



Georgia Strait Alliance

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

www.GeorgiaStrait.org

2022

CLIMATE SHADOW

The brighter the light, the more intense a shadow's contrast appears. The same is true when working to make social change.

Actions like voting, volunteering or donating, if you can, amplify your impact and increase your personal reach to social and political levels. **And by having conversations about climate issues in your community, you can begin to increase your climate shadow.**

At GSA, we're committed to providing communities and individuals with opportunities to take action for a healthy Salish Sea. Through us, you can tell decision makers what matters to you. With your support, we can gain standing as an intervenor in court cases to represent the interests of wildlife and coastal communities. And so much more.

Put together, these individual and collective actions are what will lead to the seismic change we need.

Together, let's keep growing our climate shadow.



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Reconnecting with community

by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director

It's hard to avoid a long list of spring season clichés this year as our communities take tentative movements back into the world after a less than restorative and too often traumatic “pandemic hibernation.” The world looks the same in some ways but, at the same time, I feel unsure of how to be in this world, having lost the ease and familiarity of in-person gatherings. But I know that I’m not alone – and it’s that reassurance from my community – friends, family, colleagues, and even strangers at the grocery store – that bolsters me.

Our team at Georgia Strait Alliance is taking these long anticipated first encounters back into community: we’ve started going to in-person community events, leading campaign training sessions, hosting our first in-person fundraiser in more than two years and we’ll soon launch our dock walking program for boaters. We are so excited to continue our efforts to share knowledge and put the power to build change into the hands of everyone in this region.

As we work to re-connect with communities old and new, we haven’t forgotten that there is still the need to stay connected to the bigger picture, where the opportunities for great change are brewing. We’re thrilled to see that conversations are underway to bring marine planning to the Salish Sea region. Initial conversations are already underway between the

Canadian government and Indigenous communities, opening an opportunity to create a vision for this region that is built on principles of reconciliation and ecological protection that no longer put economic prosperity ahead of everything else. Our commitment to raising community voices will be at the centre of our efforts to ensure that people throughout the region can have their say and be part of this once-in-a-lifetime journey.

During the worst of the pandemic, I saw how many of us looked for the silver bullet that would make everything OK again. We feel the same as we advocate for the protection of the Salish Sea. But as with the pandemic, there is no single thing that will protect habitat and mitigate the impacts of climate change. And there is no one person or entity who can do it alone. The solutions to what threatens this region need all of us to take actions large and small, to influence change in our communities, and at the national level to achieve what we all want – a healthy Salish Sea, with vibrant and equitable coastal communities. We each have more power than we think we do, and it’s by tapping into that power that we can change the big picture that connects all of us, to build a better future for this region.



BIODIVERSITY

A megaport expansion

We’re in the latest phase of trying to stop the dramatic expansion of the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 project, a three-berth container terminal in Delta, B.C. on the Lower Fraser River.

In March, we made another submission to the federal government in partnership with the David Suzuki Foundation, Raincoast Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Committee through our legal representative Ecojustice.

Our submission responded to the additional options provided by the project proponent, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, to try to mitigate the detrimental environmental impacts identified in the environmental assessment, published in 2020. These options were the result of a request by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in order to decide whether the identified environmental harms are justified.


The environmental assessment – in which GSA was an intervenor – concluded that the project will result in permanent and irreversible effects on Southern Resident orcas and disrupt migration patterns of the population’s main food source, Chinook salmon. It also found the proposed expansion has the potential to negatively impact the living cultural heritage of First Nations, whose territories overlap the expansion area.



Did you know?

GSA’s mission is to protect and restore the marine environment and promote the sustainability of the Georgia Strait, its adjoining waters and communities – and there’s no more important adjoining waterway in the region than the Fraser River.

At GSA, we’re playing a lead role in improving the ecological resilience of the Lower Fraser River. Through our role on the Steering Committee of the **Adapting for Ecological Resilience (AFER) Network**, we’re helping to facilitate collaboration amongst organizations with the goal of protecting ecosystems and species reliant on the Lower Fraser River, while balancing the social and economic needs of residents and the rights of Indigenous peoples.



