

Ocean Watch Task Force Report October 2019

The Ocean Watch Task Force (OWTF) has been working on behalf of the Howe Sound Community Forum over the past two years to advance marine enhancement recommendations for local governments made by the Coastal Ocean Research Institute [Ocean Watch Howe Sound Edition \(2017\)](#). [OWTF Terms of Reference and other background documents](#)

Active participants over the past six months have included elected representatives, staff and volunteers from the following local governments and organizations:

District of Squamish	Tides Canada (Marine Reference Guide)
Bowen Island	Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative
West Vancouver	David Suzuki Foundation
Gibsons	Susan Abs, Eclipse Consulting
Gambier Is. Local Trust	Coastal Ocean Research Institute/Ocean Wise
Sunshine Coast Regional District	– Ocean Watch, Howe Sound Research Team
Metro Vancouver (Area A)	

The Task Force met four times since the last Howe Sound Community Forum at the end of April 2019. The members continue to find value in meeting to update and coordinate marine-focused activities around the region at the local government level.

Priority activities included:

- Providing input into the province's marine debris engagement process
- Participating in the Coastal Ocean Research Institute/Ocean Watch's – Howe Sound/Atl'ka7tsem Action Planning for Climate Change in the Marine Environment Workshop (June 2019). Report found here at <https://research.ocean.org/program/ocean-watch>.
- Supplying updates to the Ocean Watch - Howe Sound 2.0 edition
- Finalizing the Strategic Plan 2019-2021 and Action Tracker and developed priorities year one.
- Continuing their leadership role with the Marine Reference Guide
- Advancing the concept of the inclusion of marine indicators in the Howe Sound Area Provincial Cumulative Effects project through UBCM

Priorities for the next year:

The Strategic Plan 2019-2021 as formulated by the Ocean Watch Task Force. [Ocean Watch Task Force Strategic Plan](#).

From this plan, the Task Force chose the following four local government priority strategies and their specific actions considered the most critical or achievable over the next six months. Of vital importance there is also the cross-cutting theme of supporting First Nations goals and considerations in all aspects of the work that the Task Force does in a way that recognizes that they have, since time immemorial, been the stewards of Atl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound and that their continued management of their territory has supported the region's ongoing recovery.

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1. STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO PROTECT MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

1.1 Build Local Government Capacity for Marine Protection by:

- Provide opportunities for collective professional development and learning on marine and coastal issues for Howe Sound LG elected officials and staff, using existing resources (See 2.1).

1.2 Strengthen Local Government Marine and Coastal Protection Tools

- Collectively identify one or more promising resources or tools to apply on a region-wide basis (See 2.1).

2. COLLABORATE ON MARINE AND COASTAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 Continue with Regional Collaboration

- Continue to participate in and support the HSCF semi-annual meetings and information-sharing.
- Continue to support the OWTF work to advance LG's role in protecting coastal ocean health.
- Organize occasional thematic workshops and forums to advance priority topics identified in this Plan, e.g., Vessels of Concern, foreshore management, monitoring and enforcement.
- Liaise with and support the [Howe Sound / Atl'ka7tsem UNESCO Biosphere](#) initiative.
- Collectively identify one or more promising resources or tools from the following list, which local governments could apply on a Howe Sound region-wide basis to improve marine and coastal protection and pursue resources to implement these. Combine this work with action 1.1 to help build local marine planning capacity.

Sample Environmental Resources and Guidance for Howe Sound Local Governments:

A. Howe Sound Ecological Resources: Reports, Maps and Assessments

Ocean Watch: Howe Sound Edition, CORI, 2017. (OWHS 2nd Edition expected in 2020)

[Regional Conservation Plan](#), Islands Trust Conservancy

[Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory](#), Metro Vancouver

[Atl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Marine Conservation Map](#), David Suzuki Foundation/CORI, 2019.

