




B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy





This image of giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) was created using a cyanotype photographic process. The kelp was laid on top of photoreactive paper that is then exposed to the sun. After a few minutes, the kelp was removed from the paper and the paper was washed to stop the chemical reaction. The result is a deep blue monochromatic print with the area where the kelp was placed remaining white. The print has been enhanced to reflect the emerald colour of coastal British Columbia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Province of British Columbia acknowledges the traditional custodians of these lands and waters, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We pay respect to their continuing connection to land and sea, and the continuation of their cultural, spiritual and educational practices. In preparing for the future, we acknowledge the importance of looking beyond the immediate past to learn from First Nations unique history of land management, art, culture and society that began thousands of years ago.

The work to develop this strategy spanned many First Nations territories and treaty areas, and we are grateful for the knowledge, teachings and holistic worldviews contained within. Through strength and resiliency, the relationship between the ocean and coastal First Nations peoples remains unassailable. The B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy could not have been written without the participation of First Nations, and the Province looks forward to continuing collaboration and furtherance of government-to-government relationships in its implementation.

Appreciation is also expressed to all contributing authors, reviewers and those who supported the development of this work, including staff across the provincial government, federal departments and agencies, local governments, stakeholders, business owners and citizens.

SUMMARY

We live alongside thousands of marine species that dwell in some of the most biologically diverse habitats on the planet, including estuaries, kelp forests, rocky reefs, cold water coral colonies and hydrothermal vents. Some of these habitats protect us from extreme weather, build our resilience to climate change, and offer a place to collect and grow food, express culture, learn, seek adventure, find solace, move goods and people, and earn a living. Coastal marine-dependent industries – such as fishing, tourism, ports and shipping – make significant contributions to local and regional economies.

These benefits are only possible when the coastal marine environment is healthy. Climate change, pollution, habitat loss and the cumulative impacts of development bring significant challenges and responsibilities.

This B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy fulfils a commitment to develop a made in B.C., coast-wide, holistic vision for how to steward our use and enjoyment of the coast in balance with nature. It is the result of a close collaboration with many First Nations governments and it reflects the priority interests of coastal communities, governments, stakeholders and concerned citizens who shared their points of view during an extensive consultation process. It focuses on areas

closer to shore and concentrates on activities, uses and values that the Province of British Columbia is responsible for, while recognizing that we need strong collaboration and co-operation with other governments who share responsibility.

Our vision is for “a diverse, productive and resilient coastal marine environment that is valued in its own right and that supports the prosperity, health and well-being of coastal communities now and into the future.”

First Nations values and teachings will help guide our way of thinking and decision-making. They remind us of the connections between land, water, wildlife and people, and our collective obligation and responsibility to care for and protect the ocean, and each other.



At a glance, the themes, goals and actions in the strategy are:

A HEALTHY COAST

GOAL 1: DIVERSE MARINE LIFE

- Action 1: Monitor coastal health
- Action 2: Protect and restore nearshore ecosystems
- Action 3: Help recover species at risk

GOAL 2: ABUNDANT WILD PACIFIC SALMON

- Action 4: Improve salmon survival

GOAL 3: CLEAN COAST

- Action 5: Prevent marine pollution
- Action 6: Clean up marine pollution

RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

GOAL 4: CLIMATE-READY COMMUNITIES

- Action 7: Improve understanding
- Action 8: Support First Nations climate action
- Action 9: Incorporate nature-based solutions

THRIVING COASTAL ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

GOAL 5: A SUSTAINABLE COASTAL ECONOMY

- Action 10: Nurture coastal wealth and health
- Action 11: Build talent
- Action 12: Diversify the workforce
- Action 13: Support commercial harvests

GOAL 6: VIBRANT COASTAL COMMUNITIES

- Action 14: Help restore First Nations traditional (sea)food systems
- Action 15: Expand sustainable seafood production
- Action 16: Support recreation and adventure

INFORMED GOVERNANCE

GOAL 7: TRUSTING, RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

- Action 17: Advance First Nations self-determination
- Action 18: Advance collaborative stewardship

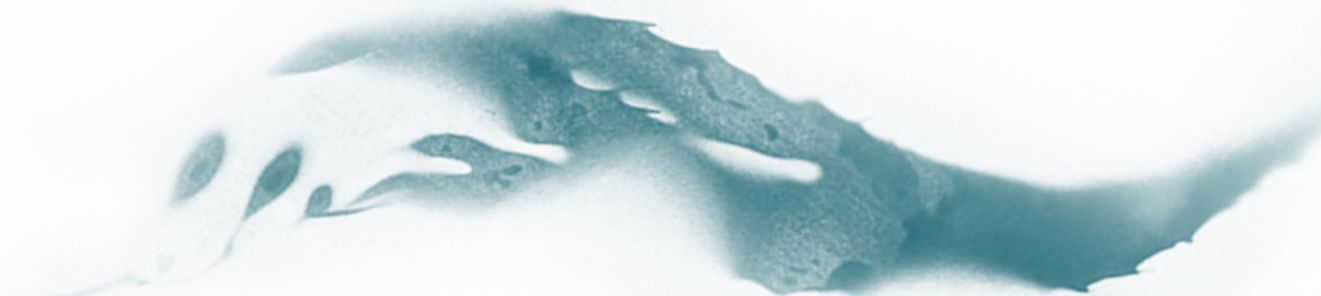
GOAL 8: A ROBUST TOOL KIT

- Action 19: Modernize policies and procedures
- Action 20: Improve compliance

GOAL 9: INTEGRATED AND BALANCED MANAGEMENT

- Action 21: Establish knowledge partnerships
- Action 22: Reflect the ocean's true value
- Action 23: Update and refresh spatial data
- Action 24: Plan for the future

Details concerning strategy implementation will be worked out in partnership with coastal First Nations and in collaboration with other governments and stakeholders. Our first tasks will be deciding on the structures and/or agreements to put in place, our shared priorities for near-term focus and our approach to engaging others in this important work.





MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE NATHAN CULLEN AND KELLY GREENE

Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture

British Columbia is blessed with more than 26,000 kilometres of coastline and our marine areas are home to an incredible diversity of species and habitats. As the foundation of the planet's life support system, we count on it every day for our physical, social, cultural, and economic well-being. All of this comes with an abiding responsibility.

Co-developed with several coastal First Nations and with significant input from federal and local governments, stakeholders and the public, the Coastal Marine Strategy marks fundamental progress in articulating and leading strong stewardship of our coastal and marine habitats. The Strategy expresses a cohesive forward-looking vision for coastal B.C. with a comprehensive suite of actions to support an ocean economy that is sustainable and inclusive and one that enables an intentional, coordinated and effective approach to taking care of the coastal marine environment in B.C.

Overwhelmingly, participants expressed support for the Province to take a more active role in stewardship—protecting coastal ecosystem health and wild salmon, addressing marine pollution, building resilience to climate change, supporting a blue economy, and creating good, sustainable jobs in our communities. The Strategy connects to the broader work government is doing for communities and ecosystems across the province.

Our thanks to many First Nations' governments, federal and local governments, industry and numerous organizations for engaging in this work and sharing your knowledge and perspectives to co-develop the province's first Coastal Marine Strategy. And thank you to everyone who participated in the public open houses and online engagement; your feedback helped us understand and consider a diversity of views that was critical to shaping this piece of work.

The Strategy positions British Columbia strongly in North America with well-envisioned coastal policy and governance for the ocean we cherish. We look forward to our collective implementation efforts and all the great work to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Cullen".

Sincerely,
Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Greene".

Kelly Greene
Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| Acknowledgements | 2 | Theme 3: Thriving coastal economies and communities | 39 |
| Summary | 3 | Goal 5: A sustainable coastal economy | 40 |
| Message from the Honourable Nathan Cullen and Kelly Greene | 5 | Action 10: Nurture coastal wealth and health | 40 |
| Introduction | 7 | Action 11: Build talent | 41 |
| The coastal marine environment | 8 | Action 12: Diversify the workforce | 41 |
| Our shared opportunity | 10 | Action 13: Support commercial harvests | 42 |
| Reconciliation | 13 | Goal 6: Vibrant coastal communities | 44 |
| Guiding values | 15 | Action 14: Help restore First Nations traditional (sea)food systems | 44 |
| How we got here | 18 | Action 15: Expand sustainable seafood production | 47 |
| Future vision | 21 | Action 16: Support recreation and adventure | 49 |
| Theme 1: Healthy coastal marine ecosystems | 22 | Theme 4: Informed governance | 50 |
| Goal 1: Diverse marine life | 23 | Goal 7: Trusting, respectful relationships | 51 |
| Action 1: Monitor coastal health | 23 | Action 17: Advance First Nations self-determination | 51 |
| Action 2: Protect and restore nearshore ecosystems | 25 | Action 18: Advance collaborative stewardship | 52 |
| Action 3: Help recover species at risk | 27 | Goal 8: A robust tool kit | 53 |
| Goal 2: Abundant wild Pacific salmon | 28 | Action 19: Modernize policies and procedures | 53 |
| Action 4: Improve salmon survival | 28 | Action 20: Improve compliance | 54 |
| Goal 3: Clean coast | 30 | Goal 9: Integrated and balanced management | 55 |
| Action 5: Prevent marine pollution | 30 | Action 21: Establish knowledge partnerships | 55 |
| Action 6: Clean up marine pollution | 31 | Action 22: Reflect the ocean's true value | 56 |
| Theme 2: Resilience to climate change | 33 | Action 23: Update and refresh spatial data | 58 |
| Goal 4: Climate-ready communities | 34 | Action 24: Plan for the future | 59 |
| Action 7: Improve understanding | 34 | Conclusion | 61 |
| Action 8: Support First Nations climate action | 37 | Appendix A: First Nations contributors | 62 |
| Action 9: Incorporate nature-based solutions | 37 | Appendix B: Timeline for the development of the strategy | 64 |

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the B.C. government committed to developing a coast-wide vision that would improve the health and stewardship of coastal marine environments, build climate change resiliency, nurture a sustainable blue economy, support coastal community well-being and advance reconciliation with First Nations. This B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy fulfils that promise.

The strategy presents a long-term vision for the well-being of people and places in British Columbia. It is the product of close collaboration with many First Nations with deep ties to the ocean and it reflects the priority interests of other governments, stakeholders, local communities and concerned citizens across the province. To address the breadth and depth of the challenges and opportunities, and to bring governmental departments responsible for stewarding the coast together, input was sought from provincial ministries responsible for water and land stewardship, forests, agriculture and food, the environment and climate change, Indigenous relations and reconciliation, energy, economic development and transportation.

The policies, programs and projects developed over the next 20 years will create results that people can see in four key areas: the environment, climate change resilience, coastal economies and communities, and governance. Some of the actions outlined in the strategy, like new coastal zone legislation and gender inclusivity in the ocean economy, are long overdue. Others, like the cleanup of marine debris and implementation of marine plans developed under the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast, are a continuation of existing initiatives that have received broad support. A few, like the development of new metrics to account

for the ocean's true contribution to our society and the economy, represent a new approach to managing resources. As a whole, the strategy reflects government's commitment to understanding and appreciating the coastal marine environment, finding a good balance between taking and giving, and nurturing respectful relationships so that current and future generations may thrive.

We can achieve much more when we work together. Implementation of the strategy will require strong co-operation and collaboration with many First Nations and other partners, since no single government, industry sector or organization can tackle the challenges and build on the opportunities alone.



THE COASTAL MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The rugged coastline of British Columbia stretches for more than 26,000 kilometres between Alaska and Washington. The coastal marine environment, shaded blue in Figure 1, is a place of abundance. It is full of nutrients that support ecosystems and species that can thrive at the margins between ocean and land or ocean and river. Kelp forests, seagrass meadows, rocky intertidal shores, sandy beaches, mudflats, salt marshes and glass sponge reefs provide homes to thousands of plant and animal species. Many, like barnacles and sponges, are stationary and don't move around freely, while others travel great distances. North Pacific humpback whales swim hundreds of kilometres to feed in the highly productive marine waters of B.C. These "filter feeders" eat massive amounts of zooplankton and small schooling fish. Some seabirds travel over 20,000 kilometres a year along the Pacific Flyway – a major corridor for millions of migratory birds travelling between breeding grounds in the Arctic to wintering grounds in southern South America. During fall and spring migrations, marine ecosystems along B.C. provide places to rest and refuel.

The coast connects life on land with life in the open ocean. For instance, marbled murrelets – perhaps the most mysterious seabird on the Pacific coast – nest on large, wide branches of coastal old growth trees and can travel over a hundred kilometres a day between their nest sites and marine foraging areas where they hunt for small fish. The Fraser, Skeena and Nass river watersheds – along with hundreds of other rivers in the province – bring fresh water and minerals into the Pacific Ocean.

