Ocean Watch Action Committee

Meeting Notes



Friday, June 23rd, 2023, 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**:

Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw:

Annabel Arnott, Environmental Specialist, Rights and Title Department; [Julie Aeyelts](http://Julie_Aeyelts@squamish.net), Environment Manager, Rights and Title Department

Bowen Island Municipality:

Sue Ellen Fast, Councillor; Carla Skuce, Manager of Environment & Parks Planning

District of Squamish:

Sarah McJannet, Community Planner

Gambier Island Local Trust Committee

Kate-Louise Stamford, Trustee & Area Director

 Marine Stewardship Initiative – Make Way Charitable Society:

 Melany Sanchez, Project Coordinator; Erica Olson, Contractor; Rebecca McDonald, Marine Debris Coordinator (from July)

Marine Life Sanctuary Society:

 Adam Taylor, Board Member

Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre:

 Krysta LaLiberté, Curator

Ocean Legacy:

 Abby McLennan, Plastic Pollution Specialist

Squamish River Watershed Society:

 Edith Tobe, Executive Director

Dead Boats Disposal Society:

 John Rowe

Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society:

 Ruth Simons, Executive Director; Micaela Anguita, OECM Project Director; Ian Winn, Director; Hasan Hutchinson, Director; Dan Rogers, Director; Bella Johnston, Community Outreach Ambassador

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

**ACTIONS**

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| 1 | **Consider attending: July 24 is 30th anniversary of Whytecliff’s “MPA”. There will be a small bbq 11am-2pm on the 23rd which is same day as Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw’s 100 year of Amalgamation Festival so suggested people also stop by bbq at Ambleside**  |
| 2 | **Review and consider signing petition to ban Styrofoam in marine environment** |
| 3 | **Send in updates for the Action Tracker** |
| 4 | **Provide Bella with marine based commercial operations selling prawn traps** |
| 5. | **Share the posting for recruitment of the Project Director for the Marine Stewardship Initiative.** [**https://howesoundguide.ca/we-are-hiring-2/**](https://howesoundguide.ca/we-are-hiring-2/) |

**NOTES:**

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| AGENDA | DISCUSSION | ACTION ITEMS/ DECISIONS |
| 1. Welcome & Introduction | Welcome to new participants – Annabel Arnott – mat. Leave replacement for Julie Aeyelts, Squamish Nation Rights and Titles. Melanie Sanchez replaced Bridget John, now with DFO, Marine Stewardship Initiative. Krysta LaLiberté of Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre replaced Jenny Wright who returned to Scotland. |  |
| 2. Marine Debris Update | John: [Dead Boats Disposal Society](https://deadboatsdisposalsociety.ca/)* Dead Boats Disposal Society born out of partnerships working to clean up Victoria are and the Gorge. Worked with Ralmax Group of Companies who are in recycling business
* Small organization with main function to find and process derelict boats; sign joint contract with other agencies to remove boats; have lots of equipment available
* Applied to federal abandoned boats program/grant to work in Átl'ḵa7tsem / Howe Sound for three years;
* First do an assessment which is then put to federal government; if approved then removal will be funded
* Marine debris data from MSI over last four years has contributed to this program
* Collaborating with Ruth over last month; new boats have been adrift and on the rocks at Britannia Beach
* Boats they deal with up to 80ft in length and up to 60ft sub-surface
* Provincial funding application onerous and needs community/municipality support. Federal application easier
* Society will be doing survey, including using air and sub-surface drones to collect more data.
* Speeds up process if owners sign over bill of sale
* Nothing required of municipalities, letters of support help.

Ian:* What happens to debris and are they aware of boat breaking facility on West Howe Sound?

John:* Debris brought to Victoria by barge. Sampled for contaminants then separated and crunched. Metals to recycling.
* Ralmax Group of Companies assist with setting up programs for batteries and tyres etc
* Society working with federal government to look at plastics; exploring pyrolysis to turn it back into oil; currently innovating; plant could be on Sunshine Coast

Kate:* When disposing of debris from Howe Sound, where would it be taken?

John:* Would be taken to Victoria unless partner with one of the larger disposal companies. New boat breaking facility on West Howe Sound could be explored. Needs to be an ISO 14040 company as this is what they adhere to.

Abby: Ocean Legacy* Run on four pillars: EPIC (details <https://oceanlegacy.ca>)
* E: education & research – free on website
* P: policy & advocacy,
* I: infrastructure development
* C: cleanup & restoration
* Infrastructure includes [Ocean Plastic Depot network](https://oceanplasticdepot.ca/) across BC coast. 6 depots. SCRD now has a depot in Sechelt and a micro one in Port Edward. SCRD has two 40-yard bins. Signs help people identify what can go in them, usually hard plastics such as crab pots and fragments. Foam floats and hard plastic buoys taken. But can’t take PVC tubing and ABS tubing from oyster farming. Number 3 plastic which gives off harmful gases.
* Beverage bottles also collected. Count kept to inform Encorp about how many collected. Would like to see funding contribution from Encorp but none so far. Example: around 450 bottles over 20 cleanup days in Powell River area
* White Styrofoam taken but not coloured or dirty foam. If 1cm depth is discoloured on smaller pieces it is no use; has to be able to be cut off to separate from the clean pieces

Ian:* Do barrels need to be without their lids to show they are empty?