If these conclusions sound familiar, it’s because they echo what we heard when the National Energy Board made its recommendations on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (see page 6).

Our submission states

“The additional information provided by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority includes minor mitigation measures for project operations and **does not include any new measures to address the impacts on Southern Residents from project related shipping.**”

Irreversible Risks

- At risk are **177 hectares of intertidal and subtidal habitat** in the Fraser River estuary.
- An increase in noise from the project’s operations at the terminal and related shipping pose an **imminent threat to Southern Residents’** critical habitat, survival and recovery.
- Scientists have identified **102 species of conservation concern in the Fraser River estuary**, which would face further (and faster) decline should the port expansion go ahead.
- Environment Canada scientists warned of disastrous environmental impacts but **this information was withheld** from the environmental assessment.



BIODIVERSITY

Orcas need safer spaces

The newest calves in the Southern Resident orca population are doing well! J-59, born to J-37 (Hy'Shqa), and a newborn K-pod calf (yet to be officially confirmed and given an alpha-numeric designation at the time of printing) have been navigating an incredibly important and fragile few weeks, considering that half of all orca calves don't survive until their first birthday.

The young J-59 was the only calf born into the J-pod despite two others expected earlier this year. The pregnancies of J-36 (Alki) and J-19 (Shachi) were lost, a heart wrenching reminder of the fragile state of orca pregnancies of which nearly 70 percent fail.

Did you know?

Hy'Shqa" is a Coast Salish/Samish word for "blessing" or "thank you." The name was given to J-37 during a traditional potlatch ceremony held by the Samish Nation in 2001.

Despite years of seasonal protection measures, the main threats to orcas remain. These are:



Contaminants



Lack of prey (primarily Chinook salmon)



Underwater noise and vessel disturbance

Compounding these challenges is warmer, more acidic and less hospitable waters due to climate change. This is altering marine food webs, further reducing the food available.



An immense contribution

Southern Resident orcas provide critical functions to the marine ecosystem, making them essential to the health of the Salish Sea ecosystem and local communities. One of these important functions is that they **stimulate the growth of phytoplankton** through their waste. Phytoplankton are the building blocks of the entire marine food chain and absorb great quantities of CO² from the atmosphere.



What's new?

This summer's orca protection measures include:

- **New fisheries closures** (commercial and recreational) in portions of Swiftsure Bank, Southern Gulf Islands, Strait of Juan de Fuca and the mouth of the Fraser River.
- **A month earlier trigger date to close Southern Gulf Islands' fisheries** at the first confirmed detection of Southern Resident orcas (to begin in May rather than June).
- **The sanctuary zone** (no boating or fishing) off Swiftsure Bank, which is a high-foraging area for the orcas, has been replaced with two slow-down areas.

Learn more about Southern Resident Orca protection measures for boaters: www.georgiastrait.org/boatingwithorcas

Protection measures can only work when they're science based and are in effect when these orcas are around. Seasonally simply isn't sufficient.

Seasonal measures to protect orcas are in effect between May and November. This leaves endangered whales underprotected in Canadian waters for several months of the year.

Between January and May of 2022, there were seven sightings of Southern Resident orcas in the Canadian waters of the Salish Sea.



Orcas will be safer when:

- ✓ Area-based closures for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries in the Gulf Islands and Strait of Juan de Fuca are in effect by April or at the first confirmed presence of Southern Resident orcas.
- ✓ There is more monitoring and enforcement for all vessels, including whale watching operators and sport fisheries, with penalties for those who knowingly and repeatedly break the law.
- ✓ A regional approach is implemented to reduce underwater noise in the Salish Sea.



In the Community

We loved meeting virtually with a few dozen community members who are passionate about the survival and recovery of endangered orcas. These supporters – who are people just like you – came together to phone their Members of Parliament, with the support of our staff and calling guides we prepared, to make it known that they want stronger protections for endangered orcas, especially now because the newest calves have a tough year ahead.

Follow @GeorgiaStraitBC for orca month events!

