

TOWARDS A MARINE USE PLAN FOR HAIDA GWAI

A Discussion Paper



COUNCIL OF THE HAIDA NATION

28 November 2007

INTRODUCTION

Haida Gwaii is home to some of the richest marine environments on the planet. Perched on the continental shelf at the most westerly edge of North America, the archipelago is where Alaskan and Japanese Currents mix in Haida Eddies. Haida Gwaii and its surrounding waters sustain diverse marine habitats, from kelp forests and eelgrass meadows to sand flats, weathered rocky shores and the abyssal ocean depths.

Each spring herring return to spawn in coastal waters, providing a key food source for birds, marine and land animals, along with our people. In summer and fall, salmon swim thousands of kilometers from feeding areas in the open North Pacific Ocean to spawn and die in their natal streams – a cycle of life that links the far reaches of the ocean to the people and forests of Haida Gwaii. Compared to other parts of the coast, halibut and rockfish populations here remain relatively healthy, and seabirds and marine mammals congregate where food is plentiful. Along the northern beaches of Haida Gwaii, there are enough razor clams to maintain a commercial fishery, and the Dungeness crab fishing grounds in Hecate Strait and Dixon Entrance are the most productive in BC.

Despite this rich marine ecosystem, the old people tell us of teeming abundance beyond anything we have seen. Today, declines are obvious and scientific studies indicate that if fishing practices around the world do not change, the seafood that we depend on may be gone within 40 years. Overfishing, habitat damage, introduced species and climate change, all contribute to these trends. Depleted and impoverished marine ecosystems translate into diminished economies and cultures. Yet there has been little to no comprehensive planning for fishing and other marine uses in Haida Gwaii waters.

On Haida Gwaii, we are going to reverse these trends. The Haida Gwaii marine use plan will guide restoration of the sea to its full potential. We will bring together all interests to launch the concerted effort necessary to make change. Our planning will link local marine uses to regional and global issues. Traditional, local and scientific knowledge will be compiled to understand the current condition of the ocean, determine its potential, and make decisions necessary to sustain human use.

Guided by the Haida Marine Vision and Haida Ethics and Values, it is up to this generation to take action so that the marine area around Haida Gwaii will sustain families, economies and cultures for generations to come.



Kelp Forest at Laskeek Bay
Bart DeFreitas, Haida Fisheries Program

Gina waadluxan gud ad kwaagiida

Everything depends on everything else



Herring in pond.
Bart DeFreitas, Haida Fisheries Program

HAIDA MARINE VISION

Haida culture is intertwined with all of creation in the land, sea, air and spirit worlds. Life in the sea around us is the essence of our well-being, and so our communities and culture.

Yet here, as around the world, an insatiable human appetite is depleting the oceans. Some species are diminished or gone, and many habitats are impoverished.

We know that our culture depends on the sea around us, and that the well-being of every community and Nation is at risk. It is imperative that we bring industrial marine resource use into balance with, and respect for, the well-being of life in the sea around us.

We must take steps today to achieve a future with healthy intact ecosystems that continue to sustain Haida culture, communities, and an abundant diversity of life, for generations to come.

HAIDA ETHICS AND VALUES

Our way of life teaches respect for all life. We live between the undersea and sky worlds that we share with other creatures and supernatural beings. Our responsibilities to the sea and land are guided by ancestral values.

Yahguudang or Yakguudang *Respect*

Respect for each other and all living things is rooted in our culture. We take only what we need, we give thanks, and we acknowledge those who behave accordingly.

'Laa guu ga kanhlins *Responsibility*

We accept the responsibility passed on by our ancestors to manage and care for our sea and land. We will ensure that our heritage is passed onto future generations.

Giid tll'juus *The world is as sharp as the edge of a knife.*

Balance is needed in our interactions with the natural world. If we aren't careful in everything we do, we can easily reach a point of no return. Our practices and those of others must be sustainable.

Isda ad diigii isda *Giving and Receiving*

Giving and receiving is a respected practice in our culture, essential in our interactions with each other and the natural world. We continually give thanks to the natural world for the gifts that we receive.

Gina k'aadang.nga gii uu tl' k'anguudang *Seeking Wise Counsel*

Our elders teach us about traditional ways and how to work in harmony. Like the forests the roots of our people are intertwined. Together we consider new ideas and information in keeping with our culture, values and laws.

