



Georgia Strait Alliance

2021

WINTER NEWSLETTER

www.GeorgiaStrait.org

Stormy skies

The ocean and the climate are life-giving systems and both are threatened by industrial greed and political inaction.

Tackling these challenges can seem overwhelming but change can be made when we work together, and work locally.

By acting locally and supporting Georgia Strait Alliance, you're contributing to the only organization dedicated exclusively to long-term, climate-focused solutions to marine threats and habitat protection in the Canadian waters of the Salish Sea and its adjoining waters.

Photo by Derek Zandvliet



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THERE IS A WAY

by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director

If there is something the pandemic has taught us it's that where there is a need and a will, there is a way. When communities needed to be protected, somehow we found the resources, the compassion and the collaborative spirit to support one other. Partisan walls fell away, decisions were made quickly, and we stayed focused on a single important goal: keeping each other safe and healthy.

Now that we have witnessed the responsive actions of the last 21 months, it rings hollow when government and industry say that the bold actions needed to tackle the climate crisis and protect habitat aren't possible. Inaction at the provincial and federal level is a choice, and the excuses given reveal that these governments are not taking these issues seriously, as evidenced by the B.C. government's incomplete CleanBC climate plan, unveiled in October.

The floods and fires that ravaged B.C. this past summer were not enough to spur immediate action, and we are told to trust the government as it continues to develop the plan that will meet our 2030 targets. Meanwhile

B.C.'s emissions continue to rise and fossil fuel production increases in the province, greenlighted and backed with billions of dollars of public subsidies that show the strength of the oil and gas industry's hold on public policy.

With your generous support, we'll keep up the fight because collective actions can create positive changes for healthier communities throughout this region.

You'll see the incredible work of our team in the pages of this newsletter. We're very excited to have added several new people to the team, broadening our skills, perspectives and experience. Our team is now stronger than ever and better able to advocate for the health of this region collaboratively and compassionately, as GSA works its way more meaningfully back into communities, with the knowledge that solutions are at our fingertips.



Photo by Daniel Lacy



We live and work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

BIODIVERSITY

Fish Farms



It certainly isn't news that the federal government has pledged to transition open-net pen fish farms to sustainable operations by 2025. However, we were surprised and concerned that the findings of the stakeholder engagement in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' (DFO) progress report included in-water and hybrid options as possible alternatives.



Photo by Laurie MacBride

“No” means no!

At GSA, we remain committed to ensuring these farms are removed from B.C. waters. The former Fisheries and Oceans Minister Bernadette Jordan made a bold and tough decision, informed by science and Indigenous leadership, and it was the beginning of the end of this destructive and harmful industry in the Discovery Islands.

The minister went against DFO staff recommendations, showing a strong commitment to supporting wild Pacific salmon and respecting consultations with Indigenous nations on whose territories these open-net pen farms are located.

For us, this welcome decision has resulted in several unwanted trips to court, because a few industry actors don't understand that the “time's up” notice for this destructive form of aquaculture has finally been served. Industry operators continue to apply for authorization to transfer new farmed salmon smolts into the open-net pen farms – the same ones that are to shutter by next summer.



The only viable transition for fish farms must be onto land as it fully eliminates pathogens, bacteria and sea lice from flowing into the marine environment – and we're focusing our efforts on this.

“

Federal courts have rejected three transfer applications to restock fish farms in the Discovery Islands – and all were appealed by industry.



With Ecojustice, our legal representative, and several allies, we're fighting to ensure the decision to phase out salmon farms in the Discovery Islands stays on track for June 2022. We'll be looking to the new Minister Joyce Murray to uphold the direction that the former minister established.



Photo by Rachael Merrett

What's the connection between orcas and fish farms?

Open-net pen fish farms use the ocean for their waste disposal, introducing pathogens and feces directly into the migration routes of wild salmon, including Chinook – the main food source for Southern Resident orcas.



We know that the current measures to protect Southern Resident orcas are not nearly enough to help the population recover or survive – even though they're the boldest we've ever seen. That's why we're pushing for more stringent enforcement of these measures as well as enhancements.

What more is required to protect Southern Resident orcas?



To apply more stringent enforcement of the minimum distance regulations for all vessels.



To close the full extent of key foraging areas in the Fraser River approaches and the Strait of Juan de Fuca to all salmon fishing from March 1 – Dec. 1.



