



Ocean Watch Action Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, January 13th, 2023, from 9:30-11:30 am via Zoom

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

Participants:

Bowen Island Municipality:

[Sue Ellen Fast](#), Councillor

District of West Vancouver:

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

Town of Gibsons:

[Michelle Lewis](#), Natural Asset Technician, [Annemarie De Andrade](#), Councillor

District of Squamish:

[Lauren Greenlaw](#), Councillor, [Sarah McJannet](#), Planner

Gambier Island Local Trust Committee

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

Metro Vancouver:

[Jen McCutcheon](#), Director, Area A, [Marcin Pachcinski](#), Division Manager

David Suzuki Foundation:

[Kilian Stehfest](#), Marine Conservation Specialist

Marine Stewardship Initiative – Make Way Charitable Society:

[Courtney Smaha](#), Project Director

Marine Life Sanctuary Society:

[Adam Taylor](#), Board Member

Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society:

[Ruth Simons](#), Project Lead, [Hasan Hutchinson](#), Board Member

Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre:

[Jenny Wright](#), Aquarium Curator

Department of Oceans & Fisheries:

[Rebecca Croke](#), Biologist, Fisheries Management

Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society:

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

Guests:

[Loic Jacquemoit](#), Post Doctoral Researcher, UBC Institute for Fisheries and Oceans

[Brian Hunt](#), Associate Professor, UBC Institute for Fisheries and Oceans

[Mike Stamford](#), Independent Biologist

[Stephanie Hewson](#), Staff Lawyer, Marine Program, West Coast Environmental Law

[Clare Greenburg](#), Executive Director at Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council

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

Note Taker: Diane Mitchell (from recording), Administrator, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS)

ACTIONS

1	Submit marine debris sightings and share MSI's Marine Debris Reporting system. Send any photos of December king tide/storm surge to Ruth and/or Courtney.
2	Local governments should become aware of the proposed RCA and GSR changes. Review Rockfish monitoring updates and latest marine OECCM guidance .
3	Consider commenting on WLNG noise pollution amendment ; other comments can be read.
4.	Send any known data on fish in creeks to Mica Anguita.

NOTES:

AGENDA	DISCUSSION	ACTION ITEMS/ DECISIONS
1. Review last meeting's notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future of Howe Sound Forum took place Nov. 5th ● Feedback to the Biosphere's Unity Plan is summarized here. 	Biosphere looking for more feedback on Unity Plan
2. Share community updates related to the Action Tracker .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● District of Squamish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flooding downtown over holiday period so looking at interim and long-term flood mitigation ○ Council approved support for HSBRIS letter of objection to Woodfibre LNG application to loosen environmental regulations on underwater noise pollution with respect to pinnipeds and cetaceans. ○ Adopted Marine Zoning Bylaw ○ Working on downtown marine access ○ Developing Mamquam Blind Channel maintenance strategy ○ Working with Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw ● Town of Gibsons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus has been on budget planning. Now have 1.5 year's worth of data on creek monitoring. 	

Working with Province to install additional stations as they have limited climate data on droughts in the creeks.

- Proposed project going to Council are a flow accretion study on Chaster Creek and Gibson Creek to look at pH, salinity, turbidity and flow measurements. Ongoing working with Streamkeepers.
 - Proposing 5 precipitation and temperature stations in watershed to avoid having to use data from Sechelt or Langdale.
 - Source to Sea Project ongoing; stormwater modelling based on creek data
 - Dialogue with Sunshine Coast Conservation Association and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw; working group looking at Gibson Creek and restoration of the reaches
 - Coastal Resilience Project looking at natural asset solutions to mitigate climate change; putting together story map of what we found out for planning; to present to Council for decision-making
- District of West Vancouver
 - Focus on orientation of new elected officials
 - Kicking off project to look at adaptation options for sea level rise and coastal flooding over next 3-4 months; minimizing impacts to public areas such as sea wall; mapping how to implement nature-based projects to protect vulnerable areas
 - Nearing completion of Urban Forest Management Plan
 - Final Reading of Climate Action Strategy plan passed; funding approved to develop; implementing now to move toward GHG emissions targets; outlining priority actions and looking at strategy to (i) mitigate and (ii) adapt to climate change and (iii) protect natural assets; integrating the three pillars over next 1-2 years.
 - 1.5% environment tax on properties implemented.
 - Islands Trust Local Trust Committee
 - Orientation of new elected officials
 - Drought local emergency and stormwater flooding in Sunshine Coast which as been focus; not yet had time to look wider