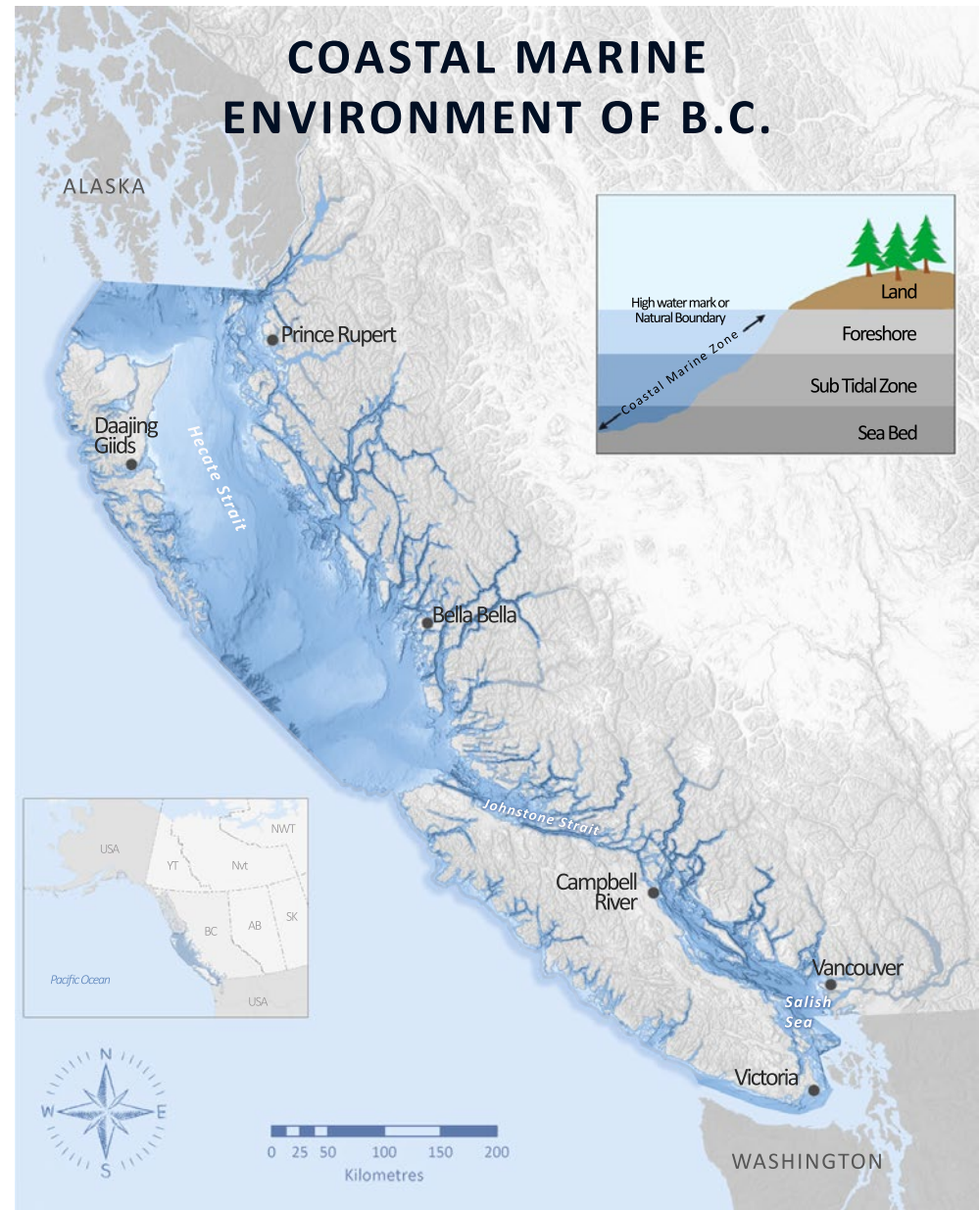


Figure 1. The strategy focuses on coastal marine waters between the borders of Alaska to the north and Washington to the south.

Coastal watersheds also receive nutrients from the sea when wild Pacific salmon return from the open ocean to spawn in rivers. Here they become food for bears and wolves that drag their catch into nearby forests, where trees are fertilized with ocean nutrients stored in the bodies of decaying salmon.

People also depend on the ocean and some coastal species, like wild Pacific salmon and orcas, are woven into cultures and histories. For millennia, Indigenous peoples have travelled up and down the coast fishing, harvesting and trading with one another. Marine animals, plants and ecosystems are vital to the identities, languages, communities, economies and knowledge systems of many First Nations in B.C. Almost half of their communities are located in coastal areas, and for these Nations, the ocean is often the primary source of healthy food for community members and the highway that keeps people in touch with relatives and neighbours.

Nearly three-quarters of the province's population lives in coastal areas where people benefit from the ocean's recreational, aesthetic, spiritual, nutritional and economic values. The ocean-based economy in British Columbia is valued at over \$21 billion, representing about eight percent of the province's gross domestic product.¹ Thousands of people in British Columbia work in fishing and mariculture, shipping and shipbuilding, ports and harbours, tourism and technology – all of which rely on coastal resources.

Many of us spend time in nature to relax, recharge and reconnect. Beachcombers, divers, recreational fishers, wildlife viewers, boaters, kayakers, surfers and paddle boarders all derive positive physical and mental health benefits from a healthy ocean.

The coast also helps keep us safe. As allies against climate change, intact coastal habitats absorb energy from incoming waves and slow down storm surge, protecting coastal communities and infrastructure from the effects of erosion, flooding, storms and natural disasters. Nearshore habitats like estuaries also trap vast amounts of carbon in water-logged soils where it can stay stored for thousands of years.

This vital coastal marine environment is also vulnerable. Regional pressures to coastal health include commercial and residential development, increased shipping activity, fishing at various intensities, the spread of invasive species, pollution and upland resource use. Global pressures include warming ocean temperatures and sea rise, deoxygenation, ocean acidification and severe weather.

A single stressor, such as pollution or overfishing, can do considerable damage. Unfortunately, the harm to habitats, species and people is cumulative and interactive. We need to address the combined effects of a changing climate and our activities on the coastal values important to people living in British Columbia. And as the demand for natural resources continues to grow, we must find ways to reduce the pressures that threaten marine life, community well-being and economic stability, so that we can help restore resilience and return to a place of abundance.

¹ Source: Big River Analytics. (2021). Economic Contribution Analysis for the Economic Contribution of the Oceans Sector in Coastal BC. Prepared for the governments of British Columbia and Canada.

What do we mean?

Ocean and sea: These terms are used interchangeably to refer to a huge body of salt water. There is one “world ocean” divided into five oceans: the Pacific (the largest), Atlantic, Indian, Southern and Arctic (the smallest). The ocean extends between the coasts of continents and is incredibly deep, with an average depth of almost four kilometres.

Coastline: Used interchangeably with shoreline, the coastline is the land along the sea. Waves, tides and currents help create coastlines.

Coastal marine: We use this term to describe the area where the coastline meets the open ocean. Water depths range from the high tide mark to thousands of metres deep. In B.C., the size of the coastal marine areas spans a few kilometres (such as the waters between Vancouver Island and the mainland) to hundreds of kilometres (such as the waters between Haida Gwaii and the Central Coast).

Stewardship: In its most basic definition, stewardship is the responsible use and protection of the environment. It is the recognition of our responsibility to care for and maintain the quality and natural function of ecosystems. Environmental stewardship includes restoration and protection, research and monitoring, community and civic action, and everyday choices.

OUR SHARED OPPORTUNITY

How we govern and interact with the environment influences how we generate benefits for society and how we can sustain these benefits. Good management begins with respect: for the natural environment, for the connections between people and place, and for responsible stewardship by all parties.

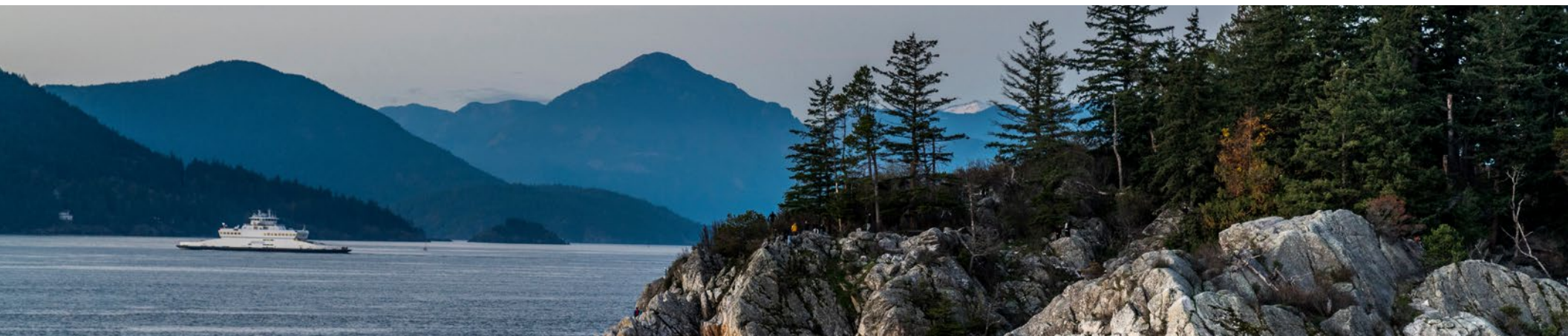
In British Columbia, coastal marine management is a complex undertaking, with many levels of government having responsibilities and interests in different ocean activities and values (Table 1). The provincial government manages and authorizes activities and uses that require access to the seabed and/or the coastline, such as aquaculture, clean energy, docks and wharves, log handling sites and underwater utilities. The provincial government is also accountable for land use planning and management (such as parks and protected areas), seafood development and aquatic plant culture and harvesting. Habitat conservation and restoration, monitoring, and emergency management are some of the ways the Province takes care of the coastal marine environment. Figure 2 illustrates a few of these provincial roles in coastal marine stewardship.

The connectivity of marine life means that we need to coordinate efforts and policies, share knowledge, expertise and resources, and build long-lasting and meaningful partnerships. Now, perhaps more than ever, we need to work together towards a common goal.

Table 1: Examples of the stewardship responsibilities across governments²

| Federal Government | First Nations Governments | Provincial Government | Local Governments |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing • Fish habitat • Finfish and shellfish aquaculture • Species at risk • Shipping • Navigation • Oil spill response • Search and rescue • Migratory birds • Environmental assessments • Protected areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and treaty rights and responsibilities as per individual First Nations • Coastal guardian and stewardship programs • Research and monitoring • Community planning • Protected Areas, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas • Community management of harvesting for food, social and ceremonial use • Oil spill response • Restoration of marine habitats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenures over seabed and foreshore (such as aquaculture) • Tourism and recreation licensing • (Sea)food safety • Marine spatial planning • Protected areas • Aquatic plants • Flood management • Environmental emergency management, such as oil spill response • Waste management and authorizations • Heritage and cultural protection • Cumulative effects management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning (such as regulating shoreline development) • Bylaws • Parks and trails • Public education |

² This table does not include an exhaustive list of responsibilities.



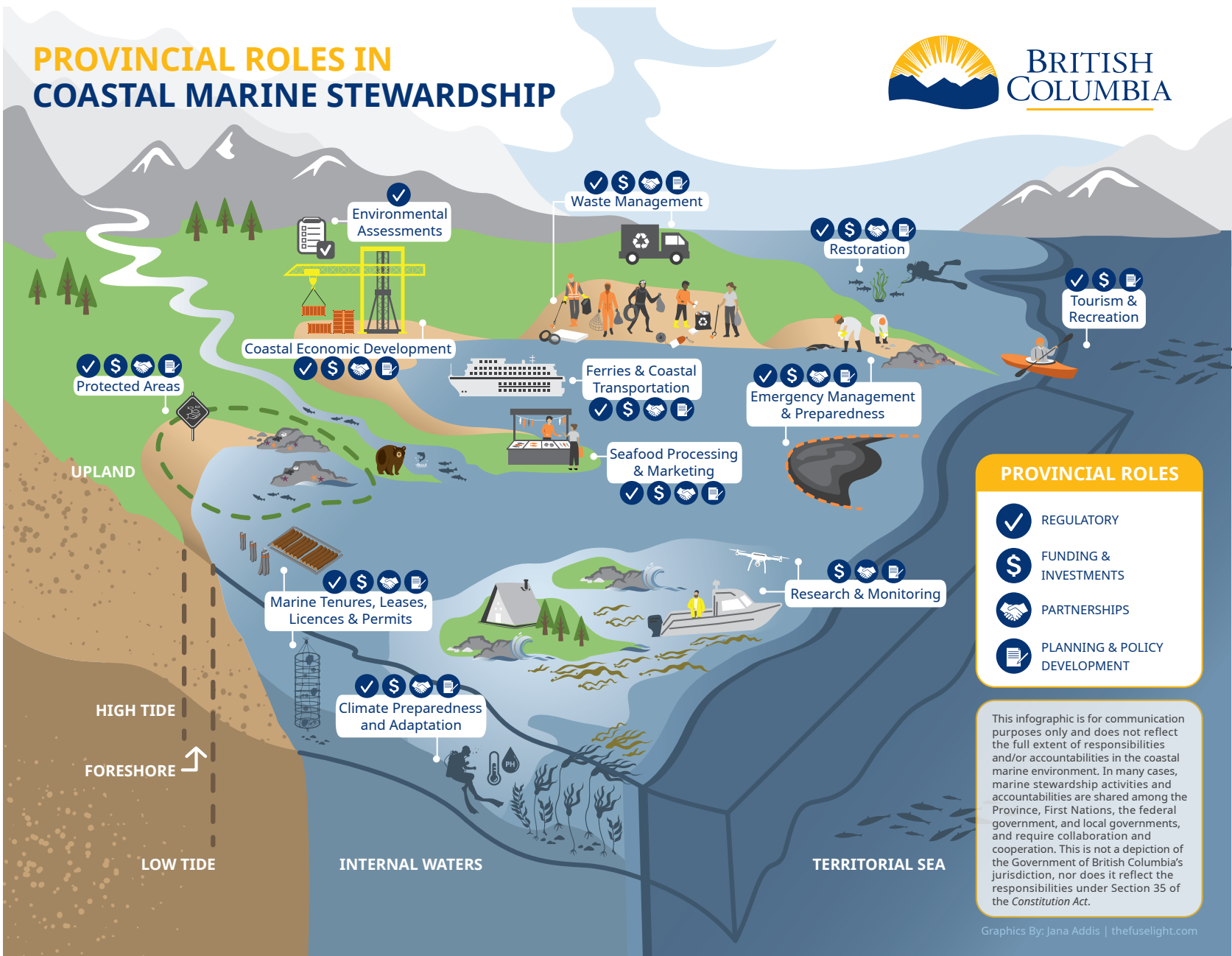


Figure 2. This illustration shows many different provincial roles in the stewardship of the coastal marine environment.



