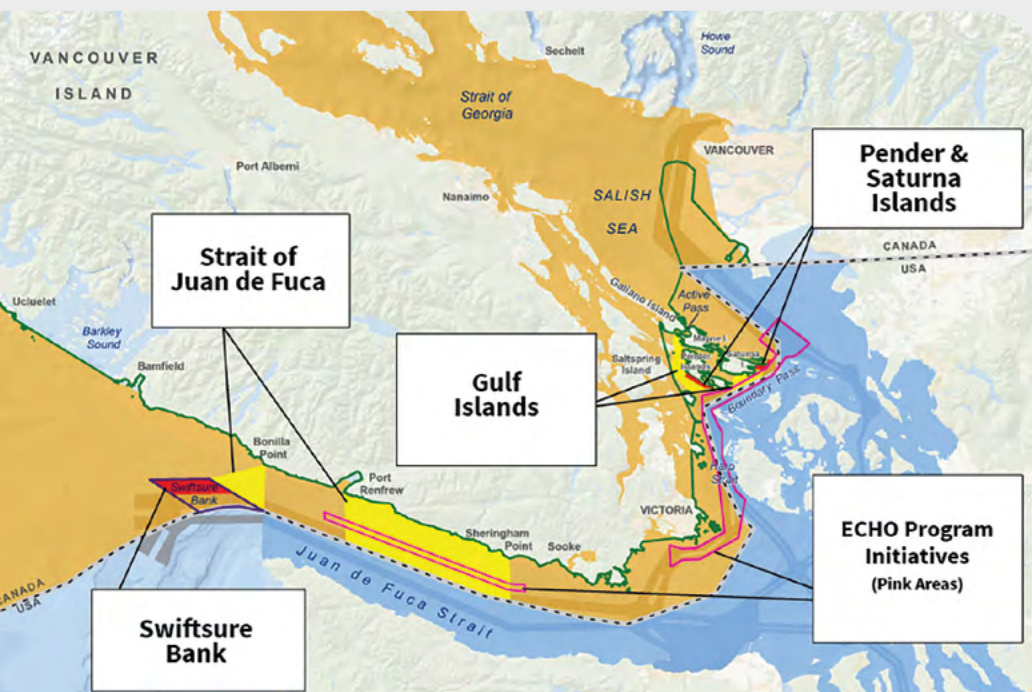
VOLUNTARY MEASURES

Boaters are asked to:

- ✓ Turn off their echo sounders and fish finders when not in use.
- ✓ Put engines in neutral idle if accidentally within the 400-metre approach distance.
- ✓ Reduce their speed to fewer than seven knots, and to stop fishing when within 1km of all orcas.

More tips for safely boating with wildlife

[www.georgiastrait.org/
boaterwildlifeinteractions](http://www.georgiastrait.org/boaterwildlifeinteractions)



Overview of management measures to protect Southern Resident orcas

- Interim Sanctuary Zones
- Area-based Fishery Closures
- 400m Approach Distance
- Existing Hook and Line Fishery Closure
- Canadian Critical Habitat

Please note that due to size constraints this map is showing only part of the data available. Please visit <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/whales-baleines/srkw-measures-mesures-ers-eng.html> to view the complete version.

Don't abandon ship

Do you have a retirement plan for your boat? When it's time to say goodbye, retire it responsibly. Learn how and where to dispose of your old boat.

www.georgiastrait.org/boatdisposal



photo: Alan Wilson

ANCHORAGES

Free, long-term marine parking for freighters . . .

Anchorage sites are designated for commercial freighters, largely internationally-owned grain and coal ships, to park while they wait to enter the Port of Vancouver to load. Because anchorages are outside of federally-regulated jurisdiction, there is very little oversight or regulation.

There are many community and environmental impacts from anchorages, but one of the biggest risks is an oil spill because these freighters transit with large amounts of bunker fuel. If oil leaks, which is a risk whenever there are winds because ships can dislodge and hit other vessels or reefs, it would be catastrophic for the fragile marine ecosystem of the Southern Gulf Islands. In this area, there are 33 anchorage sites; some used for as long as 30 consecutive days.

With our friends at No Freighter Anchorages, we're calling on the government to improve the long-standing supply chain problems at the Port so that commercial anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands—some of which are in the midst of Southern Resident killer whale habitat—can be reduced and potentially eliminated.