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sunshine Coast passed requirement for standard setback for all coastal areas to be increased from 7.5 m to 15 m ○ Grebe Islet was donated for preservation ○ Retired ferry west of Gambier; retrofitted as floating work camp for ~50 works; final home is unknown yet; won't be staying in Sound but raises issue about moorage; north of New Brighton in Andy's Bay, and close to Woolridge Island Rockfish Conservation Area and Mariner's Rest Glass Sponge Reef Protected Area. Highlights activities that fall through the cracks jurisdictionally. ○ Also still log sorts impacting some protected areas; Woolridge Island likely to be rescinded owing to log storage impacting habitat values. Another log sort over top of buffer zone of a glass sponge reef protected area. Difficulty in federal versus provincial mandate differences. May be looking for letters of support from local governments to raise the issue. ● Metro Vancouver Area A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orientation of new elected officials and strategic planning ongoing. First Climate Action Committee met yesterday. Metro Vancouver has put together Climate Action Road Maps but this year is around nature and ecosystems. ○ Sustainability & Innovation Fund; MV funds to apply innovation in MV projects. Ideas, if relate to a MV function, could be put forward to MV staff. ● Bowen Island Municipality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 out of 7 councillors are new and staff changes with Bonny Brokenshire moving on (Carla Skuce now environmental dept), therefore in the midst of familiarization and strategic planning, therefore no OWAC specific updates for now. 	
<p>3. Photos and reports from this summer's marine debris tracking and clean-up. - Ruth.</p>	<p>Ruth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recent king tides combined with storm surge in December; water had never rose to that in at least forty years. Clear indication of sea level rise. With new Council in the village, this conversation just getting started. ● Storm damaged poorly constructed encapsulated styrofoam dock now stored at Lions Bay marina. 	<p>Submit marine debris sightings and share MSI's Marine Debris Reporting system</p> <p>Send any photos of December king</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Britannia Beach a boat sunk and is near the shoreline. Was reported but no update on progress to remove. • Spread the news about the Marine Debris Reporting system on Marine Stewardship Initiative website • Requesting any photos of debris from king tide/storm surge • Marine Debris Coordinator was valuable position last summer; funded partly by Ocean Bridge; see value on ongoing basis particularly over winter • It is community stewards or local governments who pitch in to clear up debris <p>Michelle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Gibson's data stored on Aquaria software; creek and climate data. Consultant reached out to Province to get observed tide data; would be \$50 for one-time snapshot as only public data is predicted tides not observed tides. Asks if anyone has access to real-time data. • Note from Brian in meeting chat: there is only one real-time tidal station in Howe Sound, at Darrell Bay and the data can be downloaded. <p>Kate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Marine Reference Guide or Marine Stewardship Initiative preferred title? <p>Courtney:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSI encompasses research and community engagement. The MRG is the tool used. 	<p>tide/storm surge to Ruth and/or Courtney</p>
<p>4. Urgency and planning for Howe Sound-wide Green Crab Monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Green Crab monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invasive species at risk of arriving at Howe Sound. Desire for monitoring at entrance of Howe Sound. HSBRI working with Clare Greenberg (SSISC) and DFO to establish monitoring. ○ Interested partners around the Sound have met twice around establishing a region-wide task force to find out who is interested; discussion how to fund and how to develop proposal ○ Using Marine Reference Guide and DFO-provided habitat criteria lists, partners have scoped out potential areas for further study and ground truthing. Some potential spots on Bowen and around Gibsons. ○ Not commitment yet from DFO; may be slippage funds but would be limited; still need to raise alarm that this is difficult to fund. Other grant funders however feel it is DFO's responsibility. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work to put together a proposal is first step. Possible federal funding available in coming months but not confirmed nor any details known. ○ Metro Vancouver Invasive Species Council and Coastal Invasive Species Council were involved in meeting with DFO (Jan 12). DFO have 'pinned' Mannion Bay on Bowen Island for early detection. Volunteer efforts on the island helped provide local knowledge and ability to photograph potential sites. Volunteer stewards are being recruited. ○ Grant application in for Gibsons monitoring and potential sites identified there also. ○ Annemarie: asked if any support from Invasive Species Council of BC? ○ They were present at the first partner meeting and seem interested in supporting the licensing piece; worked with DFO for online course for free to apply for scientific collection license; involved in conversation but would not lead. ○ SSISC were monitoring four sites monthly for a cash/in-kind budget of ~\$30,000 in one year. ○ No green crab found in northern part of Howe Sound yet. 	
<p>5. New projects and priority plans.</p>	<p>MSI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finally have Plankton and Herring Survey reports on website; work from 2020-2021 ● Next OWAC meeting will have update on Dungeness crab and light trap report ● Marine debris reporting button is on the website and is being used by the public, e.g. for boat at Britannia which may or may not be deemed a 'vessel of concern' <p>Rockfish Conservation GSR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Day long Rockfish Conservation GSR workshop well attended this week; good experience owing to dialogue with commercial fisherman about increase conservation protections of these habitats ● Always going to be difference of opinion between those that want to fish and those that want to conserve; but did seem to be a "old guard, new guard" theme between the fishers. ● DFO trying to align the values of the RCAs and the 	<p>Local governments should become aware of the proposed RCA and GSR changes</p>