Transboundary marine issues took the stage during the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference. Over 200 presenters brought scientific research, traditional knowledge and policy considerations to live digital plenary sessions. By building capacity for multiple ways of knowing, ways that are less siloed, we can work across borders of all kinds to tackle critical issues that threaten the Salish Sea and local communities.

FUN FACT

GSA's Executive Director **Christianne Wilhelmson** was the Canadian Co-Chair for this year's conference, and staffers **Lucero González Ruiz** and **Michelle Young** organized and moderated panel sessions on orcas and derelict vessels.

CLIMATE & ENERGY

Cancel this triple disaster

The escalating costs of the Trans Mountain pipeline (TMX) have rendered it totally unprofitable. An analysis by the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer, Yves Giroux, recently showed that any anticipated project profits would be wiped out if costs were to increase by 10 percent – **and costs have already ballooned to \$21.4 billion, four times higher than the original 2013 budget of \$5.4 billion.**

As residents and taxpayers, we now have confirmation that TMX won't produce profits – and the federal government was relying on those profits to invest in climate action and the green transition. Instead, the Canadian public is left with an incredibly overpriced climate-destabilizing pipeline, as more communities in B.C. have experienced climate induced floods, fires, and heat waves.

Equally troubling, the federal government's newest climate plan has huge holes in it when it comes to the oil and gas sector. In Canada, this sector is the single-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions at 26 percent, and emissions are also growing faster than in any other sector.

The federal government must act on what the planet actually needs: a transition away from the development of new fossil fuels and away from dependence on Big Oil.

Let's not forget the International Energy Agency has drawn particular attention to closing the gap between rhetoric and action, which "requires nothing short of a total transformation of the energy systems that underpin our economies." This means that to tackle the worldwide climate emergency, there can't be new fossil fuel development anywhere in the world – and that includes in Canada.

CANCEL TRANS MOUNTAIN



for the health of the climate,
local lands and waters



to respect Indigenous
sovereignty



so taxpayers (and their
children) aren't on the hook
for decades to pay for a
project that puts dangerous
carbon into the atmosphere

**It's time to cancel Trans Mountain
– and to start the green transition
our communities and planet need.**

georgiastrait.org/cancelTMX

**The line has been drawn. It can't be erased or ignored.
It's high time to start a genuine and deliberate transition.**

**No more rhetoric. It is time to cancel the
Trans Mountain project. It is the only option.**

Two new conditions, many still missing

Following a court ordered re-examination of the conditions the B.C. government placed on the Trans Mountain expansion project, a number of conditions were amended and new conditions were added, including:

- **Studying the human health impacts of an oil spill**
- **Collecting baseline data for B.C. shorelines in the event of a spill**
- **Amendments to the bitumen research condition to include consultation with local governments**



These conditions were won by strong leadership from the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, the City of Vancouver, and tens of thousands of environmental supporters, including GSA supporters – who all put immense public pressure on the Province to make shorelines and coastal communities safer.

But there is still a lot that is missing:

Where are the accompanying health and shoreline response plans? For health, there aren't any, and the public is going to be on the hook for the health impacts of a spill. For shorelines, the Province opted to not set minimum standards, which means we're now relying on federal and industry measures that have no proven effectiveness.

We're relying on the very same measures the Province previously criticized as insufficient in its arguments to the National Energy Board in 2018, citing unclear clean-up goals, lacking demonstrated effectiveness, long-term funding and enforcement mechanisms. How does it make sense that the Province now intends to rely on these?

Premier Horgan promised to use all the tools in the toolbox. Instead he opened it, rummaged around and left the most important ones behind.



Orca graphic: Mircea Taras

Philanthropy is changing

Toju Ogbeide wondered how he could build a sustainable marketplace where people could make a positive social impact.

That happened just last year when Goodszilla, a free socially-conscious Canadian platform that connects buyers and sellers to charities, went live. The app leverages the second-hand economy, while sellers make modest charitable donations.

“We’re opening the doors to more folks to be part of the giving economy,” says Ogbeide from his home in Toronto. He explains that by having a 10 percent minimum of sale proceeds earmarked to support causes, it’s exposing the idea of financial giving to younger generations.