RECONCILIATION

Government policies that worked to suppress Indigenous cultures, languages, economies and systems of governance have had lasting effects on the health, well-being and wealth of Indigenous peoples in B.C. Despite this, Indigenous communities remain strong and resilient.

The Province of British Columbia recognizes that all relations with Indigenous peoples need to be based on the recognition and implementation of the right to self-determination, including the inherent right of self-government. As recognized in the Shared Priorities Framework between the Province and Modern Treaty

Nations, Modern Treaties provide a blueprint for reconciliation and a foundation for government-to-government relationships based on mutual respect and established rights. The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as a framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The Declaration Act aims to create a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous peoples while introducing better transparency and predictability in the work we do together.

Reconciliation is a cross-government priority and the Province is working in every sector, together with Indigenous peoples, to support healthy communities and create shared prosperity that benefits all British Columbians. As work continues, the provincial government is weaving Indigenous perspectives into all programs and supports it offers. This work is part of government's recognition that Indigenous peoples have unique constitutionally protected rights, interests and circumstances that must be considered when developing and implementing all government policies, including this strategy.

The Province has adopted a distinctions-based approach to advancing reconciliation and implementing the UN Declaration and the Shared Priorities Framework. A distinctions-based approach means that the Province's work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people will be conducted in a manner that acknowledges the specific rights, interests, priorities and concerns of each, while respecting and acknowledging these distinct peoples with unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, treaties and governments. The distinctions between coastal First Nations have been recognized and respected in the work to develop this strategy, and the Province will continue to apply a distinctions-based approach to engage appropriate rights holders in its implementation.





GUIDING VALUES

Values play an integral role in how we understand the world around us, choose courses of action, set goals, measure success and work together.

First Nations ethics and values will help guide our way of thinking and decision-making, helping further our shared goals for stewardship and integrating First Nations concepts and sacred teachings into policy and practice.

Shared with permission from the Nuuchahnulth-, Haida- and Tsimshian-speaking Nations, the following values remind us of the connections between land, water, animals and people, and our collective obligation and responsibility to care for and protect mother earth and each other.³ Adopting a values-based approach to our work will make it easier to navigate complexity and achieve balance and harmony. Ethical thinking leads to ethical practice, and the following values and teachings are at the foundation of this strategy.

³ Values are embedded in First Nations worldviews and philosophies and cannot be considered in isolation from one another. While First Nations in British Columbia have distinct knowledge systems and traditions, these values – expressed in First Nations distinct languages – resonate in many of their cultures. There are 34 First Nations languages in B.C.; we have not included them all here.

hišukiš čawaak⁴ (everything is one): Everything is connected, everything is one, everything depends on everything else. The well-being of communities is intricately tied to the well-being of the land and sea.

ʔiisaak⁴ (utmost respect): Respect for mother earth, for people, living things, the ocean. We take only what we need, we give thanks. Everything has a purpose, and that purpose must be respected.

Gin 'laa hl isdaa.uu⁵ (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 on to future generations.

ʔuuʔaʔuk⁴ (taking care of): Looking after, caring for the sea, the seabed, marine life, the land, our communities and our people.

4 Nuuchahnulth language.

5 Haida language, ǰaad Kil dialect.

Giid tlljuus⁶ (balance): 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 dii gii isda⁶ (giving and receiving): Reciprocity is essential in our interactions with each other and the natural world. We continually give thanks to the natural world for the gifts received.

syt güülm goot⁷ (being of one heart): Community-based sharing and distribution of resources from different areas of the territory, between families and lineages, ensures survival and nutritional balance, and sustainable harvests.

6 Haida language, ǰaayda Kil dialect.

7 Tsimshian language.





Quw'utsun snuw'uy'ulh (Cowichan Tribes' teachings)

For the Quw'utsun – which in addition to Cowichan Tribes includes the other Quw'utsun Nation communities of Lyackson First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, Halalt First Nation and Penelakut Tribe – ways of being are firmly grounded in the Hul'q'umi'num' language and the Quw'utsun snuw'uy'ulh (teachings). Hul'q'umi'num' is a language spoken on Vancouver Island from Malahat in the south to Nanoose Bay in the north, with some differences in dialect. Quw'utsun snuw'uy'ulh are central to learning from the natural world and understanding our place within it, and our responsibility to, the wider universe. These teachings have been shared by the Quw'utsun and will help guide our work together.

Mukw' stem 'o' slhihukw'tul: All things are connected.

Hwial'asmut tu Tumuhw: Take care of the earth – the air, the water, the land.

Stl'atl'um stuhw tun kwunmun: Take only what you need.

Hiiye'yutul tst 'u to' mukw' stem 'I'u tun'a tumuhw: Everything in nature is part of our family; we are all relatives.

HOW WE GOT HERE

British Columbians care deeply – and are concerned about – the health of the ocean. They want to ensure coastal ecosystems are healthy and resilient and they want to see their family, friends and neighbours prosper and succeed. These are the values that we heard expressed by participants during our in-person and online engagement sessions held in 2022 and 2023.

In keeping with government's commitment to the Shared Priorities Framework, the UN Declaration and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Province worked closely with First Nations governments and organizations to frame a meaningful, respectful and inclusive process for developing this strategy, together (Appendix A). This co-development approach acknowledged the thousands of years of First Nations economic activity, knowledge (contemporary and traditional), traditions and cultures that have evolved with the ocean. It also helped ensure that First Nations needs and priorities flow throughout this strategy.

In December 2022, the Province released a co-developed Intentions Paper for public feedback (see the timeline for development of the strategy in Appendix B). We heard from individuals, including Indigenous youth and young professionals (Figure 3), environmental non-governmental organizations, local and regional governments, First Nations governments, industry associations, unions and businesses. Hundreds of people joined the conversation and shared their ideas, personal experiences and stories of their present day and historical connections to the people and places of the coast.



There are many areas where more provincial support could make a real difference in the health of coastal ecosystems and communities. Through engagement, we learned that the top areas of interest include, in no particular order:

- Prioritizing the environment and protecting coastal ecosystems and their biodiversity
- Protecting wild Pacific salmon
- Tackling pollution in coastal and marine environments
- Addressing climate change and prioritizing climate change mitigation and resilience
- Minimizing the impacts of shipping and vessel traffic in coastal waters
- Consulting and engaging with all partners
- Respecting the importance of non-economic values in decision-making
- Supporting the economy and industry
- Assessing and managing the cumulative effects of human activities and climate change on the environment and human well-being of coastal communities
- Improving Indigenous peoples access to coastal resources and the coastal economy

- Developing and enforcing meaningful legislation
- Stepping up monitoring, information gathering and data sharing
- Advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
- Including Indigenous knowledge in decision-making

These priorities, summarized in a What We Heard Report, serve as a roadmap for this strategy, which brings together activities being taken across government, combines them with new initiatives, and complements other government policies and programs. When they're all added together, they will help to achieve a shared vision for the coast.





Figure 3. Youth and young professionals are the future of coastal marine stewardship, and it is essential that their voices are heard. In March 2023, 18 Indigenous youth from across the coast came together to share their perspectives on what a Coastal Marine Strategy should address. Their discussions, recorded graphically by Michelle Buchholz, have informed this strategy.



FUTURE VISION

Our vision is for a diverse, productive, and resilient coastal marine environment that is valued in its own right and that supports the prosperity, health and well-being of coastal communities now and into the future.

This strategy sets out nine goals organized under four themes. The 24 supporting actions work together to achieve the strategy's vision and goals.

Theme 1: Healthy coastal marine ecosystems

- Goal 1: Diverse marine life
- Goal 2: Abundant wild Pacific salmon
- Goal 3: Clean coast

Theme 2: Resilience to climate change

- Goal 4: Climate-ready communities

Theme 3: Thriving coastal economies and communities

- Goal 5: A sustainable coastal economy
- Goal 6: Vibrant coastal communities

Theme 4: Informed governance

- Goal 7: Trusting, respectful relationships
- Goal 8: A robust tool kit
- Goal 9: Integrated and balanced management



THEME 1: HEALTHY COASTAL MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

A healthy and productive coast that sustains abundant marine wildlife is the foundation from which our other aspirations evolve. Healthy and biodiverse coastal marine ecosystems are stable, vibrant and full of life; generate a range of benefits for people; and are resilient to change.

Goal 1: Diverse marine life

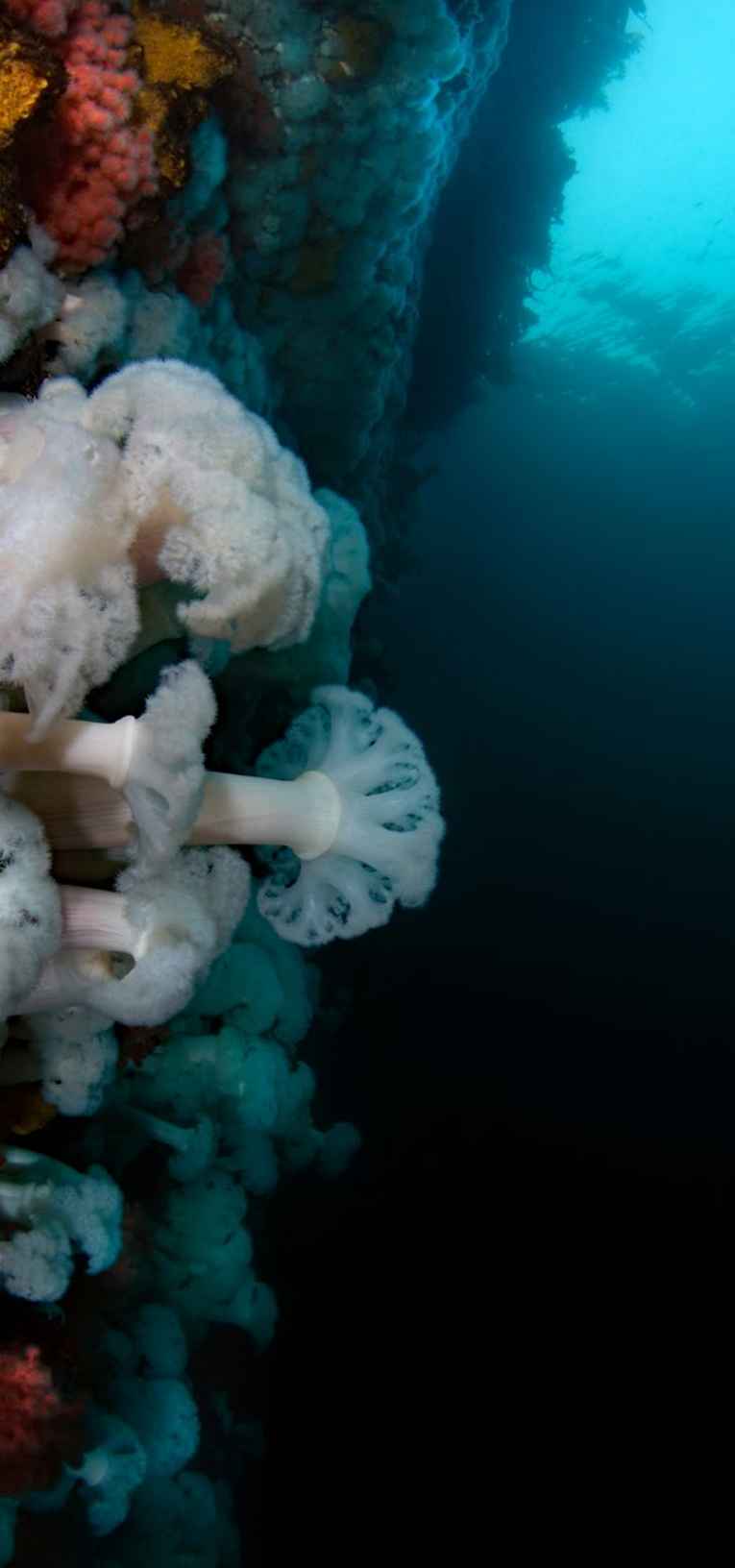
Action 1: Monitor coastal health

Responsible stewardship of the coastal marine environment requires careful and consistent monitoring. From tracking contaminants in the water and the spread of alien invasive species, to monitoring sea level rise and surveying the coastline, monitoring helps inform decisions in the best interests of coastal communities and the environment.