We need you to tell the federal government that this region cannot accommodate any additional anchorage designations despite the increasing demands from industry. These sites were created decades ago, without consultation with First Nations or other coastal residents, and no environmental assessments have ever been done.

TAKE ACTION

www.georgiastrait.org/anchorages

The length of commercial freighters is the equivalent to 2/3 the height of the Eiffel Tower.



Make a difference every single month. Become a monthly donor.

5 reasons for flexible monthly gifts:

- ★ **It's safe.** You can give securely through your credit card or bank withdrawal.
- ★ **It's convenient.** No need to renew annually.
- ★ **It's flexible.** You can change or cancel anytime.
- ★ **It saves the charity money** – in fees and administration.
- ★ **It helps GSA make strategic decisions,** knowing that monthly support is reliable.

"I love supporting Georgia Strait Alliance as a monthly donor. For less than a dollar a day, I'm making a big difference to the health of the Salish Sea for the wildlife and people I love. Thank you for all you do!"

~ Rodney S.

Become a monthly donor today!

www.georgiastrait.org/donate

Eat chocolate, HELP ORCAS



You can support Georgia Strait Alliance's orca protection initiatives by buying one—or even a case—of Denman Island Chocolate's Orca Bar. Local chocolatier Daniel Terry created the Orca Bar to raise awareness and funds to support our work to protect endangered Southern Resident orcas.

This delicious treat is made with dark, organic, fair trade chocolate, with a special twist: shredded coconut. It's black and white just like orcas are! It is available at more than 100 retailers across Canada, including on BC Ferries, as well as at retailers in Washington State.

Southern Resident orcas play a major role in the health of the Salish Sea ecosystem, so join us in the fight for actions that will reverse the decline of this iconic population. Find an Orca Bar near you! If your favourite store doesn't sell them, ask them to bring them in!

www.georgiastrait.org/orcabarlocations

NEW TO THE TEAM

We are welcoming three new people to Georgia Strait Alliance:

We've welcomed **Gillian Der** 謝美華 as the Community Organizer of our Climate Accountability campaigns. In her work, Gillian is increasing awareness about climate impacts on this region and adding strength to our efforts for regional climate-forward solutions that don't include new fossil fuel developments.



Our Board has new talent! Meet Charlotte Fox and Kristin Street:

Charlotte works at Vancouver Foundation as a Business Systems Analyst, with one foot in IT and the other in Donor Services. She is a Calgarian-turned-Vancouverite with a passion for the ocean and all things zero waste.



Kristin works at Electronic Arts as a business operations specialist, with a focus on strategic planning and project management. Her passions include politics and social responsibility, leading to her participation in multiple campaigns for environmental justice, diversity and inclusion.



★ SUPERSTAR volunteer

This is **Katie Winchester!**

She started volunteering with GSA last October for Water's Edge Day—and hasn't looked back since! As an Australian who moved to Vancouver three years ago to work in animation, she went to her first Union of B.C. Municipalities Convention last year where she helped our Climate Accountability Campaign at an outreach and information booth. She describes it as the "most rewarding experience" because she felt that she was "contributing to an important fight."

Volunteer with us!
georgiastrait.org/volunteer

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



Thank you to CloudControl CPA. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!

For Georgia Strait Alliance, our community is everything: our motivation, our strength, our perseverance, our reason to celebrate. The stories and accomplishments that fill the pages of this newsletter were all made possible by your support and by others who have shared their words of appreciation and encouragement:

“It is such a pleasure being a member of GSA and being a small part of all the wonderful work you are doing! Thank you for your dedication, your persistence, your knowledge and all of your influence and accomplishments!”

“Shining a light on environmental problems, supporting a better future for everybody that lives in this region, and finding the balance that life is about. I think that is an important part of what GSA does.”

“I’m truly hoping I’m just one of thousands around North America contributing small amounts to build to large ones. Thank you so much for all the amazing work you do.”

“Please accept my donation in loving memory of my friend, who passed away. She cared about the environment, water and the sea.”

“I am very impressed with your priorities which is why GSA is the one group I support financially each year.”



We are grateful to each and every one of you for standing with us in our commitment to practice environmentalism that protects people and the planet. Together, we can create a greener, more compassionate and just world. Thank you.

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@GeorgiaStrait.org or visit

www.georgiastrait.org/donate