



Ocean Watch Action Committee

Meeting Notes

Friday, January 12th, 2024, from 9:30-11:30 am via Zoom (see recording)

The purpose of this committee is to advance the actions recommended in the 2020 Ocean Watch Howe Sound report.

Participants:

Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw: [Hariharan \(Hari\) Sendamangalam Varudaraju](#), Environmental Specialist

Bowen Island Municipality:

[Andrew Leonard](#), Mayor, [Carla Skuce](#), Manager of Environment & Parks Planning

District of West Vancouver:

[Heather Keith](#), Senior Manager of Climate Action and Environment

Town of Gibsons:

[Annemarie De Andrade](#), Councillor

District of Squamish:

[Lauren Greenlaw](#), Councillor, [Sarah McJannet](#), Community Planner, [Lesley Douglas](#), Senior Environmental Specialist

Gambier Island Local Trust Committee

[Kate-Louise Stamford](#), Trustee & Area Director

Metro Vancouver:

[Marcin Pachcinski](#), Division Manager

Marine Stewardship Initiative – Make Way Charitable Society:

[Ellika Cairns](#), Project Director; [Erica Olsen](#), Governance and Monitoring Lead

Marine Life Sanctuary Society: [Adam Taylor](#), Board Member

Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre: [Christina Wilson](#), Program Manager

Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council (SSISC):

Erin Galloway, Field Program Manager, [Rebecca McDonald](#), Invasive Analyst Coordinator

Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society:

[Ruth Simons](#), Executive Director; [Ian Winn](#), Director; [Hasan Hutchinson](#), Director; [Mica Anguita](#), Project Director

Squamish River Watershed Society: [Edith Tobe](#), Executive Director,

David Suzuki Foundation: [Kilian Stehfest](#), Marine Conservation Specialist,

Guests: Kiran Dhaliwal, Constituency Liaison, Office of MP Patrick Weiler

Moderator: Ruth Simons, Executive Director, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS)

ACTIONS

1	Speaker on log salvaging to be invited to OWAC meeting.
2	Contact Sarah at District of Squamish if you would like to know more about DoS

	discussions about water leases. Consider hosting the OWAC on site in Squamish next meeting, have an in person once a year.
3	Contact Erica at MSI if interested in the latest updates on Coastal Marine Strategy and if interested in lunch and learn sessions for the Governance Advisory Committee,
4.	Take part in Marine Reference Guide user survey
5.	Consider signing up to the Coastal Flooding Prediction program. Can be notified for warnings at certain elevations. Contact matt.loney@ec.gc.ca , Senior Program Meteorologist: Engagement Lead - Western and Northern Canada. Consider adding this to the Howe Sound Community Forum program.
5.	Contact Ruth if you would like to join the committee for managing the marine debris fund distribution and if you know of any water temperature/quality monitoring occurring, or groups that could support this

NOTES:

AGENDA	DISCUSSION	ACTION ITEMS/ DECISIONS
1. Welcome & Introduction	Ruth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted the sad passing of Bernie Hanby who was instrumental in the creation of Whytecliff Park as a marine protected area (not official MPA) and the Marine Life Sanctuaries Society. 	
2. European Green Crab Monitoring (ECG)	Rebecca McDonald is now with SSISC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfortunately, did not receive multi-year DFO funding but currently looking at backup funding options Ruth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howe Sound is considered to be low risk, but science is still evolving Will have monitoring starting in spring via Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre, with grant funding Still looking for funding to help keep Howe Sound EGC free So far no ECG have been found 	If interested in volunteer opportunities or know of funding option to help monitor, contact Ruth or Rebecca
3. Marine Stewardship Initiative (MSI) & Marine Debris	Erica: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For an update on Provincial Coastal Marine Strategy (presented to governance advisory committee by Courtney Smaha), heard about policies, programs and legislation for marine spatial planning and how federal and provincial governments are working together. 	Contact Erica at MSI if interested hear updates on Coastal Marine Strategy