To suspend authorizations (under the Sustainable Whale Watch Agreement) to whale watching companies that violate minimum approach distances and continue to view Southern Resident orcas in Canada and/or go into U.S. waters to pursue these whales.



To create and implement a regional underwater noise management framework with noise reduction targets and timelines for implementation in annual steps to 2030.

Orca Health Check

There are

73*

Southern Resident orcas in three matrilineal pods



J-pod: 24

including 3 expectant mothers: J-36 (Alki), J-37 (Hy'Shqa), and J-19 (Shachi).



K-pod: 16

making this population smaller today than when it was listed as endangered in 2003 under the Species at Risk Act.



L-pod: 33

including the arrival of L-125 early this year, after two years without any new calves.



*At the time of printing in mid-November

Photo by National Ocean Service

Deaths since the summer

35-year-old K-21 (Cappuccino), the oldest male in K-pod, succumbed to extreme starvation and/or a chronic disease after last being seen over the summer with severe "peanut head."

47-year-old L-47 (Marina), a matriarch, left behind her three offspring, including L-115 (Mystic), an 11-year-old male, as well as two grand-offspring.

Sewage

It is deeply concerning to have learned that the legally required upgrade for the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant in Metro Vancouver is experiencing cost overruns and a four-year delay to 2034 until the tertiary-level treatment facility is operational.

Metro Vancouver hasn't been transparent with the public: these cost overruns and delays did not appear unexpectedly. For the marine environment, it means pollution will continue to be discharged into the mouth of the Fraser River for an additional four years.

What we do know is that, in October, another round of community consultation wrapped up, and the final plan for the upgrade is expected to be presented to the Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District (GVS&DD) Board early next year.



At GSA, we continue to advocate for advanced tertiary treatment to be implemented by 2030, and for continued consultation and engagement with the Musqueam First Nation, upon whose territory the plant (and its upgrade) is located. #TreatOurSalishSea.

FUN FACT

Biodiversity campaigner **Lucero González Ruiz** has been appointed to a three-year term on Metro Vancouver's Liquid Waste Management Plan - Public Advisory Committee, and also to the City of Vancouver's Sewage and Rainwater Management Plan - Project Advisory Group.



Photo by Ken Weiner

CLIMATE & ENERGY

The CleanBC plan put forward by the Province to confront the climate emergency was another incomplete one that doesn't outline how B.C. will reach its legislated climate targets for 2025 or 2030. There are some good ideas, however, it lacks detail, ambition, and urgency when people's health and communities in this region and province are already being impacted.

The climate emergency isn't years away. It's right now – and it's not good enough for the government to (a) tell us that the details will get sorted out later or (b) to propose an industry-friendly consultation with the fossil fuel sector. And yet in this plan, they did both: the plan for the fossil fuel sector is sometime in 2023 and it is to be authored with the industry. There is no timeline for a phase out for extraction, and no transition plan for workers. Meanwhile, billions in subsidies continue to flow to the Oil and Gas sector, which is now a larger source of carbon pollution than all other industries in the province combined.



We've engaged with the provincial government with technical comments and policy submissions on the:

- CleanBC Roadmap process
- Sectoral target plans for emissions reductions
- The use of Carbon Capture and Storage
- Negative Emissions Technologies (see sidebar)

GSA is trying to make sure that we are advocating for the best possible version of these **Negative Emissions Technologies (NET)**, a critical tool for dealing with the climate crisis. If done correctly, these technologies can be a key part of a climate-stable future, which is the reason it's vital to get this right. The complex web of technology, biogeochemical cycles, economic activity, and land use involved mean there are risks:

! **Fossil fuel companies continue to destabilize the climate** while using these negative emissions approaches as greenwashing. Fossil fuel interests are trying to tie these technologies to their operations and continued existence, and we cannot allow this to happen.

! **Governments and industry overpromise and underdeliver**, with NETs being unable to remove and store carbon to the degree that was expected by policymakers and decision makers.

Negative Emissions Technologies are a variety of approaches to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. These include nature-based solutions like kelp forests and tree planting, as well as technological approaches like Direct Air Capture.

Climate-related impacts are unprecedented and intensifying, and it is Indigenous, low income and racialized people who are disproportionately impacted.

Effective climate action and genuine solidarity go hand-in-hand

Where is the development and implementation of a transformative climate emergency plan?