GOALS

The overarching goals of the marine use plan for Haida Gwaii are to achieve:

- Conservation and sustainability in all human activities; and
- Effective collaborative management of the sea around Haida Gwaii.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The following objectives and strategies outline the steps needed to begin taking care of the sea around Haida Gwaii.

OBJECTIVE 1

Improve understanding of the sea around Haida Gwaii.

Strategy 1.1

Compile and summarize existing information on the condition of marine species, habitats and ecosystems (eg commercial fishery trends, fish population health, habitat condition, shoreline erosion, etc), working together with other agencies and groups where appropriate.

Strategy 1.2

Support, develop and implement long-term ecological research and monitoring activities.

Strategy 1.3

Establish an oceans data centre and resource library on Haida Gwaii, including scientific, traditional and local knowledge.

OBJECTIVE 2

Take conservation actions as necessary to protect Haida Gwaii species, habitats and ecosystems.

Strategy 2.1

Protect and rebuild marine species and habitats around Haida Gwaii that are of known conservation concern, including herring, rockfish, wild salmon, northern abalone, and Pacific cod populations.

Strategy 2.2

Identify and prioritize other marine species and habitats, for monitoring, protection and restoration as necessary.

Strategy 2.3

Develop and implement conservation action plans to halt and restore declining marine species and degraded habitats.

Strategy 2.4

Establish a network of marine protected areas to ensure the long-term health of marine and human communities.



Moon Snail
Lynn Lee

28.Nov 2007



Red Rock Crab
Lynn Lee

OBJECTIVE 3

Use an integrated ecosystem-based approach in management of marine use.

Strategy 3.1

Define ecosystem-based management for Haida Gwaii.

Strategy 3.2

Apply and consider all types of knowledge – scientific, traditional and local – to planning processes and management decision-making.

Strategy 3.3

Document Haida marine traditional knowledge, and ensure incorporation of traditional knowledge into marine planning and management.

Strategy 3.4

Ensure marine planning is integrated across jurisdictions and from local to regional scales, and includes the level of detail necessary to address identified marine management concerns.

Strategy 3.5

Apply the precautionary approach and use adaptive management techniques to account for uncertainty and ongoing improvements in understanding of marine species and ecosystems.

Strategy 3.6

Work with all levels of government to establish mechanisms and bodies that increase inclusive and collaborative oceans management.

Strategy 3.7

Determine planning objectives and assess management options, including marine use zoning and establishment of marine protected areas.

OBJECTIVE 4

Ensure sustainable use of ocean resources in Haida Gwaii.

Strategy 4.1

Evaluate the sustainability of all fisheries including examination of existing management systems, population status, ecosystem effects and trends e.g. commercial, recreational, Haida traditional, new and emerging fisheries.

Strategy 4.2

Evaluate the sustainability of hunting and gathering activities.

Strategy 4.3

Evaluate the sustainability of other human uses of ocean resources including coastal and marine developments, proposals and policies.

Strategy 4.4

Apply conservation measures to address management concerns associated with human use of ocean resources, including regulatory controls and zoning to ensure sustainable human use and to reduce conflict between resource users.

Strategy 4.5

Minimize known threats to marine ecosystems, including introduced species, pollution, habitat damage and logging.

Strategy 4.6

Ensure effective research and monitoring to provide quality, up-to-date information for management, including establishment of ecosystem and socio-economic indicators.

Strategy 4.7

Ensure adequate and effective monitoring of human activities and enforcement of regulations, including appropriate consequences for infractions.

Strategy 4.8

Assess potential effects of climate change on Haida Gwaii ecosystems, and respond with management measures that ensure sustainable human use while allowing human communities to adapt to changes.

OBJECTIVE 5

Develop effective collaborative management of marine resources and activities.

Strategy 5.1

Develop a collaborative ecosystem-based management framework for the proposed Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve.

Strategy 5.2

Pursue new collaborative management initiatives with government agencies, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

OBJECTIVE 6

Develop and implement an integrated marine use plan for Haida Gwaii.

Strategy 6.1

Prepare a marine use plan for Haida Gwaii which considers the local, regional and global contexts, in collaboration with other First Nations and relevant federal and provincial government agencies.

Strategy 6.2

Engage with Haida Gwaii communities and marine sectors to develop and build support for the Haida Gwaii marine use plan.

Strategy 6.3

Implement the Haida Gwaii marine use plan incrementally or entirely, using existing and innovative processes and mechanisms, and working with all levels of government, coastal communities and marine sectors.



Razor Clam Survey Crew
Bart DeFreitas, Haida Fisheries Program



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