	<p>Adam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been speaking with governments on seabed issues and getting good feedback from each about productive collaboration. Excited to see what outcomes may be. <p>Erica:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both governments are working on building relationships on central and north coast and that planning at regional scale is on its way for the south coast. <p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good news that two former MSI staff (Bridget John and Courtney Smaha) are both working with these bodies. <p>Adam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been discussing overlap between provincial log tenure, rockfish protected areas and glass sponge protected areas. Positive is that they are talking among themselves is encouraging. Hopefully process will continue to move well. If not, Adam will follow up with committee for letters of support. <p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoping for outcome for foreshore tenures and water leases. There is a disconnect between renewing a water lease with updated plans for input from community; when advertising was made public for new water lease, it used to be that ads were only made in local newspaper. • Encourages local governments to become informed on impacts of poorly managed water leases. Good example is Andy's Bay on Gambier. Lease was sub-let to a salvage operator who has caused marine debris, sinking boats and oil spills. How do we close those gaps? <p>Sarah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoS has been in discussion around consultation and process with the province for northern Átl'ka7tsem / Howe Sound in the municipal area. Suggests bringing this to the governance advisory committee. But contact Sarah if you would like to know more about the DoS discussions. <p>Heather/Councillor Thompson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District of West Van request to UBCM regarding log debris has had no response so far. • Sea wall is being closed regularly during high wind events as there are a lot of logs coming onto shore. <p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At one time there was an insurance company that had a barge that collected logs to avoid claims on 	<p>Contact Sarah at DoS if you would like to know more about DoS discussions about Crown land tenuring</p>
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	propellers etc.	
4. Updates and review of last meeting's notes	<p>Ellika:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Advisory Committee hosting lunch and learn sessions; some can be shared publicly. • Next GAC meeting will happen in Feb/March. • 2023 Herring Survey report published. • Currently preparing for 2024 survey season. Volunteer training will be happening in next few weeks if anyone is interested in working. Contact Ellika. • Marine Reference Guide is undergoing development updates. A user survey has been distributed. Encourage all to complete. <p>Councillor Greenlaw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been contacted about anti-fouling paint affecting herring eggs. Ellika is following up. <p>Sarah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with marine-focused projects. Slowly working through marine maintenance in Mamquam Blind Channel Strategy to address different objectives about navigability, accessibility, marine safety and coastal adaptation. Sent advocacy letter (along with other Squamish organizations) about work being done and key challenges (including significant lack of funding) to federal and provincial bodies: MP Weiler's office, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and Canadian Coast Guard, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. Sarah happy to share letter with committee if you are interested. • Continuing to engage Sk̓w̓x̓w̓7mesh Uxwumixw and other community organizations including Squamish River Watershed Society on estuary. Doing a lot of coastal project reviews on foreshore protection. • Mamquam Blind Channel bridge under construction. <p>Lesley:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoS has authority under environmental development permit to ask for more riparian restoration. Working on a couple of multi-phase development projects where this is being asked. <p>Councillor Greenlaw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing a lot of various permits coming through for WLNG for effluent discharge. Council and staff have been assembling letters to EAO about their process and bring awareness to the limited budget and capacity to address some of these significant issues in the very short timeframe given. Process is very heavily weighted on the side of the industry; DoS is working hard to bring this to the attention of as many as possible. 	<p>Contact Ellika if interested in lunch and learn sessions for Governance Advisory Committee, or for volunteering on herring survey.</p> <p>Take part in MSI user survey on Marine Reference Guide.</p> <p>Contact Sarah for copy of the DOS letter to regarding the multi-jurisdictional challenges with Mamquam Blind Channel</p>

Edith:

- Having good discussions with DoS on part of marine action strategy. Over the years have been restoring salmon habitat and connectivity. Been involved with very significant restoration projects to improve flows from Squamish River to estuary, particularly with spit removal project. Monitoring is a small sample size so far but results have been stellar; making extremely good use of culverts and removed spit. Will be interesting to see herring spawning results. Juvenile chinook monitoring happens spring into summer but also measuring temperature and salinity etc which corresponds to storms/tides etc. Looking for robust picture on how estuary is functioning.
- Have funding for next few years for water quality and salmon passage monitoring. May include installing culverts beneath CN spur servicing Squamish Terminals and enhancement work including small part at end of training berm, ramps for kayakers etc. Access upgrades would have to come from DoS and/or Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw.

Carla:

- Planning continuing EGC monitoring this year.
- [Participating in Metro Vancouver's feedback for ten-year salmon enhancement plan.](#)
- Bowen Isl. Fish & Wildlife Club are planning improvements in estuary, causeway and fish ladder.

Marcin:

- Not involved in ten-year salmon project mentioned by Carla but it is an engagement project looking for feedback from all member municipalities.

