



Ocean Watch Action Committee Report – October 2023-April 2024

Since the last HSCF in October 2023, the committee met over Zoom on January 12, 2024 and April 6, 2024. Meeting notes, plans and Action Tracker [can be viewed here](#).

Participating organizations: Representatives of the Howe Sound Community Forum member communities- Town of Gibsons, District of West Vancouver, District of Squamish, Bowen Island Municipality, Gambier Island Local Trust Committee, Area A Metro Van, SLRD, Squamish Nation, Marine Stewardship Initiative, Marine Life Sanctuaries Society, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre, Squamish River Watershed Society, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society, David Suzuki Foundation

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

Objectives of the Committee – Terms of Reference:

1. Learn and build consensus on collective actions Local Governments can take to advance Ocean Health.
2. Advance actions emerging from [Átl'ka7tsem/Txwnéwu7ts/Howe Sound Edition 2020 \(OWHS 2020\)](#)
3. To review and share updates on each of the recommended actions and strategic plan.

Education and presentations received from:

Sarah McJannet – Senior Planner, District of Squamish. On April 6th District of Squamish hosted the first in-person meeting of the OWAC since before COVID. Sarah walked us to the future site of the DOS waterfront park and explained the history of environmental protections and regulation along the Mamquam Blind Channel.

Collaborative Actions – a few examples:

- a. Ocean Legacy, Marine Stewardship Initiative and HSBRIS participated in a shoreline marine debris assessment of Howe Sound. Ocean Legacy is now applying to Clean Coast Fund. Over \$12,000 was raised by HSBRIS through the West Vancouver Community Foundation's Give Where You Live Campaign for debris cleanup. MSI is collaborating with Squamish Terminals on a shoreline clean up.
- b. Successful Collaboration on Rockfish Monitoring between MLSS, MSI, HSBRIS volunteers to monitor species at risk in Howe Sound. MLSS finished first full year of funding for monitoring programs, including reinstating the lingcod egg mass survey and new rockfish monitoring.

- c. The Governance Advisory Committee led by MSI continues to meet and prepare for participation in the Province's and DFO's Marine Spatial planning strategy for the south coast. This is a collaboration between Local Governments and First Nations.
- d. European Green Crab monitoring is starting up again in upper Howe Sound and areas of Bowen and West Howe Sound. Collaboration of many groups and volunteers.

Other News to note:

MSI and HSBRS are initiating a survey to assess the scope, audience and other feedback for the 2026 report on Howe Sound's Ocean Health. This will be an update from the 2017, 2020 editions of the Ocean Wise Research Institute's Ocean Watch Report taking into consideration all the changes that have occurred over the past five years.

Marine Life Sanctuaries Society has been doing outdoor education programming with Squamish Nation Elementary Schools and secured funding for contract educators to work with the Nation's language and culture department to enhance language and culture at outdoor education events.

Squamish River Watershed Society continues to improve fish access in the focus areas in the Squamish estuary. The significant work to date of removing barriers to salmon survival are showing good results from radio tagging.

The first spawn event was recorded on February 16th. Since then, herring spawn has been recorded across the majority of Skwelwil'em / the Squamish Estuary, as well as along the shores of Squamish Terminals and the Oceanfront development. The Squamish Nation celebrated the return of slhawt' / herring during a Welcome Ceremony on March 14th.

Whale, herring and sea lion activity continues to awe and inspire people , with daily reports of sightings, including the threatened Northern Resident whales.

Note Taker: Diane Mitchell, HSBRS

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For more information contact howesoundbri@gmail.com

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