Provides 140 data layers, including "ecological hot spots"

Marine Reference Guide (Strategy 2.1): mapping of environmental, social and economic information

B. Environmental Protection Guidance and Tools

[Marine Protection Tools for Local Governments](#), Islands Trust

[Green Shores resources](#), BC Stewardship Centre

[Caring for our Shorelines](#), Islands Trust Conservancy

[Shoreline Care](#), DFO Guide for Property Owners

Ecosystem Assets Study for Howe Sound <https://davidsuzuki.org/science-learning-centre-article/soundinvestment-measuring-return-howe-sounds-ecosystem-assets/> David Suzuki Foundation

[Natural Asset Management Strategy](#), Town of Gibsons

[South Coast Conservation Program](#) resources for local government (have worked with West Vancouver,

Squamish, Whistler and the Sunshine Coast Regional District)

[Natural Resources Best Practices Guidelines](#), BC Ministry of Environment

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4.0 STRENGTHEN MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS

4.4 Collaborate on Problem Vessels and Structures. Contribute collectively to the Vessel of Concern (VOC) Inventory being compiled by Coast Guard (2019); with Bill C-642 coming into force, DFO seeking is seeking local government input in assessing risks in the region.

- Build on past collaboration on Vessels of Concern to establish a multi-stakeholder body (e.g., senior governments, First Nations, LGs, NGOs) and process to share information and find solutions.

5.0 ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS BY COLLABORATING REGIONALLY ON CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

5.1 Work collectively to learn about and use selected resources through workshops, exchanges, peer learning and experience-sharing, including the Ocean Watch Atl'ka7tsem 2nd edition.

Share resources and best practices on planning for sea level rise and flood hazard management.

Climate change (CC) is a cross-cutting issue affecting many aspects of local decision-making. Numerous programs and resources are available to help local governments address climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local level.

For example, see:

- [Ocean Watch Howe Sound Atl'ka7tsem June 2019 workshop - Action Planning for Climate Change in Howe Sound's Marine Environment](#)
- [BC Municipal Climate Leadership Council.](#)
- [BC Climate Action Toolkit;](#)
- [Islands Trust resources;](#)
- [B.C. Environment resources, including Preparing for Climate Change: An Implementation Guide for Local Governments in B.C](#)
- [University of Victoria Plan to Adapt Toolkit;](#)

Moving Forward

The Task Force continues to be challenged by how best to move appropriate strategies forward without a clear governance structure to accomplish priorities.

- *How does the group relate back to its respective governments and organizations with deliverables?*
- *Where does the Task Force reside on the internet - a part of CORI or is it more closely aligned with Howe Sound/Atl'ka7tsem regional entities and the possible UNESCO Biosphere?*

The Ocean Watch Task Force has many opportunities to advance marine planning across the region but lacks a dedicated coordinator to more effectively actualize those goals.

- *Is the Howe Sound Community Forum ready to have a more formalized regional presence that can action initiatives in the common marine environment?*

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Recommendations:

The Task Force has completed the first three items in its Terms of Reference and continues to work on prioritized strategies for regional enhancement of the marine environment by local government. There is consensus that a representative group continues to meet in order to:

- A. *Continue to advance the strategies as outlined, maintain the Action Tracker and support the Marine Reference Guide as the Leadership Team*
- B. *Act as an Atl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound regional voice to advocate for specific issues and support marine enhancement opportunities as they arise. (i.e. marine debris clean-up, Ocean Watch – Howe Sound 2.0, UBCM motion to support cumulative effects in the marine environment)*

The Ocean Watch Task Force recommends to the Howe Sound Community Forum that:

1. *a new Terms of Reference be developed by members of the Howe Sound Community Forum that defines a governance structure for a new Ocean Watch Task Force (or similar body) that provides for a more focused follow-up of the Strategic Plan actions, continues the role as Leadership Team for the Marine Reference Guide, and provides opportunities to advocate on marine issues on a regional basis;*
2. *this new Terms of Reference be developed in a ½ day workshop, tentatively hosted by the Town of Gibsons at a date to be determined (before the end of the year), with representation from Forum members and participating NGOs; and*
3. *consideration be given to the provision of ongoing financial support to the Ocean Watch Task Force from Forum members to enable appropriate coordination of strategic actions.*

On behalf of the Ocean Watch Task Force, I would like to thank Susan Abs of Eclipse Consulting Ltd for her continuing support of the Strategic Plan 2019-21, Ocean Wise for providing financial support the strategic plan process and to the Islands Trust for providing financial support for administrative services.

Kate-Louise Stamford, Trustee – Gambier Island Local Trust Committee

Co-Chair Ocean Watch Task Force