	<p>GSRs makes sense as the many types of protections are confusing for the average person fishing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made good headway with Prawn Association in discussing real-time monitoring and enforcement over illegal harvesting. • Future management plan, education & outreach and lack of enforcement was also discussed. Local communities can get involved through shore-based park signage and having groups as local stewards. As ideas and projects will be developed, Adam will be coming to OWAC group to find out who can assist. • Each local government should be aware of changes as likely to hear about it through local fishers concerned about the changes. • DSF generally supportive of proposal; high degree of overlap between sites proposed for enhanced protection and areas identified as conservation priorities through conservation analysis through Ocean Wise and DSF several years ago. However, would like to see more focus on biodiversity overall and not a focus on select species. • Late in December DFO published marine OECM guidance; big improvement on previous guidance • Feedback to DFO after workshop reflected diversity in the room; strong feelings but respectful and open dialogue. Rebecca will report back to DFO on DSF feedback about need to focus not just on select species. A post-workshop survey will be distributed shortly but Rebecca can also be emailed. • Acknowledgment to DFO for moving this along. Would have been good to have had Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw at the meeting to hear from them; shíshálh Nation were present. <p>MLSS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking into rockfish monitoring in Howe Sound. Was historically run by Vancouver Aquarium and Ocean Wise but discontinued. • MLSS projects paused during COVID but in restarting GSR work needs to build volunteer base; decided to broaden to include rockfish monitoring. • With support from HSBRS/OECM project, have received 3-month DFO funding to progress rockfish monitoring. Hope to secure 3-year funding in spring for monitoring, outreach & education efforts. • Can contribute to the conversation effort discussion. 	<p>Review Rockfish monitoring updates</p> <p>Review latest marine OECM guidance</p>
<p>6. Upcoming Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large international IMPAC 5 conference coming to Vancouver; several participants from OWAC attending. 	

	<p>Hosted by DFO, CPAWS and others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field trip is boat tour of Howe Sound; lot of politicians will be present. • Coastal Zone Canada conference is upcoming; HSBRS will be present. • Woodfibre LNG Amendment public commenting extended until January 26. Refers to reduction of underwater noise pollution limits and impacts on pinnipeds; for 6-8 months of pile driving during construction. District of Squamish chose to support the HSBRS objection. Canada does not have regulations pertaining to underwater noise impact on pinnipeds so defer to NOAA, which has missing information. This missing information was able to be uncovered through the network. Ruth can share HSBRS letter of objection to other Councils if requested. • Next Oceans Protection Plan Workshop coming up by Transport Canada. Canada's commitment to the oceans' protection; announcement made by PM Trudeau on Bowen Island of ongoing funding. Some things advancing and others (e.g., hazardous cargo, underwater noise) • Intentions paper on Coastal Marine Strategy is open for feedback. • Next OWAC meeting will be in March. • Next Howe Sound Community Forum will be in April and anticipated to be in Gibsons. More info to follow. 	<p>Consider commenting on WLNG noise pollution amendment; other comments can be read</p>
<p>7. Putting fjord biodiversity on the map (guest speakers)</p>	<p>Using eDNA to put fjord biodiversity on the map for British Columbia conservation planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspired by work for few years in fjords. Major knowledge gaps and limited protection in fjord environments and limited understanding of uniqueness. • Observations of species only found in fjord environments. • DFO funded project began October 2022. • Project focusing on fish but also invertebrates in Indian Arm, Howe Sound, Bute Inlet, Toba Inlet and Rivers Inlet; conducted through marker genes assessed through water sampling. Field sampling each season but will incorporate historic samples also. Sample at surface, 10m, 100m and bottom at head, middle and mouth of fjord. Temp/salinity also measured. • Connecting with local communities to find out what is of interest to them. • Project mapping biodiversity as an essential step toward conservation planning. 	

- Document habitat use by species of concern; better understand effect of environmental changes; develop approach to biodiversity assessment that is reproducible and easy to implement; and support conservation and marine spatial planning strategies.
- Looking for feedback on how collection can contribute to existing projects; are there locations or species of interest that sampling might address; and what would be best way to communicate results? Some earlier feedback has already directed sampling to near WLNG for herring monitoring.

Adam:

- Divers already out in Howe Sound may be able to contribute to project by providing visual observations at sample sites.

Ruth:

- MSI hoping to produce next issue of the Howe Sound Oceanwatch Report. This takes community and funding but needs to fill the gap left by Ocean Wise.
- The eDNA project may be able to help with data in restoring Indigenous food sources, e.g. eulochon.
- How many species can be detected? Answer from Loic: can detect all species of concern though cannot assess abundance.
- Can be related to another HSBRS project on [visualizing biodiversity](#) and another project to assess data on [fish-bearing streams](#).

Annemarie:

- Could this project contribute to European Green Crab monitoring? Answer from Loic: yes

Meeting moved into the informal networking on topics of interest

Send any known data on fish in creeks to Mica Anguita