Governments, organizations and research institutions all play a role in ocean and coastal monitoring. Across many parts of the coast, First Nations are the eyes and ears on the water. First Nation-led initiatives such as Guardians, Watchmen and stewardship programs document changes in coastal habitats and the species that rely on them, such as crab, herring, eulachon and wild Pacific salmon. Their contemporary observations, combined with an intricate knowledge of the natural world, have greatly improved understanding of the health of nearshore habitats and their resilience to climate change, stress and disturbance.

Activities:

- Further develop or establish water quality objectives and monitoring programs in coastal areas of concern, starting with areas where pollution is impacting the growing and harvesting of food. Link monitoring results to coastal watershed planning and protection and other strategic planning processes (such as estuary management plans and stormwater management plans).



- Scale up the monitoring of coastal habitats that are critical for maintaining biodiversity, such as kelp beds, eelgrass beds, estuaries, salt marshes, and forage fish habitat and use this information to guide management decisions and planning initiatives.
 - Assess the rate of coastal habitat loss or degradation.
 - Continue to support First Nations-led programs and monitoring systems.
 - Maintain and expand partnerships with other governments, research centres and academic institutions.
 - Develop and implement a coast-wide aquatic plant research and monitoring network.
 - Expand efforts for preventing, detecting, monitoring and managing invasive aquatic plant species (such as *Spartina* spp., *Mazzaella japonica* and *Sargassum muticum*).
- Work with partners to establish a robust ecological and socioeconomic monitoring program for the Northern Shelf Bioregion Marine Protected Area Network, and report on performance assessments.



Action 2: Protect and restore nearshore ecosystems

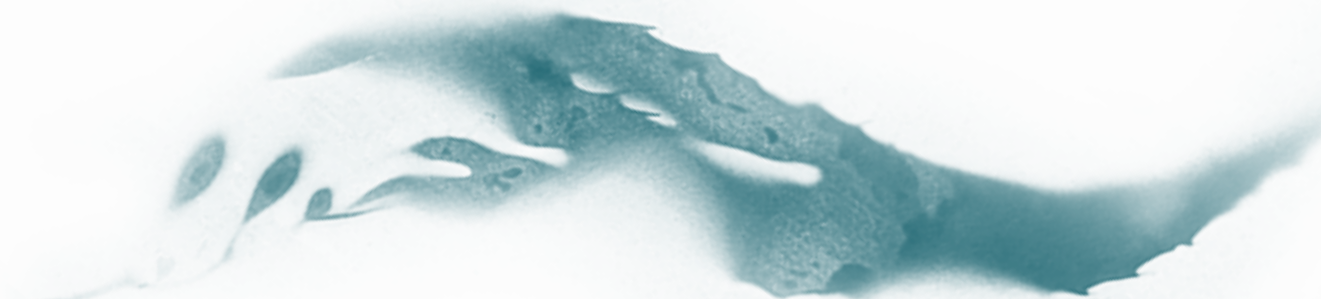
Kelp forests, eelgrass beds, sandy beaches, mud flats, salt marshes and rocky intertidal areas are critical migrating, feeding, breeding and sheltering grounds for hundreds of unique species. In addition to being sites of great biodiversity, coastal ecosystems play a vital role in enhancing climate change resiliency.

The carbon stored in coastal ecosystems is often referred to as blue carbon. Salt marshes, like the large one in Boundary Bay, are blue carbon ecosystems, as are eelgrass beds in estuaries. Blue carbon ecosystems can capture and store up to five times more carbon than trees and plants in a similar-sized area on land. When a blue carbon ecosystem is degraded or lost, stored carbon is released, contributing to climate change. Conserving and restoring blue carbon ecosystems are therefore important actions we can take to mitigate and adapt to climate change and support biodiversity.

Representative examples of nearshore habitat types are included in the Canada-B.C.-First Nations plan for a marine protected area network in the Northern Shelf bioregion. The Province is committed to collaboratively implementing this plan to protect biodiversity and maintain these vital ecosystems.

Activities:

- Collate information on the status of estuaries across B.C. and support initiatives to increase the number and scope of estuary protection and restoration projects.
- Protect nearshore habitats from the impacts of small vessel anchoring and mooring buoys, in collaboration with First Nations, federal and local governments.
- Explore establishing innovative protected area models for the coastal marine environment in collaboration with interested First Nations and the federal government, including the use of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, to help realize shared objectives for marine and coastal areas.
- Assist in the collation of information on the location and status of intertidal spawning habitat for forage fish (sand lance and surf smelt), support additional forage fish habitat spawning surveys and help to encourage citizen involvement in habitat conservation.
- Co-develop and implement climate-informed management plans for marine parks and protected areas established under provincial legislation, beginning with sites identified in the marine protected area network action plan in the Northern Shelf bioregion.



Taking Care of Lands and Waters

The health of coastal habitats and the species that rely upon them are influenced by both terrestrial and marine conditions. The steps we're taking with others to improve the stewardship of forests, fresh water and watersheds will benefit the ocean and the communities that are closely tied to it. Here are a few of the initiatives underway.

- The Watershed Security Strategy will lead the changes needed to create a future where our watersheds are better cared for and stewarded together.
- The B.C. Flood Strategy provides a unifying vision on priorities to improve resilience to coastal, riverine, local stormwater and groundwater flood events.
- The B.C. Biodiversity Ecosystem Health Framework sets the stage for a transformational shift in resource management. Under the framework, conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity will be prioritized.
- The Conservation Financing Mechanism, a partnership launched by the Province and the BC Parks Foundation, aims to address biodiversity loss and improve climate security through activities related to the conservation and protection of lands, ongoing stewardship and guardianship measures led or supported by First Nations, and support for low-carbon economic opportunities.
- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation is a first-of-its-kind agreement between B.C., Canada and the First Nations Leadership Council to protect and conserve biodiversity, habitats and species at risk in the province. With \$1 billion in joint federal and provincial funding, the agreement enables action rooted in recognition of First Nations title and rights to reach B.C.'s and Canada's goal of protecting 30 percent of lands and waters in B.C. by 2030.
- The 2016 *Great Bear Rainforest Land Use Order and Great Bear Rainforest (Forest Management) Act* will conserve 85 percent of the forest and 70 percent of old growth over time, achieving a high level of ecological integrity.
- In 2019, the governments of B.C. and Canada launched the five-year, \$142.85-million B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund. In response to the program's success, the fund doubled in size in 2022 and was extended to 2026. Projects across the province have brought tangible benefits to wild salmon and their freshwater and marine habitats, the fishing and seafood sectors, and coastal communities.
- Shared stewardship agreements between B.C. and First Nations accomplish many goals that benefit all British Columbians. For example, modern treaties include provisions to monitor lands and waters under long-standing cultural laws, restore watersheds, and protect fish and aquatic plant habitat. Collaborative stewardship forums in the North Coast support land use planning, compliance and enforcement, and monitoring of watershed and wildlife (such as caribou, moose, stone sheep and mountain goat).



Action 3: Help recover species at risk

Many marine species found in the coastal marine waters of British Columbia are endangered, threatened or of special concern, including resident killer whales, some Pacific salmon populations, basking sharks, sixgill sharks, great blue herons, Olympia oysters, northern abalones, several rockfish species and marbled murrelets.

The federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) provides protection to species in danger of disappearing. Recovery plans for SARA-listed species can include interventions meant to improve the survival of individuals (such as fisheries restrictions) and the protection of some habitat critical to a population (such as establishing sanctuary zones).

Responsibility for the conservation of wildlife is shared among the governments, and the Province will do its part to help in the recovery of coastal marine species at risk.

Activities:

- Continue to work with partners to improve outcomes for species listed under the *Species at Risk Act* (such as continued participation in the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force).
- Contribute to status assessments of coastal marine species in decline and the development and implementation of appropriate measures to conserve and protect marine species at risk.





Goal 2: Abundant wild Pacific salmon

Action 4: Improve salmon survival

The overall abundance and diversity of wild Pacific salmon has declined since the 1950s, and many populations are at an all-time low. The causes are complex and are thought to include water quality and quantity, harvesting, predation, availability of prey, industrial use in nearshore environments, forestry operations and land use decisions in salmon-spawning watersheds. Changing hydrologic and ocean conditions as a result of climate change are also stressing maturing and adult salmon.

Salmon can spend anywhere between one to seven years of their lives feeding and growing in the ocean. Their ocean phase is one of the least understood parts of their lives, but we do know that some salmon species, like chinook and pink, are sparsely distributed throughout the ocean and migrate vast distances as they feed and mature. Others, like coho and chum, prefer to stay in coastal waters.

Adult salmon accumulate almost all their weight in the ocean, where they prey on plankton, copepods, herring, smelt, sand lance, shrimp, krill, squid and other species. Estuaries and coastal wetlands are crucial to the survival of young smolts. While allowing their bodies to adjust to new saltier conditions, salmon take shelter in shallower estuarine waters and feed heavily to boost their chances of survival in the ocean.

Extensive conservation and fisheries management measures have helped slow the decline of salmon populations, although some are responding better than others. Sustained, transformative action building on previous and ongoing initiatives is needed to protect wild salmon populations. A collaborative approach that weaves together the work of First Nations, the federal government, citizens, industry, stewardship groups and stakeholders is our best chance for addressing the complex and cumulative threats facing wild salmon populations.

Activities:

- Develop and implement management plans for salmon habitat in estuaries that include designated conservation areas, robust monitoring, and recovery and restoration.
- Connect habitat protection and restoration in the coastal marine environment with salmon habitat protection and restoration in upland aquatic and terrestrial habitats, following holistic principles that value all forms of knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Sponsor research and monitoring that elevates our understanding of marine survival rates for salmon, focusing on the:
 - Distribution of maturing and adult salmon.
 - Availability of suitable prey (such as zooplankton, shrimp, krill, sand lance, herring and squid).
 - Threats to survival (such as invasive species, pinniped predation, loss of critical habitat and pollution).
 - Impacts of climate change to salmon and salmon prey.
- Recognize wild Pacific salmon as a priority marine feature when licensing marine activity. Develop a consistent framework for prioritizing consideration of the potential ecological and sociocultural impacts of an activity or use on wild salmon when making decisions on provincial Crown land in the coastal marine environment.
- Assess the feasibility of establishing First Nations-led “salmon sanctuaries at sea” under provincial legislation and connect these at-sea sanctuaries with First Nations-led salmon parks in watersheds.
- Report on provincially led conservation actions and outcomes every five years.
- Continue working through international treaty processes with other governments to advocate for better harvest data from Alaska and reduced bycatch of B.C.-origin fish in Alaska’s wild salmon fishery.
- Maintain support for Canada’s Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative, which is leading transformative change in how wild salmon are managed.





Goal 3: Clean coast

Action 5: Prevent marine pollution

Marine debris is a long-standing and growing problem, and while it appears in many forms, most marine debris is plastic. Plastic can be produced in a wide variety of forms and used in different ways, from water bottles and disposable medical supplies to food packaging, clothing and fishing gear. Globally, it's thought that more than 20 million tonnes of plastic waste end up in the ocean every year. About 80 percent of this plastic is estimated to come from land-based sources, with the remaining 20 percent coming from boats and other marine sources. Marine debris also includes polystyrene foam (such as Styrofoam), cigarette stubs and filters, rope, nets, glass, metal and rubber.

There are other forms of pollution that impact human and ecosystem health. These include fertilizer from our yards, runoff from farmland and city streets, waste from industry, poorly treated or untreated wastewater, and failing septic systems. Human-caused noise pollution is a problem for marine mammals, seabirds and fish, disrupting their ability to navigate, mate, feed and escape predators. Vessel discharge and oil spills are a significant concern and given that B.C. is part of a major shipping corridor between Asia and North America, response preparedness is crucial to protecting the province's complex coastline.

Marine pollution degrades the beauty of our shorelines, contaminates our seafood, creates navigation hazards, injures or kills wildlife, and damages marine habitat. It can impact the exercise of Aboriginal and treaty rights, and can threaten the health and safety, well-being, economic livelihood, and food security of coastal First Nations and other coastal communities reliant on a healthy ocean. Pollution is everyone's problem, and we all have a role to play in preventing it.

Activities:

- Address gaps in provincial policy and legislation around point and non-point sources of pollution.
- Develop changes to marine tenure licence application requirements and adopt best management practices to prevent pollution, in collaboration with the federal government where required.
- Make targeted investments in research and technology to speed up the adoption of greener practices that reduce plastic pollution, improve wastewater and stormwater treatment and decrease reliance on polystyrene.
- Prohibit the use of polystyrene in future marine infrastructure construction and collaborate with the federal government to promote replacing existing polystyrene marine floats with environmentally friendly alternatives.
- Boost support for projects that prevent marine debris through outreach and education experiences that deepen understanding of the issue and encourage and support changes in behaviour.
- Continue to examine the life cycle of boats to identify waste prevention, reduction and end-of-life opportunities.
- Engage with First Nations and the federal government to develop a framework for marine incident preparedness, response and recovery for the south coast of B.C., modelled after the framework developed in the north.
- Develop and implement post-spill environmental monitoring and clean-up standards for coastal shorelines and areas under provincial jurisdiction. Provide more support to First Nations for shoreline cleanup and assessment technique training.