Abby:* Barrels with liquid still in them can be emptied but risk is unknown liquid. Depends on cleanup crew and availability of spill kits; can be dealt with in Richmond facility

Dan:* Question about Styrofoam with cement or mussels and algae

Abby:* Cement covered Styrofoam goes to landfill. Algae can often be cleaned off and mussels can dry out in the sun and be picked off.
* Majority of primary processing happens in Richmond. They have designed proprietary equipment to deal with the hard plastics from marine environment. Wash, dry, shred, chip and extrude to make a plastic pellet. Working with manufactures to make marine debris non-structural composite for lumber alternative. Can be put back into their system at end of life though designed to be durable and long lasting.

Ruth:* Best practices in dock management document prepared through HSBRIS. Squamish Nation Marine Group construct docks using encapsulated Styrofoam.

Abby:* [Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River) petitioning federal government](https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=441-01130) to ban Styrofoam in marine environment
 | **Review and consider signing petition to ban Styrofoam in marine environment.**  |
| 3. Updates and review of last meeting’s notes | Edith:* Squamish River Watershed Society’s work to [restore connectivity between estuary and Squamish River](https://www.squamishwatershed.com/training-berm-upgrades-cerp.html#/) through opening up gap in Squamish Spit wrapped up in mid May. Will be spending next few years revegetating higher ground with sedge marsh.
* Bathymetric surveys can be shared. No known derelict boats known in the estuary.

Sarah:* Working closely with Edith for central estuary restoration. Also working with Rachel Munger of Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw and Natasha Wilbrink of the Province over recreational management at the Squamish Spit; sub-licensed to the Watersports Society. Working to ensure access is responsible in the Wildlife Management Area for not just windsport access but all recreational users such as paddleboarders and walkers. Signage and community education.
* Squamish Downtown Marine Access discussion draft went to Council in June. Recreation, leisure, commercial and industrial being explored. Trying to identify key issues for connectivity, coastal protection and infrastructure. Continuing to work on Mamquam Blind Channel sedimentation for safe navigation.
* No updates from last meeting on collaborating on data or models available on risk management for sea level rise and tidal influxes. Can share more at next meeting about what they’ve been looking at.

Julie:* Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw working on initial stage of marine plan, one objective from their strategic plan.
* Expanding and growing Guardianship program; new Guardians are out. Terrestrial Guardians are new team.

Ruth:* Would Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw be supportive of ban on Styrofoam and would they want to take a strong interest in, e.g. in marine side of business?

Julie:* Julie can take to Senior Manager who has lots of experience with docks. They do use the HSBRIS dock management best practices in their referrals process for docks.

Abby:* Move to completely ban use of Styrofoam with Province was changed to allowing encased Styrofoam. Did try to follow up with shíshálh Nation to see learn more as their Powell River depot sees lots of encased foam but not being hard foam, when there is a hole in it, it disintegrates easily to a sand-like substance.

Ruth:* When researching best practices some dock builders and manufacturers were very confident in their encased foam so still a lot of work to do. Can bring this to next meeting for follow up conversation.

Carla:* European Green Crab monitoring is underway on Bowen Island with volunteers from Fish & Wildlife Club. Once a month monitoring. None found to date.

Sue Ellen:* Lots of ECG from further up the coast.

Ruth: * No reports from fishers in Howe Sound of ECG. Next will be looking to West Howe Sound.

Erica:* Where is nearest monitoring where ECG is found?

Ruth:* Sightings shown on DFO which is out of date. Nearest is on Sunshine Coast (around Madeira Park) and around Delta. Like disturbed area which is why West Howe Sound will be important to monitor.

Adam:* Conducting citizen science rockfish monitoring at sites formerly surveyed by Oceanwise (for forty years). New funding in process from HSBRIS for ten survey dives a year. Data will be used with DFO about conservation areas and possibly combination with Glass Sponge Reefs conservation areas.
* Also have a signage project at Whytecliff Park should be done in fall. Any other waterfront parks interested in interpretive or enforcement signage, reach out to Adam or HSBRIS.

Ruth:* Speaking to enforcement, referenced the recent fire at new campsite at Apodaca Marine Park. No Fire signs had not yet gone up and someone left a fire burning causing a fire. Still hoping to have someone to speak about BC Parks Marine Action Plan for next meeting.

Adam:* Fire was on dry rocky bluffs and there has been a history of fires there.

Sue Ellen:* Metro Vancouver Regional Parks now owns a big property on southwest of Bowen Island. Posted it as closed to public access for now owing to danger to environment and fire risk. MVRP now patrolling. The Crown land in municipal area means that camping is not permitted there. More no camping signs going up as more people seem to be coming and camping on crown land.