Ask the B.C. government to advance these important **10 actions**:

- 1

Set binding climate pollution targets based on science and justice.
- 2

Invest in a thriving, regenerative, zero emissions economy.
- 3

Rapidly wind down all fossil fuel production and use.
- 4

End fossil fuel subsidies and make polluters pay.
- 5

Leave no one behind.
- 6

Protect and restore nature.
- 7

Invest in local, organic, regenerative agriculture and food systems.
- 8

Accelerate the transition to zero emission transportation.
- 9

Accelerate the transition to zero emission buildings.
- 10

Track and report progress on these actions every year.



Learn more here:
georgiastrait.org/bc-climate-emergency

Photo by Alex Sutcliffe/Pixabay

Photo by Li-An Lim/Unsplash

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

People Power

Over the past few months, we have been dedicating more effort into deepening our connections in community, beginning by hiring two Community Organizers: **Gil Aguilar** and **Dana Taylor**. Together, they’ve been developing a program to build people power by spending time in community, listening to the concerns of neighbourhoods affected by both environmental degradation and climate change, and to communities that have been excluded from the conversation until now.

At GSA, our goal is to integrate and elevate social, racial and environmental justice and that begins with engaging with impacted communities. Simply put, we cannot achieve a healthy marine ecosystem in this region if we do not ensure that every community has the ability to be part of identifying and implementing the solutions.



We plugged for orcas!

This was a community fundraiser based on the idea of a Swedish eco-fitness trend that combines picking up litter and jogging. All marine creatures benefit when less litter makes its way into the waterways, particularly orcas. As one of the most contaminated marine mammals on the planet and as apex predators at the top of the food web, orcas absorb a high concentration of the contamination in the ocean.

Our objectives include:

- ✓ Gaining understanding of what communities in the Lower Fraser River region are concerned about and working with them to address these concerns.
- ✓ Dedicating efforts to hold the carbon majors accountable by better engaging more diverse communities in the conversation, including in the process that focuses on working with municipal governments.
- ✓ Increasing our understanding of how social issues intersect with environmental issues so we can work to achieve our mission of building sustainable communities.
- ✓ Revisiting how we build our campaigns and programs, starting by listening to Indigenous and community concerns, and focusing on increasing capacity in these communities so they can speak with their own voices in addressing climate change, and other threats to the Salish Sea.



#LoveTheSalishSea Photo Contest

We received 116 passionate entries into our **#LoveTheSalishSea** community photo contest. Participants shared what they love about this region, its beauty and the reasons they want to protect it. Highlights included stunning sunsets, magnificent marine mammals, beautiful birds, human-powered boats, cunning coyotes, and other surprises. First, second and third prize winners received fantastic prizes donated by Cusheon Lake Resort, Seaflora Skincare and Fanny Bay Oysters.



Gold

Derek Zandvliet's stormy skies from Davis Bay Beach, Sechelt



Silver

Daniel Lacy's otter with a rockfish catch in Clover Point, Victoria



Bronze

Ken Cheng's owl flying the West Dyke Trail, Richmond



Enjoy all the images from the #LoveTheSalishSea contest at:
georgiastrait.org/love-the-salish-sea-contest-gallery/

LEAVING A LEGACY FOR THE OCEAN SHE LOVED



Joscelyn Hurst, who perhaps was better known as Joy, wasn't always an outdoorsy type. As a child, she grew up playing the piano, her love for the natural world rooted in the romanticism of poets, flowers and an observance of seasons turning with the ever-changing flora.

Love was also what led Joy into a crash course in outdoor survival. Married to a geologist, she accompanied Donald in the 1950s to a work camp in Labrador where they lived in canvas tents and cooked on gas stoves. "My dad was the outdoorsy type; my mom became one," says EJ Hurst, one of Joy and Don's three daughters. EJ, who lives on Gabriola Island, recalls one of the many visits that her parents made to the island. "They loved the whole experience of being with us, on the ocean. We have a photo of them arriving on the bow of a tugboat when the ferry wasn't running. They're looking so proud of themselves, with their backpacks and skis."

EJ describes her mom as a very beautiful, strong community leader, who loved to sing and direct community productions, noting she had a knack for supporting people, especially youngsters, to discover their creativity. "She was super creative. She sewed my wedding dress using a magazine clipping I had sent her of a woman running through a grass field in a light and flowy dress."

