



Georgia Strait Alliance

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026

Strengthening our roots, expanding our reach

At GSA, our direction is shaped by a simple but powerful understanding: everything is connected. Freshwater, land, and ocean form one living system, and communities sit at its heart as the “last watershed before the sea”. What happens upstream does not stay upstream. It flows outward, shaping the health of the Salish Sea and everything that depends on it.

This is why we are working to advance a more integrated watershed-to-sea approach, one that reflects ecological reality rather than administrative boundaries—and why your role in this matters. Your support, your engagement, and your belief in collective action make this work possible. Again and again, we see how change is built through shared effort: ideas becoming action, and action becoming real impact in communities, on the water, and in decision-making spaces. It is this collective work—and your support—that helps care for the Salish Sea and for each other.

From that foundation, we are advancing a networked approach to marine stewardship across the Salish Sea,

bringing together Indigenous leadership, communities, science, and policy innovation. This means weaving together coordinated tools—from marine refuges and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas to national frameworks like Canada’s Nature Strategy—to strengthen protection, support biodiversity recovery, and advance commitments to conserve 30% of lands and oceans by 2030. It also includes work across our core priorities, including orca recovery, marine contaminants and governance, 30x30 implementation, resilient coastal communities, and Indigenous sovereignty and stewardship.

This work is guided by our strategic plan and rooted in a commitment to harnessing community power for systemic change, while deepening our shared connection to the Salish Sea. Across our five focus areas, progress is taking shape through collaboration, shared learning, and collective action. The stories in this newsletter reflect that momentum—and the people, including you, who make it possible. Thank you for being part of this community with us, and for helping move this work forward.



Get involved

Visit our Get involved page to see the latest actions you could take to protect the Salish Sea.

georgiastrait.org/get-involved



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Discovery Islands victory for wild salmon

The Federal Court of Appeal has upheld the Minister's decision to keep salmon farms out of the Discovery Islands, firmly rejecting the appeal by MOWI. Building on the 2024 Federal Court ruling, this landmark decision is a powerful win for wild salmon—and for the ecosystems and communities that depend on them. Together with Ecojustice and our allies, we stood strong in court to defend this decision, helping secure a critical step forward for the long-term protection and recovery of wild salmon. Thank you for standing with us!

Orca Action

Last year, we fought hard for an Emergency Order to protect Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW). We didn't get it but we didn't walk away. We regrouped, strengthened our alliances, and pushed harder.

With just 74 whales remaining, the stakes couldn't be higher. And now, we're seeing progress. Thanks to sustained advocacy alongside our partners, new protections are coming into force on June 1, 2026: expanding the minimum approach distance to SRKWs to 1,000m, 10-knot speed limits at Swiftsure Bank, seasonal vessel exclusion zones in the Southern Gulf Islands, and continued ECHO slowdowns to reduce underwater noise and also updating regulations

on drones. Even more importantly, the federal government is proposing to make the 1,000m buffer permanent, a critical shift toward consistent, year-round protection, and one we are actively working to secure.

At the same time, we're bringing ocean leaders together in Ottawa this June for Whales Are in Our Nature—a four-day gathering focused on practical, collaborative solutions, from fisheries and entanglement to ocean noise and spatial protection, all aimed at driving meaningful federal action for whale conservation and habitat protection across Canada. We didn't get the Emergency Order but we didn't stop. And now, momentum is building.

Very soon, we'll be joining forces with the South Coast Ship Watch Alliance—dedicated advocates for quieter,

cleaner waters through more efficient and responsible anchorage use in the Southern Gulf Islands. As anchorage use in the region continues to grow so do concerns about underwater noise, air emissions, habitat degradation, and impacts on local First Nations and coastal communities. Stay tuned for more details.

Marine Contaminants & Governance

We're excited to welcome Milltown Marina & Boatyard as the newest member of the Clean Marine BC Eco-Certification Program, earning our highest distinction, a 5-Anchor rating.

CMBC member facilities commit to reducing their environmental footprint through best practices, on site assessments, and continuous improvement. Milltown has fully embraced this by integrating environmental responsibility into nearly every aspect of their operations, resulting in a clean, well managed facility that reflects true marine stewardship. We are also grateful to MP Wade Grant for joining the certification announcement and for the deep



Thank you to our Salish Sea champions!



Orca Club

A group of kids on the Sunshine Coast have been raising money for GSA's work protecting orcas and their habitat. They have an ambitious goal to raise \$10,000 by 2030, and are already a quarter of the way there! Their latest fundraising strategy has been selling beautiful t-shirts featuring their own orca art work. You can find these t-shirts for sale at GSA events throughout the summer!