Action 6: Clean up marine pollution

Pollution is persistent. Plastics do not easily degrade in the ocean, and they can accumulate in the environment for centuries. Similarly, persistent synthetic chemical pollutants (known as “forever chemicals”) have very long half-lives and can stick around for decades after they enter aquatic environments. Both microplastics and chemical pollutants are now commonly found in orcas and other marine mammals in B.C.

Another type of marine debris commonly found in our coastal waters is abandoned or derelict vessels, which are aground, broken apart, sunken or in dilapidated condition. They can damage infrastructure; disrupt First Nations cultural uses, interfere with navigation and recreation, pose safety concerns, become eyesores to look at, smother valuable habitat and impact water quality. More than 1,400 abandoned or derelict vessels are awaiting cleanup in the coastal marine waters of B.C.

Since pollution is persistent, we must continue our efforts to clean it up. B.C. is building a circular economy focused on sharing, reusing, repairing and recycling materials to eliminate waste, pollution and emissions. Everyone needs to be a part of the solution, and small actions can make a big difference. Every bottle, tire, barrel, piece of foam and derelict vessel removed and sorted can help “close the loop” and minimize waste.

Activities:

- Develop a long-term vision for the Clean Coast, Clean Waters initiative that supports the prevention, cleanup, monitoring, removal, recycling and disposal of polluting marine debris and derelict vessels while providing employment opportunities in coastal communities.
- Support additional coastal cleanups of plastics and debris, including actions to address abandoned and derelict trespass structures and derelict vessels in the intertidal zone.
- Inventory degraded sites along the coast and prioritize remediation of sites to address local concerns around contaminants from residential and industrial uses (such as leaky septic fields, abandoned mines and historic log handling sites).

Clean Coast, Clean Waters

In 2020, B.C. coastal First Nations, local governments, non-profits, organizations and businesses tackled marine debris cleanup projects under B.C.'s Clean Coast, Clean Waters initiative. In just three years, 1,500 tonnes of plastics pollution were removed from over 4,600 kilometres of coastline, while creating job opportunities in rural communities. Long before this initiative was launched, volunteers have sponsored coastal cleanups across the province, collecting valuable data as they bring communities together to make a positive difference.





THEME 2: RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is altering the temperature, chemistry and circulation of ocean water. It is shifting how and where ice is formed and distributed and leading to rising sea levels. These systemic changes have critical impacts on biodiversity and the lives and livelihoods of people, and the impacts are expected to become more severe over the coming decades. To withstand the challenges of climate change – and to thrive – we need climate resilience. Resilience is about preparing, recovering from and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Goal 4: Climate-ready communities

Action 7: Improve understanding

The climate is changing. Wind and precipitation patterns are more variable, and fires, droughts, floods and other extreme weather events are occurring more frequently. Sea levels are changing around the globe as ice caps melt, causing fluctuations along the coast of B.C. Sea surface temperatures are rising and ocean waters are becoming more acidic and carrying less oxygen. Warmer temperatures are altering the geographic distribution of some species and opening new pathways for marine invasive species. These changes ripple through the entire ocean ecosystem, impacting marine life and people.

Communities and businesses across B.C. will experience the effects of climate change in the ocean differently. First Nations and coastal communities are disproportionately affected since their cultures, livelihoods and food security are intertwined with the ocean. Damage to, disappearance of, or loss of access to sacred and cultural sites, harvesting areas and coastal routes due to extreme weather events and flooding are matters of deep concern, as are changes in the quantity, quality and timing of harvested species. Traditionally harvested seafood is fundamental to the diet, nutritional health and overall well-being of First Nations. Seafood connects many First Nations to their landscape, ancestors and very existence as peoples.

Communities are the first line of response to severe weather events and disasters and play a critical role in applying policies and strategies to help prevent and manage climate risks. While some impacts of climate change will affect all communities, other changes pose different levels of risk based on where we live. At the same time, the needs and capacities of rural, remote communities are different from those of urban centres.



Activities:

- Expand our collective understanding of climate risks to coastal communities, ecosystems and economies through monitoring, research, data acquisition, modelling and vulnerability studies. Work with government partners to enhance and support the climate resilience of coastal communities.
- Identify and help to address the disparities among coastal communities in their capacity to respond to changing ocean conditions in partnership with First Nations, federal and local governments.
- Continue to investigate the role of aquatic vegetation in mitigating ocean acidification, buffering against storm surge, storing carbon and contributing to carbon sequestration.
- Help provide the information needed to develop or update regional climate action plans.
- Assess climate risks to seafood and the marine species that serve as bioindicators of abundance and health (such as phytoplankton and top predators).
- Commission a report that examines the ability of provincial marine protected areas to enhance ecosystem resilience to climate change impacts.
- Work with partners to improve rapid response capabilities to unanticipated biodiversity/fisheries emergencies, such as sea star wasting disease, harmful algal blooms, sudden rapid population growth of invasive species and kelp forest collapse.
- Map the current and projected future habitat space for seagrass meadows, salt marshes and kelp forests along the coast, and address data needs in current distribution mapping and future habitat suitability models. Set appropriate targets for restoration.
- Identify coastal tourism areas at risk from sea level rise, land subsidence, sediment deficit and coastal flooding.
- Continue to implement the actions in the BC Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Action Plan.





Vital signs of the ocean: Temperature, pH and oxygen

Rising temperatures and falling pH and oxygen levels are having a significant impact on the ocean and the life it supports.

The average sea surface temperature has increased by 0.7°C since 1880, putting stress on species that depend on colder water, such as kelp and salmon. In 2023, surface temperatures in a warm water mass off the coast of B.C. were up to five degrees higher than usual. This extreme heat can cause extreme weather, contribute to faster-melting ice caps and threaten all marine life – from tiny plankton to whales.

Ocean acidification is a global problem with local impacts. Ocean acidity, measured on a pH scale, has increased by an estimated 25 percent since the Industrial Revolution. For marine species that build shells and skeletons, this increased acidity has “osteoporosis-like” effects. Under severe conditions, skeletons and shells can dissolve faster than they can form. Marine ecosystems will likely become less vibrant and diverse.

Hypoxia refers to low or depleted dissolved oxygen conditions that can cause die-offs of fish, shellfish and aquatic plants. It is often associated with the overgrowth of certain species of algae arising from nutrient pollution. While the amount of oxygen in water fluctuates naturally, changes in global and regional climates have the potential to make coastal and marine ecosystems even more vulnerable to hypoxic conditions.

In 2023, the Province completed the British Columbia Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Plan. In 2024, the Province provided funding to begin implementing high-priority actions identified in the plan, such as research to improve the scientific understanding of acidification and hypoxia, advancing marine carbon removal technologies, and developing and testing acidification and hypoxia mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Action 8: Support First Nations climate action

First Nations are global leaders in climate action. Supporting First Nations climate leadership is central to advancing reconciliation and self-determination. Many First Nations governments and organizations have climate action strategies that align with provincial initiatives and policy directives. The Province will continue to collaborate with First Nations to develop innovative, long-term climate action solutions that improve our collective ability to adapt to changing coastal conditions.

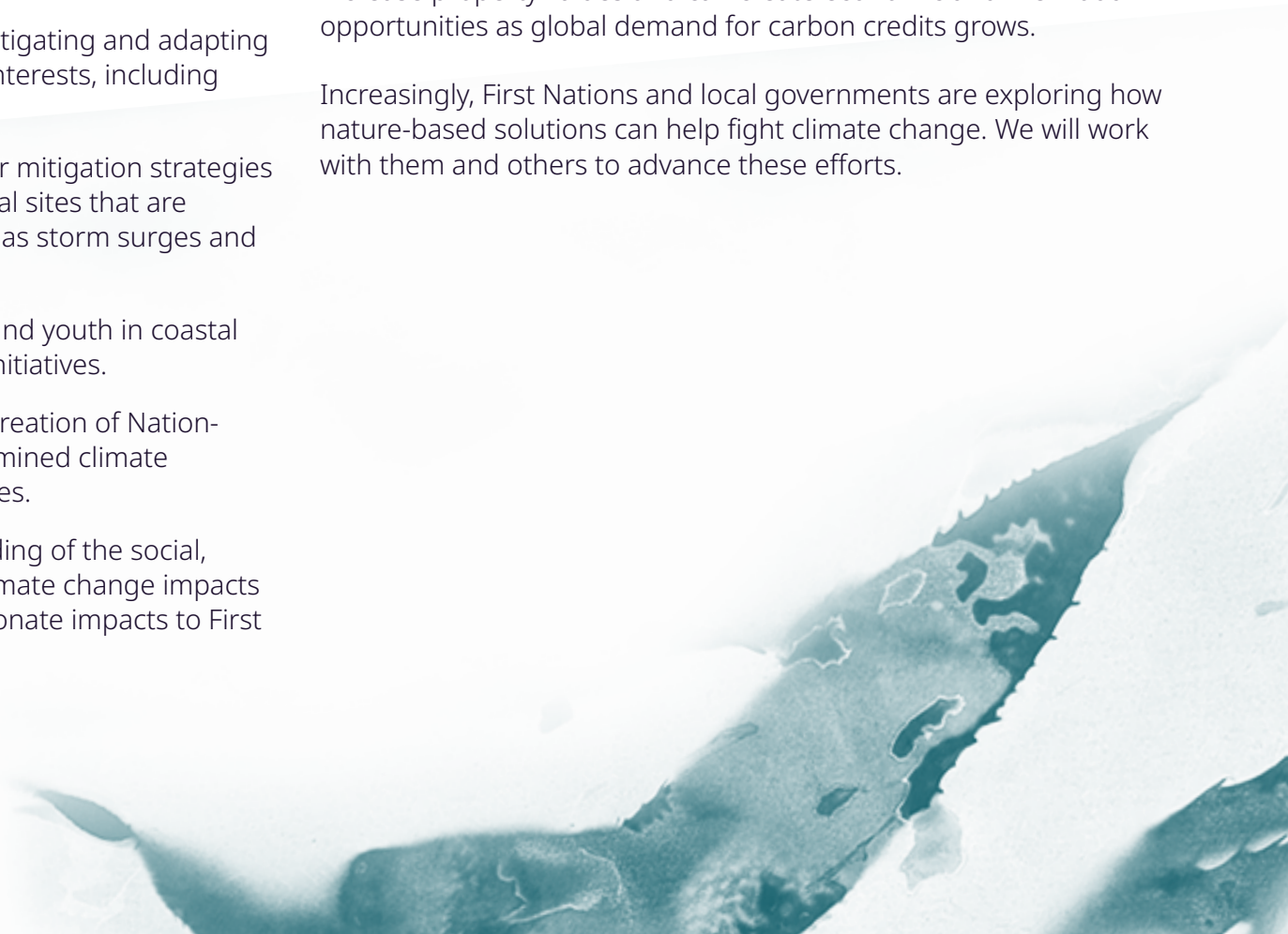
Activities:

- Support First Nations-led approaches to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change on their interests, including traditional coastal foods and food systems.
- Support First Nations-led adaptation and/or mitigation strategies for coastal sacred, cultural and archeological sites that are vulnerable to climate change impacts such as storm surges and sea level rise.
- Hold space for Elders, knowledge holders and youth in coastal marine climate discussions and response initiatives.
- With interested First Nations, support the creation of Nation-specific climate terminology and self-determined climate responses grounded in traditional languages.
- Enhance public knowledge and understanding of the social, cultural and economic consequences of climate change impacts on coastal ecosystems and the disproportionate impacts to First Nations on the coast.

Action 9: Incorporate nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions are cost-effective actions designed to conserve, sustainably manage and restore blue carbon ecosystems to address climate change. These solutions can include protecting living shorelines (such as native beach grass and sedges), applying green stormwater management techniques and protecting and restoring wetlands and estuaries. Nature-based solutions prevent pollution, reduce impacts from storm surge and wind-blown flooding, help avoid habitat loss through “coastal squeeze” and attract and sustain wildlife. They add recreational benefits, increase property values and can create economic and livelihood opportunities as global demand for carbon credits grows.

Increasingly, First Nations and local governments are exploring how nature-based solutions can help fight climate change. We will work with them and others to advance these efforts.



Activities:

- Investigate and consider incentives to homeowners and developers to maintain or restore natural shorelines (such as through grants and rebates, tax relief and permitting efficiencies).
- Improve access to Green Shores training, education and technical support to help homeowners, developers and local governments implement nature-based solutions to a high standard. Explore the establishment of a First Nations Green Shores working group to bring an Indigenous lens to the program.
- Support research to better understand the benefits of nature-based solutions for addressing climate impacts along shorelines.
- Expand the implementation of B.C.'s expedited permit process for nature-based shoreline projects.
- Replace hard armoured approaches with soft shoreline stabilization techniques in coastal marine parks and protected areas managed by the provincial government, where appropriate.





THEME 3: THRIVING COASTAL ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

A thriving coastal economy is a diverse web of sustainable activity. Fishing, marine tourism and recreation, aquaculture, water transportation, coastal forestry operations, research and monitoring, and boatbuilding and repair provide stable employment opportunities. Young people have the education and resources they need to build a future in the communities they grew up in. Infrastructure is in place to support traditional livelihoods and entrepreneurial thinking.

Thriving coastal communities are resilient and self-reliant. They can meet the basic needs of all members. They encourage social and economic development, inspire learning, maintain cultural identities and provide access and connection to nature. They are places where families have enough nutritious food to eat, and where everyone is included.