Joy found peace and beauty in the natural world, in particular from the ocean. "She'd walk for hours along the beach after my dad died. I think it restored her," EJ says. Joy's adventurous side was also connected, at times, to the ocean. One of her last trips, something she planned from her hospital bed while recovering from hip surgery, was a tour in the Galapagos Islands to engage with guest naturalist, Canadian artist Robert Bateman, who had a big influence on Joy's life.

'Nature is priceless' are the words that EJ found underlined in her mom's copy of JB MacKinnon's *The Once and Future World* after Joy died. "That really sums up her view of the world," EJ says.

Joy was a donor to GSA for almost two decades. She was a monthly donor and also gave many generous major gifts to honour and protect the place that she loved. These donations have supported GSA's work to protect the ocean and Joy's legacy gift – a life insurance policy – ensures that this work lasts beyond her lifetime.



New certifications!

Burrard Yacht Club and Hollyburn Sailing Club, in North and West Vancouver, are the newest certifications in the Clean Marine BC program – congratulations to both!

What is Clean Marine BC?

It's a GSA eco-certification program that supports boating facilities to reduce the impact of recreational boating and their operations on the Salish Sea and beyond, and recognizes them for their efforts. We work with marinas, yacht and sailing clubs, harbour authorities, fuel docks and boatyards, providing guidance and recommendations for the implementation of improved environmental measures, including:

- ☑ reduction and containment of toxins,
- ☑ collection and disposal of various wastes,
- ☑ conservation of water and energy,
- ☑ protection of habitat.

COMINGS & GOINGS



Gil Aguilar and **Dana Taylor** are Community Organizers based in our office in present-day Vancouver. They're guiding us back to our roots by deepening our connections in community. Gil, who is originally from Chiapas, Mexico, has experience advocating for many social justice issues, such as the struggle for migrant workers' rights, Indigenous sovereignty, and housing justice. Dana, who hails from Ontario, has experience in campaigns and issues that prioritize climate, emissions reductions and the environment, specifically in the spaces where these issues meet public policy.

Edna Jack brings her experiences in business administration, accounting and payroll to support GSA as Operations Coordinator from our office in present-day Nanaimo. Edna is passionate about these lands and waters, which her ancestors and elders have taught her to live off of as they have been doing since time immemorial.

The GSA Board has a newly formed executive: **Kristin Street** is now President; **Christopher Hakes** is Vice President; **Sheldon Fernandes** is Treasurer, and **Charlotte Fox** is Secretary. We'd like to acknowledge the hard work of **Aaron Nabata**, who left the Board last year after more than three years of service as our Treasurer, and to **Maya Stano**, who recently left the Board after one year of service. We'd also like to acknowledge and thank two long-time directors who left the Board this September: **Kathy Fletcher** most recently served as President and Fundraising Committee Chair, while **Ken Coach** spent time as Vice President and Chair of the Communications Committee. Together, Kathy and Ken shared a combined total of 17 years with GSA! We're so lucky to have had their commitment, wisdom, and roll-up-your-sleeves support for our initiatives. We will miss you all!

YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!

Meet Karlo Kowalczyk

Karlo is the founder of Restore Human, a movement studio that incorporates (re-)connecting with nature as a core piece of its physical literacy training.

“We see how integral the environment is to rehab, health and fitness: people’s connection to the biosphere is really good for their bodies and their health,” says Karlo. “We also see the need for being local and there are a lot of things we don’t know about our local area.” And this is where GSA comes in:

“

GSA is bringing awareness to everything from boaters – and the amount of spills from small boats and pleasure crafts, and the damage it has on the ecosystem – to bigger risks like TMX. GSA is part of that fight, cutting through the noise and getting information to people and building awareness.

“Just as we refer people to chiropractors, when you live here, in this region, get in touch with this organization!” he says. And Restore Human does just that as a 1% For the Planet member, with GSA and Ecojustice as the beneficiaries.



In the new year, Karlo is launching a new project to facilitate his community with getting out into nature and on the water in single and multi-day canoe workshops.

Being outdoors in nature fuels good human health, physically and mentally, and this is the reason that GSA’s marine and climate work are so important. GSA is working to support the health and wellbeing of everyone in coastal communities around the Salish Sea.

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



**glasswaters
foundation**



We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

Donate today!

Call: 250-753-3459

Email: giving@GeorgiaStrait.org

Website: georgiastrait.org/donate

Your tax deductible donation is an investment in local action on climate change and ocean protection today and for years to come.

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