Songs for the Strait

A heartfelt thank you to longtime volunteer and musician Brian Robertson for organizing and performing in last month's folk fundraiser in support of GSA. Alongside Michael Burnyeat, Holly Arntzen, and Tim Readman, the music celebrated deep connections to the Salish Sea and raised \$1,750 for our work. We're grateful to everyone who came out and contributed!

connection he brings to the Musqueam owned marina.

We are also celebrating Maple Bay Marina, which has recertified at a top five anchor rating. An Eco-Certified member since 2010, Maple Bay continues to lead with its eelgrass protection zone, long term dock replacement planning, exceptional recycling and waste systems, and by hosting our spill response training.

In early April, a fire tore through Ladysmith Harbour's Dogpatch, destroying several vessels. Thankfully, no one was hurt, but the risks are undeniable. Derelict boats continue to pollute our waters and threaten both ecosystems and communities, with similar pressures emerging in places like False Creek and Oak Bay. This incident is a stark reminder: without prevention, stronger coordination, Indigenous partnership, and better vessel management, these impacts will continue. In response, we are taking the next step by forming an Advisory Circle to bring together leaders, experts, and governments to align priorities, strengthen regulations, and advance coordinated, lasting solutions.

Indigenous Sovereignty & Stewardship

This part of our work at GSA is changing as we keep listening, learning, and reflecting on how we work with the ocean, culture, and Coast Salish ways of caring and taking responsibility for these lands and waters that have been stewarded since time immemorial.

This spring, that commitment is taking shape. Together with WSÁNEĆ Hereditary Chiefs and local partners, we are launching a campaign to protect herring and uphold the Douglas Treaty right to "fish as formerly". Herring may be small, but their role is immense, sustaining Chinook salmon and, in turn, Southern Resident killer whales, with the entire system rising or falling with their presence.

This campaign is about more than a species—it is about renewing relationships with land and water, and supporting pathways forward where Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and governance steward the health and future of the Salish Sea.

Alongside a broad coalition, we've also called on David Eby to uphold Indigenous rights, including recommitting to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and B.C.'s Declaration Act. For GSA, this reflects the kind of community we want to be part of, one that listens, learns, shows up in a good way, and stands alongside Indigenous leadership.



Images: Marnee Pearce



Image: Campaigns Manager russ elliott and participants at Nature on the Hill. Credit: Jay Gallant, Nature Canada

Resilient Coastal Communities

Climate resilience work is gaining real momentum at GSA after a year of deep strategy and partnership building, grounded in one idea: healthy, living waters are central to how the Salish Sea and its communities adapt and thrive in a changing climate.

We're excited to celebrate a new collaboration with False Creek Friends Society as we begin mapping False Creek's urban watershed. This work brings together lived experience from local residents, equity-deserving communities, and Indigenous Peoples alongside existing science to co-design an accessible, interactive community map that connects knowledge systems and reflects community needs and priorities.

This work is grounded in moments of connection on the ground. At the Rain to Resilience event, we joined Peninsula Streams Society, Surfrider Foundation Canada, the Capital Regional District, and the

City of Victoria to explore stormwater challenges and solutions. Monitoring data highlighted key issues and opportunities—from updated strategies and green stormwater infrastructure to improved street sweeping and targeted water quality monitoring—all critical to building more resilient watersheds.

Stay tuned for our upcoming campaign on climate adaptation and community resilience, building on our past work and amplifying coastal communities' visions for a just, resilient future.

30 x 30

We joined Nature on the Hill in Ottawa with more than 70 environmental organizations to meet with Ministers and Members of Parliament to advocate for the Salish Sea. We met with Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada Joanne Thompson to discuss protections for Southern Resident killer whales, with MP Will Greaves and MP Erin Klessen on transitioning away from open-net pen salmon farms and building restoration-based economies, and with MP Patrick Weiler on Bill

C-244 and derelict vessels.

A central focus was the Canadian Nature Strategy, which we continued to engage with as it evolved and was released this spring. Canada has now set a national roadmap to halt biodiversity loss and protect 30% of lands and oceans by 2030, including new and expanded marine protected areas, growth in Indigenous-led conservation, and early actions such as removing ghost gear and rope to reduce harm to marine life.

At the same time, we are learning from leadership on the ground through the QEN,T Stewardship Gathering hosted by STÁUTW (Tsawout) First Nation. Over three days, we joined Indigenous leaders, knowledge holders, and partners to witness stewardship in practice across the QEN,T Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area.

From Ottawa to the Salish Sea, these conversations are connected by one thread: advancing a networked approach to marine spatial planning that strengthens watershed-to-sea conservation across the Salish Sea.



georgiastrait.org/donate

Donate Today!

Your support matters. Donate today to help turn hard-won victories into lasting protection for the Salish Sea. Your support will help us work alongside communities, scientists, governments, and First Nations to push for bold action on coastal resilience, climate, orca protection, and safeguarding the entire Salish Sea watershed for future generations.