Mayor Leonard:

- Salmon project has not reached Metro Vancouver board or committees yet.
- Board not met since November and just getting into 2024 meetings. However, since late fall, MV been in process of regional planning and climate action to develop and implement stronger climate policy tied to Climate 2050. Supporting road maps are being updated. Anticipate coming for approval in next month or two.
- Another update was to Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory 2020, which came shortly after last meeting of OWAC. There was a noted loss of riparian and wetland zones across MV, but not so much intertidal or estuarine. Staff being made aware of this to plug into policy pieces.
- Another issue raised was issue of community policing in port areas. There is a lack of uniformed port police

services making them a hotbed of criminal activity. Advocacy to provincial and federal governments for more support.

- Summer air quality was poor, from wildfires. Five AQ advisories were issued during summer. MV has an air-quality mapping tool which includes portion of AHSUBR in MV.

Ruth:

- 2020 Oceanwatch report reported climate change and warming waters as biggest threat to marine environment. Great to monitor air quality but there are large gaps in monitoring of water temperatures.

Councillor de Andrade:

- Just launched Urban Forest Plan. If goes well, will be completed by mid year.
- Upcoming announcement will share that Town of Gibsons and Howe Sound will benefit from funding awarded by Abandoned Boats Program to assess four pleasure crafts and four sail boats in Gibsons area.

Ruth:

- John Roe from Dead Boats Society is still waiting to hear about his federal funding request for Howe Sound.

Kiran:

- No updates at this time.

Heather:

- In the fall, a significant spawning salmon fish kill occurred in one of the creeks just below the highway, from 6PPDQ chemical coming of tires; came after a significant rainfall. Flows through creeks quickly and in this case the fish were spawning when the chemical came through. Working with Streamkeepers on pilot project to look at ways to alleviate issue.

Councillor Thompson:

- Unique situation of perfect storm; a dry fall combined with the rain event and timing of spawning.

Heather:

- Issue seems to be with coho who normally spawn later, however, this event was with stray hatchery salmon, likely from Capilano River that strayed into a side creek.

Adam:

- Similar situations with brake dust. One possible reason for lack of herring spawn on east side of Howe Sound is runoff from highway. If any sampling program is implemented it would be great to keep that in mind.

[Note the news announcement following the meeting here.](#)

Kilian:

- No Howe Sound specific update. Working on higher level biodiversity initiatives; federal and provincial governments consulting on [Federal Biodiversity Strategy](#) in Action plan; commitments to implement international COP goals domestically. Consultation ends Feb 9 so any input should be made soon.
- Province released draft Biodiversity & Ecosystem Health Framework in December; consulting finishes end January. Strong pieces on restoration. Also looking at support of community support.

Adam:

- Adam indicated DFO hopes to have another stakeholder round of discussions on RCA/GSR alignment in late Feb/March. Working on mapping just now.

Trustee Stamford:

- Islands Trust continues to work on foreshore issues especially on Keats.
- Thank you to Gibsons' organizations who conducted marine debris collection as they included islands.
- Met with SCRD in December; request for input for new shipbreaking outfit in West Howe Sound.

Ian:

- Staff report to SCRD. Company in Hillside Industrial Park wants to proceed with ship breaking for recycling in an environmentally proper way. Land not zoned for ship breaking so going through bylaw amendment. Staff report indicates that environmental and archeology assessments should be done before bylaw amendment. Recommendation agreed by Board so that monitoring will set a baseline. Would be advantageous to have this function in the region if done responsibly to help with boats awaiting dismantling to help prevent their sinking.

Kilian:

- Recent experience in Comox highlighted the challenges with jurisdictional uncertainty between federal, provincial and municipal governments. Can put OWAC in touch DFO colleague who engaged on the Comox experience.

Ruth:

- Received concerns from observers in West Howe Sound about divers rising with many sacks of sea cucumbers. Info from DFO is that it is a regulated, hand harvest, first in thirty years. Area was deemed to have enough density to allow this (many other BC coast areas are already seeing this harvesting). DFO opened up Howe Sound in Oct/Nov but will not happen

Consider contributing to consultation on the Federal Biodiversity Strategy in Action plan. By Feb 9