Krista Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Ctre:* Very new to role.
* Scoped out potential EGC monitoring area with Ian. Now need to pull resources together to implement.
* May subtidal cleanup. 1.5 tonnes of debris from harbour area. About 30% diverted from landfill.

Ruth:* Howe Sound Community Forum hosted in Gibsons in April, next is October 13th at Whistler.

Kate Louise:* For SCRD, top priority is fresh potable water. Move to to renew leases for hillside area. Hoping to see public engagement on complexities of marine and how industrial area operates.
* For Islands Trust, continue to move forward on Keats foreshore protection bylaws. Meeting in July in Gibsons. Recent committee meeting package had great package on the science. Can send package to Ruth.
* For Gambier, moving forward on OCP. Engagement with Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw is high priority. Looking for ways to activate that process for 2023.
* Apparent push at Trust Council level to demonstrate that forests are a fire hazard. Not sure how to mitigate this. Attended a good workshop recently on Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystems and classification. Their support for carbon sinks and biodiversity refuges were not mentioned. Looking for input into resources for speaking about forest.

Ruth:* Indigenous ways of knowing and stewardship would suggest Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw would be good spokespersons.

Edith:* Conversation comes up about every decade and often relates to fire suppression and timber harvesting.
* A more robust approach of forest management would include other approaches.
* Managing forests is a tool not a solution to the bigger context.

Ruth * Mayor and Council at District of West Vancouver have directed staff to look into woody debris on shorelines and marine environment.

Erica – Marine Stewardship Initiative* Job posting for [Project Director](https://howesoundguide.ca/we-are-hiring-2/) as Courtney has moved to work at the Province on implementation of the Coastal Marine Strategy.
* Moving forward with planning for next governance advisory committee. Will be quarterly meetings. Technical representatives from municipalities, districts and First Nations. Musqueam only Nation not yet provided a representative.
* Thank the municipalities for their ongoing contributions to MSI.
* While waiting for a new Project Director, Erica and Melany will be main point of contact.
* Rebecca McDonald will be joining as Marine Debris Coordinator in July

Melany – Marine Stewardship Initiative:* Now have data from Feb-May herring survey on MSI website. Report will be summarized and online in July.
* Dungeness crab megalopa surveys in partnership with the Hakai Institute going well. Have found a lot of megalopa and having to change protocol as never had so many (thousands this week).
* Amazing team of diligent, attentive volunteers this year.

Ruth:* MSI [Steering Committee](https://howesoundguide.ca/team/) members are also points of contact as overseeing changes.
* Update on HSBIRS/Biosphere. Bella Johnston is out in the community and distributing DFO materials to the marinas

Bella:* Distributing brochures and posters on rockfish conservation and BC’s tigerfish. Also targeting stores selling prawn traps around North Shore and Howe Sound. Contact Bella if you know of anywhere to distribute info to. Also reminding them about regulations and closures.

Adam:* DFO in process of updating Glass Sponge Reefs brochure. When completed these could also be provided, e.g., ask stores to add a brochure inside the prawn trap when sold.

Ruth:* [Published final report on fish-bearing streams](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58c0c358ebbd1a9d3cd1ecf0/t/64540759c176d251b71ce525/1683228508263/FishBearing_Streams_Stewardship_Report_2023.pdf), funded by Environment Climate Change Canada. Study was scan of existing data to identify fish bearing streams not currently being monitored. Next step will be outreach to relevant communities and updating Marine Reference Guide.
* Request from District of Squamish to learn if any other communities commented during public commenting period on Trans Mountain Pipeline and impacts on health.

Sarah:* Senior staff with DoS asked Sarah to reach out to OWAC (and Howe Sound Community Forum) to learn if referral reached to other communities. (see also section 5)

Carla:* Referral will be going to Bowen Island Council soon. Expectation would be staff directed to write a letter and likely in conjunction with Islands Trust, but no direction given yet.

Sue Ellen:* Question about impact of several letters versus one collaborative letter.

Ian:* Referral went before SCRD this week. SCRD did not have internal staff knowledge to know how to respond therefore a collaborative letter would be of value to them.

Ruth:* Commenting period for WLNG application for effluent discharge deadline extended into July. Science-based response coming from My Sea to Sky. Also looking into Fortis’ effluent discharge. More information being sought on cumulative effects.

Sue Ellen:* [Shared joint letter](https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/comments-for-bc-environmental-assessment-office-condition-39-existing-shorelines-conditions-report/) between Bowen Island and Islands Trust on existing shorelines report for Trans Mountain Pipeline.
 | **Provide Bella with locations for posters****WLNG comment period for effluent discharge still open for communities or organizations to consider commenting if not already done so** |
| 4. Share community updates related to the [Action Tracker.](https://www.howesoundbri.org/ocean-watch-action-tracker) | Ruth:* Will be translating data into a spreadsheet
 |  |
| 5. 11:00 – 11: 30 – Informal networking and topics of interest  | Conversation continued regarding Trans Mountain health impact referral and managing challenging conversations.   |  |