

Howe Sound Marine Reference Guide Summary

i. Background

The Ocean Watch Task Force was formed in June 2017 by members of the Howe Sound Community Forum (HSCF). Task Force members are elected officials and staff representatives of the HSCF member communities. The Task Force has a mission to advance the implementation of action items outlined in the [Ocean Watch – Howe Sound Edition](#). To achieve this goal, the Task Force will provide recommendations to Howe Sound’s local governments to support initiatives and projects that further marine ecosystem protection and ocean health. This document will outline one such project proposal.

ii. The Howe Sound Marine Reference Guide

Action 1 in the Ocean Watch – Howe Sound Edition [Executive Summary](#) is to create a marine guide for Howe Sound that pulls together information on the region’s marine ecosystem. This guide will be a non-binding informative tool that will help Howe Sound develop into an international leader in marine sustainability.

The Howe Sound Marine Reference Guide will use scientific, indigenous, and local knowledge to identify areas of significant ecological and human value. It will consist of an interactive map accompanied by narrative documentation, education resources, and media. It will be a unified resource on marine data for planning and decisions by all government levels and community groups, and will support collaborative management and stewardship of the region’s marine ecosystems.

The information will be openly accessible, subject to privacy concerns, and is intended to be used by local governments and First Nations to support zoning and marine planning, official community planning, and by community groups to strategize stewardship initiatives. However, it alone will hold no authority beyond providing data and recommendations.

Data collection for this project will involve workshops, meetings, interviews, field work, and surveys. Part of this knowledge gathering has already occurred through the work of the Coastal Ocean Research Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation. Their data on spatial attributes of Howe Sound, and ecosystem, recreation, cultural, economic, spiritual, and conservation values associated with Howe Sound’s marine habitats will be a valuable resource for the Howe Sound Marine Reference Guide to use and build off of.

iii. West Coast Aquatic’s Marine Ecosystem Reference Guide: an existing template for Howe Sound’s Project

Ocean Watch Task Force

The Ocean Watch Task Force suggests that to better understand this project proposal, local governments familiarize themselves with West Coast Aquatic's Marine Ecosystem Reference Guide (MERG): marineguide.ca.

WCA's MERG is an interactive map developed to support decision-making and integrated ecosystem-based management on the west coast of Vancouver Island. MERG provides hundreds of data layers on ecosystems, marine resources, human activities, conservation needs, and social systems within the Barkley and Clayoquot Sound regions. It divides each region into marine units, which are based on administrative boundaries, biophysical characteristics, and common uses and activities. Each marine unit is accompanied by documentation that provides recommendations on suitable uses and activities, as well as each unit's vulnerability to stressors.

This model will provide a useful framework that the Howe Sound Marine Reference Guide can build off of.

iv. Financial breakdown

The projected budget for this initiative is approximately \$200,000 per year over the course of three years. Funding sources may include local, provincial, and federal governments, First Nations, supporting NGOs, and private funders.

To help acquire external funding, local governments are asked to give their official support to the project, and to participate in a cost-share of \$20,000/year, which will be shared amongst participating local governments. *The task force is recommending a three-year commitment from local governments to provide a sound baseline for the large financial requests to non-governmental granting organizations for this project.*

To help understand each community's potential contribution to this project, the Ocean Watch Task Force asks the HSCF member communities **to determine the worth of this tool to their community, and the financial contribution they are willing to make towards it.** Following these determinations, member communities of Howe Sound can construct a cost-share breakdown.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE HOWE SOUND COMMUNITY FORUM MEMBERS

"That the Task Force recommends to the Howe Sound Community Forum ("Forum") that it endorse the preparation of the Howe Sound Marine Reference Guide ("Guide") and that the Forum communicate this endorsement to member governments request that member local governments commit to cost-sharing a total of \$20,000 per year for three years as their contribution to the cost of producing the Guide."