Goal 5: A sustainable coastal economy

Action 10: Nurture coastal wealth and health

There's growing interest worldwide in the transformative power of the blue economy. By focusing on long-term sustainability, the blue economy prioritizes ocean-based activities that benefit the ocean and communities. Blue economies can increase food and energy production, improve the quality of jobs in the ocean sector, and benefit millions of people – while minimizing pressure on ecosystems.

Blue economies are not created by themselves. Long-term strategies are needed to pursue a balanced economic mix that is mindful of local social objectives and preferences, and includes greater First Nations participation and sharing in the wealth generated.

Activities:

- Identify specific opportunities for blue growth in partnership with other governments and stakeholders.
- Continue to invest in emerging conservation and restoration economies that provide significant benefits for communities and ecosystems, including job creation, economic prosperity, social empowerment, cultural vitality and biodiversity conservation.
- Guide and support coastal tourism development that puts an equal focus on wealth generation and the well-being of people and places. For example:
 - Develop a shared vision for a thriving marine tourism sector that gives back to nature and communities and is respectful of First Nations values and interests.
 - Assess opportunities and challenges for sustainable growth.
 - Support marine tourism operators' transition to energy-efficient, carbon-neutral modes of transportation.



- Develop new guidelines for coast-reliant sectors, such as commercial sport fishing, forestry, aquaculture and wildlife viewing, to align operations with the principles of a blue economy.⁸
- Use a consistent and standardized approach to assess the current condition of a selection of key provincial- and regional-scale coastal marine values, in collaboration with other governments. Apply the results of these evaluations to:
 - Help assess existing or potential cumulative effects.
 - Inform project assessments and decision-making on authorizations.
 - Support the development of new local and regional marine plans and implement existing ones.

Action 11: Build talent

A healthy ocean has the potential to support sustainable growth and new jobs. Advances in aquaculture, ocean technology, shipping and renewable energy are expected to contribute to the growth of the national blue economy – and we'll need individuals with relevant education and up-to-date skills to stay at the forefront of these advances. The blue economy needs people with education and training in areas that include marine biology, environmental monitoring, mechanics, marine vessel operation, systems engineering and data analysis.

To ensure that B.C. remains competitive and achieves the full potential of ocean-related industries, it is vital to prepare the

⁸ Principles of a blue economy are not strictly defined but can include prioritizing ocean health; recognizing and including First Nations knowledge, interests and values; acknowledging and addressing links between the ocean and climate; promoting equitable opportunities and gender equality; and supporting science, technology and innovation.

workforce. This will require an improved understanding of the barriers that historically marginalized groups face in acquiring specific sector-relevant education, knowledge and skills training.

Activities:

- Identify and reduce the skills gaps between education on offer and labour market needs now and into the future.
- Help create a positive perception of the ocean sector and the opportunities it presents to youth and those interested in upgrading their skills.
- Explore increasing coastal and marine-based education opportunities, certification programs and skills training in partnership with First Nations, learning institutions and the private sector.

Action 12: Diversify the workforce

The ocean economy contributes over \$21 billion to provincial gross domestic product (GDP) and employs over 196,000 people full time.⁹ But not everyone has had the same opportunity to benefit. Some face barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources in the ocean economy based on age, Indigeneity, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender identity and gender expression, nationality, race and/or sexual orientation. Some of these inequities are systemic, while others are created by conditions in the workplace (such as facilities, hiring strategies and cultural understanding).

Equitable access to employment – irrespective of age, gender, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status – is central to achieving a sustainable economy. Individuals of all

⁹ GDP and employment figures represent direct, indirect and induced contributions within the 2018 reference year, quoted in 2020 prices. Source: Big River Analytics. (2021).



backgrounds and experiences bring different perspectives that lead to innovative solutions and new discoveries. Without all voices, management decisions, for example, cannot consider all knowledge of, and effects on, marine ecosystems and people.

Activities:

- Identify the types of inequities prevalent in the ocean sector's labour force and determine the actions needed to make spaces for everyone. Apply intersectional lenses to understand compounding factors.
- Address inequities with directed policies and practices that explicitly improve social and economic equity in relation to people's use of the ocean.
- Partner with coastal First Nations to develop a blue economy, workforce and business climate that supports greater leadership, inclusion and participation of First Nations.

Action 13: Support commercial harvests

The wild fish, shellfish and aquatic plants harvested in the waters of B.C. are an important source of food, jobs and community benefits. Over 190 seafood species are harvested here, and getting seafood products from boats and farms to plates involves the hard work of 10,000 directly employed people.¹⁰

Recently, the long-term viability of commercial harvesting of some species in British Columbia has come into question. Challenges include declines in the health and abundance of some fish stocks, barriers to accessing fish, harvester conflicts, increasing regulations and aging or insufficient infrastructure. Although fisheries are managed by the federal government, the provincial government can do a lot to support fishers.

¹⁰ Employment figures represent direct full-time-equivalent jobs across the seafood sector for 2018. Source: Big River Analytics. (2021).

Activities:

- Increase participation with the federal government in managing fisheries and advocate for:
 - Introduction of Atlantic-type fisheries policies (such as owner-operator and fleet separation) to restore and strengthen the economic viability of B.C.'s harvesting sector, attract and retain new entrants from diverse backgrounds, support robust food systems and improve the distribution of benefits to local and First Nations economies and communities.
 - Better access to capital to address issues related to the high cost of entry into a fishery.
 - Addressing socioeconomic and fish stock data needs to inform better decision-making.
 - Greater transparency of science, data and decision-making.
 - Enhanced First Nations presence and participation in international fisheries treaty negotiations and transboundary issues.
- Develop a plan to evaluate and meet critical coastal infrastructure needs (like ice plants, live storage tanks, offloading stations, seafood processing plants, seaweed plant processing and wharves).
- Reinstate key data collation and reporting on harvest, landed value, wholesale value, and international export values and markets from the former provincial "Seafood Year in Review" report.
- Co-develop with First Nations a vision for effectively and sustainably managing the commercial aquatic plant harvest industry.

Pacific versus Atlantic fisheries

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada has differing approaches to commercial fisheries policy in the Atlantic and Pacific regions of Canada. In Atlantic Canada, policies and laws ensure that a majority of licences are held by independent owner-operated fleets who meet regional residency requirements. This model tends to lead to economic and social benefits being retained more directly by local harvesters and coastal communities.

In contrast, fisheries in the Pacific region don't have ownership restrictions and, consequently, there is a higher degree of corporate and foreign ownership of fishing licences and seafood processing plants. The higher costs of licences and quotas on the West Coast (relative to the East Coast) may be excluding ownership by local harvesters and First Nations.



Goal 6: Vibrant coastal communities

Action 14: Help restore First Nations traditional (sea)food systems

Many First Nations have been vocal about the challenges they experience with food sovereignty and security and the impacts to well-being when communities are disconnected from their traditional food systems. Government regulations, land use decisions, climate change, pollution and other challenges can alter First Nations access to areas important for harvesting, teaching and healing as well as their ability to practise traditional resource management and harvesting methods (such as sea gardens, harvest wheels, fish traps and weirs and estuarine root gardens).¹¹ These same challenges also impact the quantity and quality of traditional foods, which include a diversity of nutritious plant and animal species that are harvested, cultivated, taken care of, prepared, preserved, shared or traded based on values of respect, reciprocity and ecological sensibility. Wild Pacific salmon, kelp, herring roe, eulachon and clams are just some examples of the foods that are important to coastal First Nations health and well-being.

Upholding or strengthening generational participation in cultural harvesting practices at the individual, family and community levels is key to First Nations food sovereignty and security. The provincial government is committed to reconnecting First Nations knowledge and value systems with food systems, deepening collective awareness of self-sustaining Indigenous food systems, and improving access to traditional foods harvested from the ocean.

¹¹ The right to fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes is protected under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Modern Treaty Nations have rights to fish that are protected under their treaties, and fishing is integral to Modern Treaty Nations and their economies. Fishing rights are also integral to historic treaties and these rights are constitutionally protected.



Activities:

- Support the development and implementation of community-level, climate-informed food sovereignty visions/plans focused on reclaiming ancestral seafoods and building food resiliency.
- Ensure consideration of First Nations access to traditional seafoods in planning processes and land use decisions (such as tenures, permits and licences).
- Make it easier for First Nations to access the technical capital needed to harvest traditional foods (such as boats, mooring infrastructure, processing facilities, transportation, technology and communication).
- Take steps to reduce marine-based sources of pollution that directly impact the safety of traditional shellfish harvesting areas and marine terrestrial foods.
- Co-create a “Healthy Shellfish Initiative” with First Nations partners, modelled off successful programs and pollution correction legislation in Washington State. Set specific goals for remediation, in partnership with others. Identify pilot projects that can inform a coast-wide program flexible enough to meet distinct needs.
- Advocate for changes to the federal Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program, including more funding to support increased water quality testing and pollution remediation.

Harvesting in sync with the seasons

First Nations rely on their generations-old knowledge of seasons and plant and animal life cycles to anticipate the harvest times for foods, materials and medicines. Often, this intimate knowledge of place is brought together visually in the form of a “harvest wheel” – like the one developed by the Nisga’a Lisims government and shown on the next page (Figure 4). The traditional names of the months reflect seasonal relationships with the land. In the Nisga’a language, the month of March is known as X̱SAAK – literally, “to eat oolichans.” X̱SAAK is the time of year when saak (oolichans) return to fresh waters to spawn, marking the beginning of Hobiye (Nisga’a new year), the end of winter foods and the start of feasting. The sophisticated monitoring, harvesting and storing systems developed for oolichan and hundreds of other traditional foods requires close observations of land and sea – the appearance of flowers, the calls of migrating birds, the behaviour of insects or the flow of water. With disruptions in the timing and abundance of seasonal foods, traditional practices are disrupted too, challenging the ability of First Nations to maintain and honour their ancestral ways and teachings.



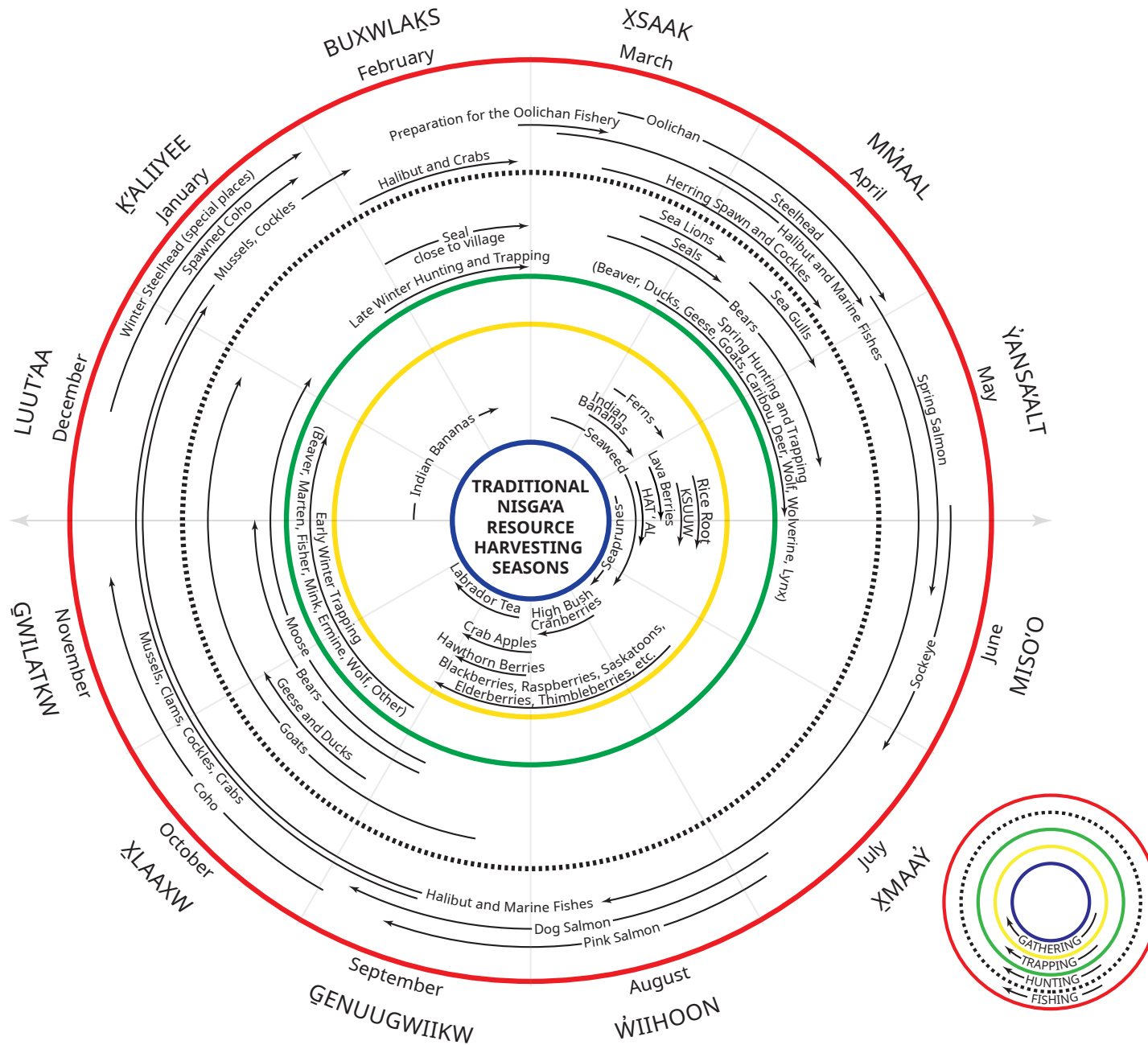


Figure 4. A harvest wheel depicting Nisga'a harvesting seasons. Shared with permission from the Nisga'a Lisims Government.