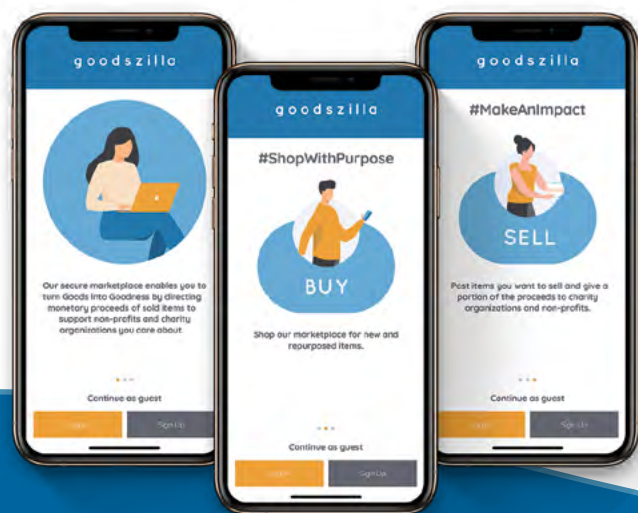
By connecting directly with late Millennials and Gen Z where they are, Ogbeide says that Goodszilla is a pathway for many charities to engage with younger demographics of would-be donors.

The app connects 3,000 users across the country, with over 50,000 charities through its partnership with CanadaHelps, an online platform that enables donating to any registered charity in Canada.



“The impact is that we’re building a marketplace where everyone can contribute.”

- Toju Ogbeide, Founder & CEO, Goodszilla



“For a small business, it is hard to make enough profit to donate, especially in the beginning. With Goodszilla, I can choose the percentage of sales that goes to the charity without compromising my operations.

“I chose Georgia Strait Alliance as my Goodszilla charity because I am passionate about marine biodiversity. Being raised in a small coastal city in Brazil, I studied environmental engineering and got involved in projects committed to marine conservation. When I moved to Canada and opened Nüska, I thought I could do something similar here by giving back to my new community.”

- Taís Chamelet, small business owner, Nüska



photos: (top) Fanny Bay Oysters, (below) Cheryl Onciul

From Oysters to Orcas

We were so happy to be back in community at Vancouver’s only tide-to-table oyster bar for a delectable evening of appetizers, sustainable seafood, beverages – and for proceeds from tickets going to support our marine conservation initiatives. Guests were joined by biologist Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard, whose research was used to officially list Southern Resident orcas as an endangered species 19 years ago.



This wonderful evening was made possible by the generosity of Fanny Bay Oyster Bar & Shellfish Market and the Taylor family.



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

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

The McLean Foundation

glasswaters foundation



GLOBAL GREENGRANTS FUND

BC | BC Conservation & Biodiversity Awards

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

LEAVING A LEGACY

Passionate about the earth and all things wild, Salt Spring Island resident Susan Bloom left a generous donation to GSA as part of her legacy. We are incredibly grateful to Susan and her estate trustees for this gift that will support the stability of the organization and its growth, including bringing our grassroots organizing work to scale. Given Susan’s belief in the power of organizing to activate small groups of passionate people to accomplish extraordinary things, we are pleased to be able to direct Susan’s gift towards this innovative work.

CLEAN MARINE BC

Our dock-walking program is back!

After many years on pause, we have a group of freshly trained volunteers. They are already engaging with boaters in their communities about reducing the impact of recreational boating on local waterways.

Our focus throughout the summer is on raising awareness and preventing small spills – the ones that can happen when refuelling. Despite being little, they are a major source of marine pollution over time. Volunteers are also talking to boaters about whale watching rules; preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species; and where to pump out holding tanks, while handing out education and prevention resources – including spill supplies – that are part of our **Clean Boater Kit**.

SHIP BREAKING

Vessel debris and contaminants put marine life and sensitive habitats at risk, endanger mariners, coastal residents and beachgoers, cause harm to shoreline infrastructure, use valuable community resources, and impact the rights and traditions of Indigenous peoples.

Community leadership has brought to light a threat to local waters near Union Bay: ship breaking (the deconstruction and recycling of industrial ships into scrap metal and other materials).