	<p>again for another 3 years. Sea cucumbers are exported to China for medicinal purposes.</p> <p>Adam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this harvest there was some collection from the rockfish conservation areas. As done by hand shouldn't be an issue but unknown the overall effect to the habitat of harvesting a vast quantity of one species. <p>Carla:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been approached for feedback on the Coastal Flooding Prediction program by Environment Climate Change Canada. Others on OWAC may want to be on list. Can be notified for warnings at certain elevations. Contact matt.loney@ec.gc.ca, Senior Program Meteorologist: Engagement Lead - Western and Northern Canada <p>Sarah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could make for a useful Howe Sound Community Forum topic. 	<p>Consider signing up to Coastal Flooding Prediction program</p>
<p>5. Marine Debris</p>	<p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$12,271 in a marine debris fund, raised through Howe Sound Biosphere Fund thanks to West Vancouver Foundation's Give Where You Live campaign. Work in progress but to help individuals be reimbursed for mid-sized debris. Ellika will join Ruth and Ian to manage fund. Does not replace other funding. If fund grows, it could also help support a marine debris coordinator that can no longer be funded through MSI. • Call for applications for shoreline cleanups and vessel removal from Clean Coast Clean Waters Initiative. • Salish Sea symposium; Oceans Protection Plan happening in Vancouver this month. Workshop to bring people together with Transport Canada. Agenda limited but does include changes to hazardous and dangerous cargo regulations. Always asking for updates, relating to WLNG. Not a managed port in Howe Sound so concerns about oversight about very large tankers carrying hazardous materials to first floating LNG terminal on West Coast. Underwater noise impacts also on the agenda. Anchorages and places of refuge are also of concern. Floating terminal not under the jurisdiction of Transport Canada but of BC Oil & Gas regulator. HSBRI asking for status update from Transport Canada and also awaiting for any input from Patrick Weiler. <p>Erica:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Canada has a cumulative effects of marine 	<p>Contact Ruth if you would like to join committee for managing the marine debris fund distribution</p>

shipping initiative. Curious to know more.

Ruth:

- With three applications from WLNG for discharge of effluent, plus floatel and potential bilge water, the cumulative impacts should be recognized. Concern is a belief of a lack of oversight and the cumulative impact that will have. Unlikely to get any specific Howe Sound feedback at this symposium unless there has been engagement with Squamish Nation.

Hari:

- Would like to see documentation before Nation can comment on anything. Would be concerned about disturbances to spawning grounds etc.

Ruth:

- HSBRS is taking the opportunity (available until Jan 19) to give feedback to O&G Regulator, highlighting the main areas of concern, representing the region's view. If any local governments have had any updates to their views or situation, let Ruth know so the statement is not misrepresentative.
- There was a concern about propellor wash and impact on glass sponge reefs but science is not there yet to know.

Edith:

- Knows that Squamish Nation has an upcoming information session at Totem Hall on WLNG. Though it's for Nation members, is it possible to be notified of outcomes?

Hari:

- Will get an update to share.

Ruth:

- Information from the proponent varies from information from authorities. Urges OWAC to keep asking questions about rules, regulations and gaps.

Councillor Greenlaw:

- DoS has found it very difficult to get information from Transport Canada and O&G Regulator. Echoes Ruth's comments.

Ruth:

- OceanWatch 2020 report is due for an update in the next year. This is a sizable undertaking both for time and funding. The work of OWAC will contribute including the Action Tracker. Ruth and Ellika looking to process. The Howe Sound Ocean Watch website is no longer active either. Only the PDF is available. A questionnaire will likely be sent out.
- Exploring how to acquire and host the documentation on the HSBRS website.

Sarah:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed it is a shame to see the loss of the website. May have some of the missing documents saved over the years. • For the 2025 update, how can the Biosphere, Nchu'ú7mut/Unity Plan and SDGs be integrated into the reporting? <p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding will be a big question. Will look for grants but is there scope to have contributions from Province? Everyone in region should be interested in results and trends, including water quality. • Who is measuring ocean temperature and water quality? Need a baseline. Can funding for this be requested from Fortis and WLNG? <p>Adam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLSS was running temp monitoring at 6 stations but stopped during COVID. Should hear this week about funding for 10 more loggers. Would be happy to collaborate on this. <p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you know of anyone doing monitoring of any kind (e.g., for public access beaches, universities etc), let Ruth know. If funding is an issue, maybe able to help. <p>Erica:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If anyone is writing letters about monitoring work that would be done by Fortis etc, make sure there is the request for baseline monitoring before the work begins. <p>Councillor Greenlaw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid bias in monitoring by industry, request should be for monitoring by a third party. <p>Councillor de Andrade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could Streamkeepers assist? 	<p>Contact Ruth if you know of any water temperature/quality monitoring occurring, or groups that could support this. A list of current water quality monitoring will be developed and shared.</p>
Roundtable	<p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressing with implementation of AHSUBR Roundtable. Kilian has applied from the OWAC. • Looking for first meeting in May. 	
Next Meeting	April 5 th in Squamish TBC	