Action 15: Expand sustainable seafood production

No one should have to go to bed worrying about how they will get their next meal or feed their families. Yet food insecurity is a serious public health issue. Seafood can play an essential role in food production and fighting hunger and malnutrition.

Just over half of the fish harvested commercially in B.C. is caught in the wild, including halibut, prawn, crab, wild geoduck and tuna. The other half is grown in aquaculture facilities up and down the coast. Scallops, oysters, mussels, kelp and salmon are some examples of the species farmed in B.C. Like commercial fishing, aquaculture can boost economic growth in coastal and rural areas, providing year-round jobs, supporting resilient working waterfronts, and generating employment in areas such as seafood processing and equipment manufacturing.

The largest gains in seafood production will likely come from aquaculture. Bivalve shellfish and marine plants, including algae, offer a particularly high development potential, and since they don't need added food, they put less pressure on other resources. Key species of promise include native cockles, scallops and kelp.

To be able to confidently expand their operations, seafood harvesters and producers need strong and clear support from governments.

Activities:

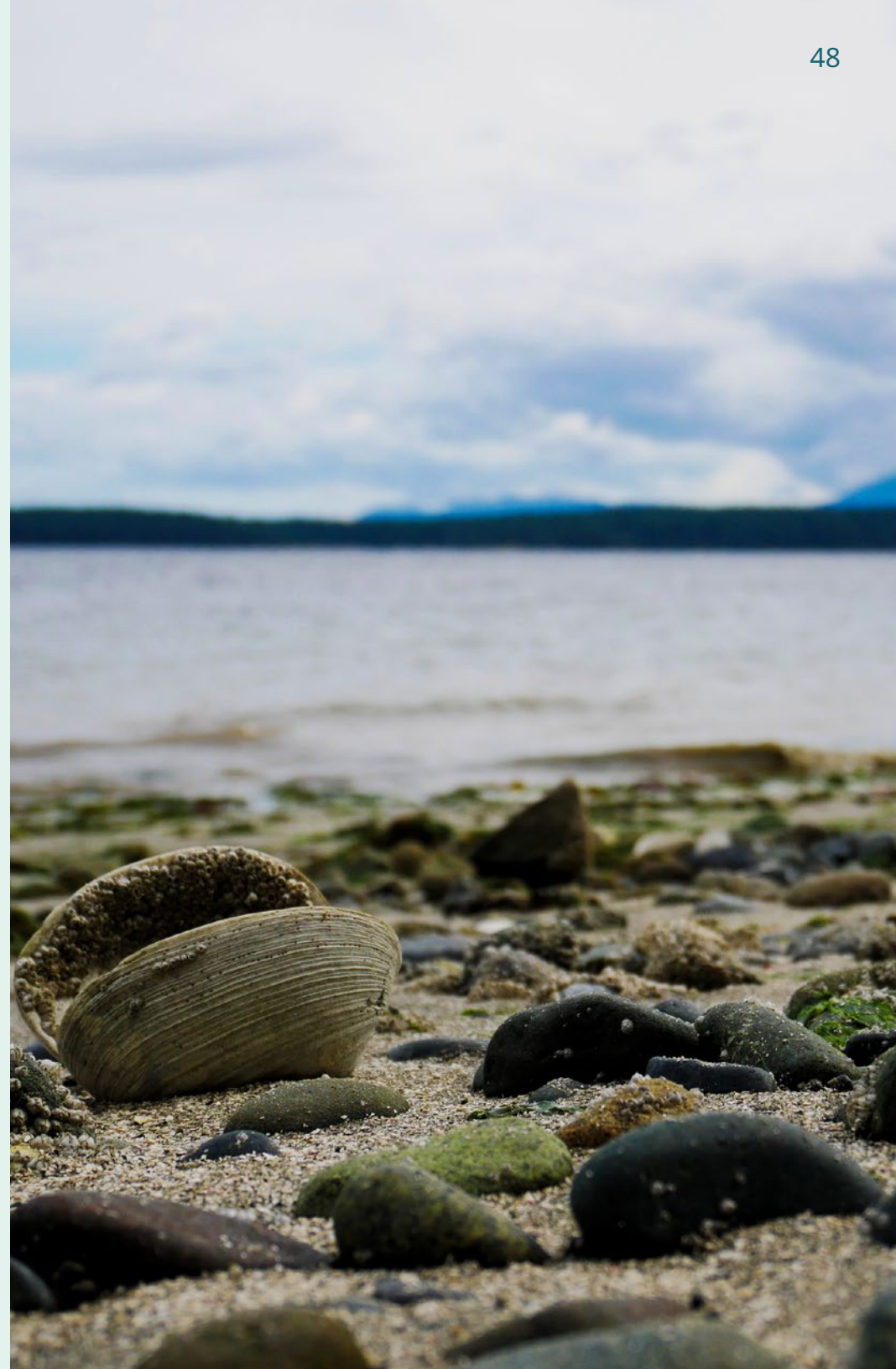
- Develop and implement a growth and diversification plan for aquaculture, with equitable support for Indigenous aquaculture practices.
- Promote the essential role of seafood in sustainable food production and the economic prosperity of coastal communities.
- Inform the collaborative development of responsible plans to transition from open-net pen salmon farming in coastal waters.
- Support community-led workshops and research to improve the understanding of food insecurity and identify the barriers to consuming local edible marine resources. Apply results to improve food and nutrition security for coastal communities.
- Develop and implement strategies to boost valued-added seafood processing in British Columbia. Expand domestic seafood processing and promote local consumption of nutritious seafood, emphasizing fish stocks that are abundant, in season and caught and processed locally.

Restoring abundance

For thousands of years, First Nations along the coast constructed and nurtured clam gardens to feed people. Once established, clam gardens increase food production between 150 and 300 percent and can be sustained with small inputs of time and care.

Maa-nulth First Nations are among the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations actively striving to achieve food sovereignty in their communities by reconnecting with and reviving the ancestral practice. For example, in 2023 the Huu-ay-aht First Nation constructed a clam garden through the youth Warriors program, which will also, alongside Coastal Voices, support a new clam garden for Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations.

Clam restoration efforts are also underway in the Saanich Peninsula, where the Pauquachin First Nation has been working tirelessly to reopen harvesting beaches in Coles Bay. Here, shellfish beds have been closed for over 25 years in response to poor water quality caused by sanitation and other pollution. Their restoration planning work has highlighted how Indigenous knowledge can be integrated with best scientific practices to generate novel solutions. Learning from successful initiatives in Washington State, the Pauquachin First Nation has identified key aspects for success, including multi-stakeholder engagement, good site selection and effective pollution monitoring.



Action 16: Support recreation and adventure

The beauty of the coastline in British Columbia isn't a secret. As the population grows, more people are choosing to visit and explore the province's beaches, bays, inlets, islands and fjords. Access to the coast allows us to peek inside tidal pools, take a swim in cool water, play in the waves, photograph wildlife, set sail and catch fish for dinner.

In some parts of the province, it can be hard to access the ocean. Safe access may be limited by docks, floating structures, private land ownership, shoreline armouring and development, or vessel traffic. Some places are easy to get to, and visitor use may need to be managed to reduce negative impacts on animals, habitats, First Nations cultural sites and features, and historical and archaeological sites. In 2022, BC Parks completed a Marine Recreation Action Plan to ensure that high-quality and sustainable recreational opportunities are available in the 274 coastal protected areas within the traditional territories of First Nations. The plan includes five goals, such as improving understanding of the natural and cultural values of marine areas, strengthening relationships with First Nations coastal communities, providing high-quality marine recreation, and promoting ocean stewardship and responsible marine recreation.

There are countless opportunities for aquatic adventure in British Columbia; enjoyable, safe, sustainable and respectful marine recreation is everyone's responsibility.

Activities:

- Partner with First Nations to help secure safe public access to, and enjoyment of, beaches and coastal waters in ways that respect coastal ecosystems and First Nations rights and sensitive cultural sites, and that are inclusive of marginalized people.
- Provide supports to First Nations interested in developing public education tools guiding appropriate access and respectful enjoyment of culturally sensitive places.
- Continue to market the coastal marine environment as an international and domestic destination for recreational fishing, wildlife viewing and cultural tourism in ways that are aligned with coastal community and First Nations values.
- Identify ways to support improved business planning for commercial lodges offering opportunities for the sustainable enjoyment of nature.





THEME 4: INFORMED GOVERNANCE

Governance refers to how decisions are made, who gets to make decisions and how accountability is ensured. When it comes to managing the use of coastal marine ecosystems, a collaborative form of governance is essential for creating sustainable benefits for both people and the environment. Successful models of governance create space for diverse perspectives, encourage the free flow of knowledge across organizations, and recognize and advance First Nations rights to self-determination. Governance also encompasses the policies and legislation that guide action, as well as the tools to ensure compliance.

Goal 7: Trusting, respectful relationships

Action 17: Advance First Nations self-determination

First Nations have cared for their homelands and traditional territories since time immemorial, monitoring, protecting and restoring wildlife and habitats under systems of governance that embody an intrinsic sense of responsibility. And while this crucial work continues, colonial policies and practices have eroded First Nations authorities and their capacity to practise those authorities.

Recognizing First Nations right to self-determination is fundamental to protect First Nations traditions and their distinct social, cultural, economic and political characteristics. To move forward with reconciliation, First Nations governments must be able to implement the priorities they have set for their communities, lands, waters and resources. The Province must continue to build government-to-government relationships with First Nations based on respect, co-operation and partnership.

Activities:

- Work with First Nations to reshape the frameworks and processes through which timelines are set, decisions are made, policies are formulated and actions are co-ordinated to help ensure their rights are respected in the governance of the coastal marine environment.
- Identify and implement strategies to build understanding and acceptance of First Nations rights and management authorities as they relate to the stewardship of marine values in First Nations territories. Emphasize the importance of multiple ways of knowing and world views.
- Continue to support First Nations-led education programs that transfer language, knowledge and practices to younger generations to help prepare them for their roles as future community leaders.
- Support First Nations-led solutions to protect and restore their cultural and spiritual heritage sites and features, particularly in publicly accessible areas sensitive to human disturbance and coastal erosion.
- Co-develop with First Nations distinctions-based recommendations for facilitating First Nations access to diverse streams of revenue from coastal marine activities and resources, consistent with the Province's new fiscal framework.



Action 18: Advance collaborative stewardship

Many individuals, communities, environmental groups, institutions and governments are taking action to steward the coastal marine environment. They are conducting ecological and social research, monitoring environmental change, restoring degraded habitat, protecting species at risk and educating the public. When multiple and diverse groups act together, they draw on each other's perspectives and expertise, building a shared understanding of the issues and opportunities and developing a clear view of desired outcomes. Collaboration is powerful: duplication of effort is avoided, costs and tasks are shared (allowing the resource-constrained to participate), relationships are formed and strengthened, and positive outcomes for ecosystems and communities are more impactful and enduring.

First Nations, local governments, coastal communities and stakeholders need more opportunities to contribute meaningfully to coastal marine management. Their participation can unlock additional knowledge that improves the quality and credibility of decisions, enhances compliance with rules and reduces conflict.

Activities:

- Establish new, integrated participatory structures and processes that:
 - Bring diverse voices and interests together to inform decision-making and planning.
 - Target underserved/underrepresented groups.
 - Offer opportunities to mentor young leaders and encourage cross-cultural knowledge exchange.
 - Improve collaboration and co-ordination across governments.
- Sponsor regular gatherings to celebrate the ocean and our collective efforts to steward it.
- Enhance ocean knowledge, help nurture an emotional connection to the ocean, and support and encourage citizens and stakeholders to act in a positive way for the ocean.
- Help to clarify the roles of governments in stewarding the marine environment.
- Seek opportunities to improve cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange in managing migratory fish and wildlife (such as continued participation in the Pacific Wild Salmon Treaty), monitoring water quality and planning for climate change impacts. Support transboundary forums that bring people together (such as the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference).

Goal 8: A robust tool kit

Action 19: Modernize policies and procedures

With the growing challenges of climate change, greater pressures on land and sea, and commitments to meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, it is time to assess the effectiveness of provincial policies and resourcing for managing the coastal marine environment.

A key challenge to coastal management in B.C. is the absence of a legal framework specifically designed to govern and manage coastal marine areas. Such a framework, developed in partnership with First Nations, could, for example, advance the authority of First Nations to steward their territories and protect their access to cultural heritage resources in the intertidal area. It could establish guidelines for planning and shoreline management, such as requiring new infrastructure to be built with coastal flood projections in mind; enable effective, proactive responses to climate-related changes and marine pollution; and address legacy and emerging concerns related to the siting and management of marine-based industrial uses. It could also ensure that integrated coastal marine plans have regulatory and policy weight.