The K'ómoks First Nation opposes these activities that are taking place on the Nation's unceded territory, citing environmental concerns and the importance of shellfish for economic, food, social and ceremonial uses.

These are unregulated activities that are taking place close to residential areas and in a federally defined Ecologically and Biologically significant marine area. At GSA, we worked with other groups to support the community's opposition to these activities.

When ship breaking doesn't contain toxins and properly dispose of all waste, it is hazardous. It releases heavy metals, asbestos, PCBs, and other toxins into the surrounding land, air and water.

Newest certifications

➔ **Harbour Authority of Salt Spring Island** has certified all eight facilities around Salt Spring Island

➔ **The Oak Bay Marine Group** has certified all four of their marinas



Clean Marine BC is GSA's eco-certification program that supports boating facilities to reduce the impact of recreational boating and their operations on the Salish Sea and beyond. We work with marinas, yacht and sailing clubs, harbour authorities, fuel docks and boatyards to reduce and contain toxins, collect and dispose of wastes, conserve water and energy, and protect local habitat.

Assistance for recreational boaters

Those anecdotal accounts about a spike in boat purchases during the pandemic over the past two years are true! Recreational boating has increased 300 percent, according to Transport Canada.

Many of these new boaters are inexperienced. Perhaps the biggest mistake that a new boater can make is to assume that boats are like cars when, in fact, sailboats and motorboats use much more fuel.

Regardless of one's familiarity with boating, every boater can benefit from a C-Tow membership. It provides on-call assistance for those unexpected times when something happens while on the water – from fuel-related issues to drained batteries.

C-Tow's team of captains are on standby for fuel drops and tows 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing boaters with the on-water equivalent to roadside assistance for cars for approximately \$160 a year.



COMINGS & GOINGS

Mitchell O'Brien joined the team as the Clean Marine BC Assistant, bringing his enthusiasm, skills and environmental knowledge to a role initially made possible by funding from Canada Summer Jobs. Mitchell has been working on the development and testing of Clean Marine BC's online platform and in the preparation of outreach materials for our summer dock-walking program (see page 10).

We recently bid farewell to **Anabelle Mirfatahi**, whose short-term role was made possible by funding from Nature Canada to hire a youth between the ages of 15 and 30. Anabelle gave a boost to our communications team, focusing on ways to engage and listen to more communities around the Salish Sea. We enjoyed our time together!

We also said goodbye to Board member **Stephanie Schiffmacher**, who was a valuable member of the Board of Directors for nearly three years. We appreciated her contributions and the energy that she brought to the Human Resources and Nominations & Board Development committees, and thank her for her service to our organization.

★ SUPERSTAR volunteer



Meet Jandy Anderson!

She lives in Chilliwack and started volunteering with us after experiencing a very powerful dream about orcas – and wanted to heed the call she heard from them for help. She dedicates some of her time to GSA because she greatly appreciates the organization's work and dedication as stewards of the waters of the Salish Sea and surrounding areas.

Volunteer with us!
georgiastrait.org/volunteer



In the Community

Campaigning 101

Through a series of digital and in-person workshops, Organizers **Dana Taylor** and **Gil Aguilar** met with participants over a four-month period. They shared must-have tools and tactics to create campaigns that drive positive change. Participants can take and implement these learnings to mobilize people in their communities to take action around causes that matter to them.



Arts & Design for Change workshop. Photo: Dana Taylor



Climate-mitigation outreach

We are connecting with people who experienced extreme weather events. By focusing on identifying and engaging with some of the most affected communities, our outreach and subsequent data collection aims to deeply explore and consider the interconnections between environmental and social (in) justices.



We're focussed on connecting with individuals who are lower income, renters, racialized and who live with health and mobility conditions. We're delivering digital and in-person surveys through October. Survey analyses, results and possible policy recommendations – that centre on climate-mitigation solutions coming from within these communities – are anticipated early next year.



Gil Aguilar at the Patagonia Vancouver Store. Photo: Dana Taylor

CONTACT US
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**Become a monthly donor today
and make a difference all year round!**

Your tax deductible donation is an investment
in the protection of the Salish Sea, and all the
creatures that call it home.

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

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