Law-making is one of the most significant responsibilities of government, and since laws affect lives and livelihoods, new legislation must be considered carefully. The legislative process begins with an assessment of issues and options (the policy development stage), and if legislation is recommended and approved, legislation is prepared and then enacted. As an interim step towards new legislation, the Province will address long-standing concerns with existing policies and procedures.



Activities:

- Assess the information needed and develop a proposal for coastal marine legislation, in partnership with First Nations. As appropriate, proceed through the legislative stages.
- Update, as required, provincial policies, best management practices and authorization requirements for tenures tied to activities in the coastal marine environment.
- Streamline authorization processes for activities that promote ecosystem health (such as First Nations sea gardens and ecological restoration).
- Help establish regulatory certainty for the marine renewable energy sector, in close collaboration with other governments and industry.

Action 20: Improve compliance

Rules, policies and plans put in place to steward the natural environment are just the start. We need to make sure individuals, organizations and communities comply. Natural resource officers, conservation officers and park rangers enforce provincial laws that protect coastal ecosystems and natural resources in B.C., but with such a long, remote and complex coastline, this can be a challenge. Infringements can happen without awareness or consequence.

First Nations stewardship programs, like Guardians and Watchmen, play an increasingly important role in making sure the coast is managed responsibly. Guardians protect, monitor and study their territories. They keep eyes on resource use, observe changes in the ecosystems they oversee, educate and inform the public, and promote compliance with laws, land use plans and agreements. With additional support, First Nations can do more of this important work.

Activities:

- Develop a coast-wide approach to ensure marine and foreshore activities comply with Crown land policy and local marine plans.
- Take steps to better respond to compliance monitoring information gathered.
- Explore shared compliance and enforcement of marine protected areas.
- Increase provincial capacity to maintain a presence in the coastal marine environment and to take enforcement action.
- Raise awareness of laws and regulations through education and outreach.



Goal 9: Integrated and balanced management

Action 21: Establish knowledge partnerships

Western science and Indigenous knowledge represent different ways of looking at the world around us. Western science tries to understand the natural world through observation, experimentation and hypothesis testing that can be replicated in different locations by different researchers. Knowledge is transferred through academic proceedings, presentations and research papers.

Indigenous knowledge and science seek to understand the world in a holistic way through close observations of and engagement with the natural world. “Ways of knowing” are tied to land and language, and are rooted in worldviews, values, practices and relationships. Knowledge can be transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, dance, song, shared experiences on the water, witnessing ceremonies and potlatches.

We are just beginning to scratch the surface of the benefits of braiding diverse knowledge systems together. They must be braided carefully – Indigenous knowledge systems are not simply sources of data and information that can be used apart from the contexts in which they are produced. Knowledge systems must be respected in their entirety. It’s also important to acknowledge and respect the differences between individual Indigenous knowledge systems.

Better stewardship of coastal marine values can only be achieved when everyone brings knowledge to the table as equals. In ways that are consistent with First Nations distinct protocols, laws, processes and protections, the Province will partner First Nations knowledge systems with western scientific and local community insights to inform decision-making.



Activities:

- Elevate First Nations knowledge systems when developing coastal policy and managing use of the coastal marine environment.
- Together, develop and implement protocols to co-produce knowledge and embed distinct First Nations knowledge systems in decision-making.
- Include more First Nations authors and knowledge keepers in provincial assessments of coastal ecosystem health and climate change vulnerability. Ensure opportunities for full collaboration of First Nations in designing, monitoring, reporting and verifying research.
- Build public understanding of the value and importance of First Nations traditional and informed knowledge and experience.
- Practice storytelling and art to share science with the public, with permission from knowledge keepers.

Action 22: Reflect the ocean's true value

Over the last two decades, the provincial and federal governments have twice assessed the value of British Columbia's ocean-based economy (2006, 2020) using "traditional" indicators such as GDP and employment. Although these indicators are essential for understanding monetary trends in the ocean sector and sub-sectors, they don't capture the true value of the ocean.



GDP-based valuations are not designed to account for the value of natural assets (such as fish populations and intertidal reefs), infrastructure assets like docks and wharves, or the social values that an ocean sub-sector – like commercial fishing – brings to families and communities. They also do not address concepts of well-being that are important to First Nations, including the strong spiritual connection to territory; values, teachings, languages and ways of living rooted in place; and, responsibility for lands, waters, and resources.¹²

To measure progress towards a sustainable blue economy in B.C., we must consider the natural wealth of the ocean and the status of coastal communities, including their social, cultural, mental and physical health and well-being.

¹² Source: British Columbia Assembly of First Nations. 2020. "Centering First Nations concepts of well-being: Toward a GDP-alternative index in British Columbia."

Activities:

- Develop a holistic set of metrics to estimate the value of the ocean. Partner with others to reflect diverse perspectives. Apply results to guide policy decisions and planning.
- Collect the data needed to support more accurate valuations of the ocean.
- Continue assessing the value of the ocean-based economy using traditional indicators.
- Create interactive dashboards to allow for the exploration of data in ways that protect confidential information.



Action 23: Update and refresh spatial data

We need up-to-date information to guide decision-making as we take care of coastal and marine habitats. Habitat mapping, which describes the physical and biological characteristics of an area, is essential for protecting biodiversity, building climate resiliency and ensuring the sustainable use of the environment. For a complete picture, cultural and economic values and human uses – as well as the threats to them – also need to be mapped or spatially characterized.

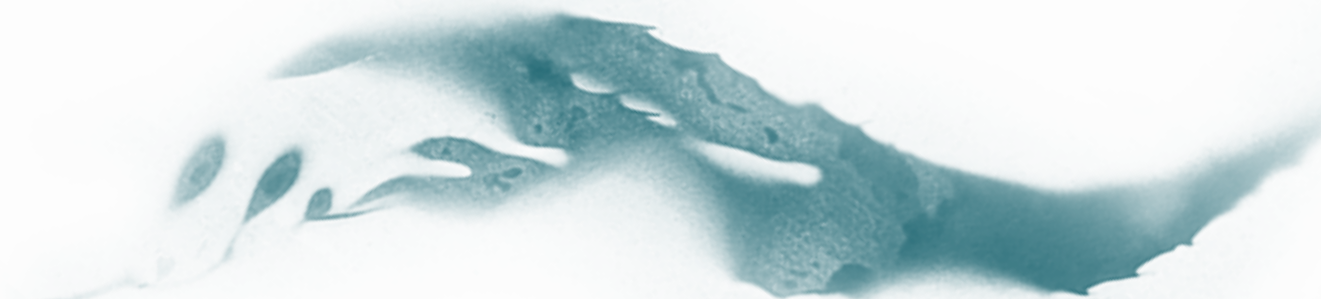
The Province already collects spatial data for coastal and marine values, including species, habitats, select fisheries and human uses. Some datasets that are critical for decision-making need to be updated, such as data on the distribution of kelp forest beds and eelgrass meadows. Other datasets need to be created to support sustainable economic development. For example, the data needed to assess the potential for aquaculture and marine renewable energy in remote communities is unknown for parts of the coast.

We will work in partnership with others to update provincial spatial datasets and fill key gaps, with privacy protection measures in place and acknowledgement of knowledge holders' requests for confidentiality, as needed. We will be innovative in the ways we

collect, validate and communicate diverse knowledge (such as Arc GIS storytelling and collaborative decision-making software tools) and devote more attention to the different domains of coastal community health (including ocean use patterns, features of well-being and climate change vulnerability). Many organizations also collect and compile spatial data and we'll encourage these organizations to collaborate with each other. We will continue to provide broad, open access to provincial data.

Activities:

- Identify areas where we are missing important spatial data (such as nearshore habitats and patterns of human use) and develop and implement a plan to fill spatial data needs and maintain datasets.
- Incorporate knowledge and citizen science in novel ways and at different scales, aligning data generation and sharing with the interests of knowledge holders.
- Identify and seek solutions to challenges in accessing coastal data experienced by individual First Nations.



Action 24: Plan for the future

Changes in the distribution, abundance, and diversity of marine species and the resulting disruptions to human well-being signal that we need to re-establish balance. One way to nurture a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with the ocean is to carefully plan and allocate human use to specific areas. Similar to how we plan cities and towns, we can zone the ocean for conservation, cultural use and continuity, and specific economic activities.

Collaborative processes that bring people and multiple knowledge systems together to zone the ocean can contribute to long-term ecological, economic and cultural resilience; support climate action; and address cumulative effects. Local stressors can be identified and mitigation, adaptation and repair strategies can be developed to effectively address challenges.

Decisions about using and accessing coastal marine areas are the responsibility of First Nations, federal, provincial and local governments. For some parts of the province, marine spatial plans are well into the implementation phase (such as marine plans successfully developed under the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast) and may need to be refreshed. In other parts of the province, more work is needed to build trusting relationships, understand community needs, document social and environmental conditions, and identify blue economy opportunities.



Activities:

- Continue implementing existing integrated marine plans and address the challenges that have made it difficult to achieve some key ecosystem-based management objectives.
- Participate in efforts to update marine plans in response to changing conditions and lessons learned.
- Advance planning in areas of the coast where it is needed most and where there is shared interest. Support collaborative, inclusive development and implementation of coastal marine plans that:
 - Advance reconciliation and respect for Aboriginal and treaty rights.
 - Partner with First Nations to include their knowledge, practices, cultures and values.
 - Engage user groups, local governments, stakeholders, non-government organizations and the public.
 - Are climate- and, where appropriate, wild salmon-informed.
 - Bring a spatial dimension to the management of multiple marine activities within a given area, reducing conflicts among users and increasing certainty for users and investors.
 - Deliver social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits under an ecosystem-based management framework.
 - Advance the principles of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Identify a pilot area to develop and implement an integrated plan across the land-sea interface that brings together watershed and coastal marine planning.
- Continue to participate in federally led marine planning initiatives in British Columbia and advocate for shared decision-making.
- Work with other governments and industry to collaboratively develop a plan for vessel anchorages to address the concerns of First Nations, local governments and communities regarding ship vessel noise and light pollution, discharge and habitat disturbance.



CONCLUSION

The B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy signifies the beginning of the provincial government's commitment to improving stewardship of the coastal marine environment at a province-wide scale under a collective and holistic vision. It is the blueprint for future work and decision-making related to coastal ecosystems and economies over the next two decades.

This strategy doesn't exist in isolation. There are many policies and investments directed at the stewardship of land and freshwater systems and clean and inclusive economic growth that will deliver improvements to coastal ecosystems and coastal communities. Equally, implementing the actions articulated in this strategy will provide benefits beyond our coastal marine waters, including social benefits such as job growth and food security, as well as

contributions towards tackling biodiversity loss and climate change. Implementing the strategy will also take us further along our journey towards reconciliation with First Nations who have deep ties with the ocean.

The B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy has been co-developed with many First Nations who will continue to have a leadership role in helping to deliver it. As a first step together, we will put processes and structures in place to complete a co-developed implementation plan. Together, we will identify the initiatives to be implemented first; which actions will be undertaken locally and which will be implemented more broadly; the opportunities for collaboration with federal and local governments and stakeholders; and how we will measure and report on our success.

APPENDIX A: FIRST NATIONS CONTRIBUTORS

The following First Nations governments and First Nations organizations contributed to the development of this first B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy. We thank each and every one.

First Nations Governments

- Ahousaht First Nation
- Council of the Haida Nation
- Cowichan Tribes
- Da'naxda'xw First Nation (Elected)
- Da'naxda'xw First Nation (Hereditary)
- Ditidaht First Nation
- Ehattesaht Chinehkinit First Nation
- Esquimalt First Nation
- Kwakiutl First Nation
- Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation
- Gitga'at First Nation
- Gitxaala Nation
- Gwa'Sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations
- Gwawaenuk Tribe
- Haisla Nation
- Halalt First Nation
- Heiltsuk Nation
- Huu-ay-aht First Nations
- Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations
- Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation
- Kitselas First Nation
- Kitsumkalum First Nation
- K'ómoks First Nation
- Kwiakah First Nation
- Lax Kw'alaams Band
- Lyackson First Nation
- Malahat Nation
- Mamalilikulla First Nation
- Metlakatla First Nation
- Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation
- Musqueam Indian Band
- 'Namgis First Nation
- Nisga'a Lisims Government
- Nuchatlaht First Nation
- Nuxalk Nation
- Pacheedaht First Nation
- Pauquachin First Nation
- Penelakut Tribe
- Quatsino First Nation
- Semiahmoo First Nation
- Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation
- shíshálh
- Snuneymuxw First Nation
- Songhees Nation
- Squamish Nation
- Stz'uminus First Nation
- Tla'amin Nation
- Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation
- Tlatlasikwala First Nation
- Tlowitsis Nation
- Toquaht Nation
- Tsartlip First Nation
- Tsawout First Nation
- Tsawwassen First Nation
- Tseshaht First Nation
- Tseycum First Nation
- Tsleil-Waututh Nation
- T'Sou-ke First Nation
- Uchucklesaht Tribe
- Wei Wai Kum Nation
- We Wai Kai Nation
- Wuikinuxv Nation
- Xwemalhkwa (Homalco) First Nation
- Yuułu?if?atḥ Government

First Nations Organizations

- Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative
- First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia
- The First Nations of Maa-Nulth Treaty Society
- Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council
- North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society
- A-Tlegay Fisheries Society
- Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance
- N̓anwakolas Council
- W̓SÁNEĆ Leadership Council



APPENDIX B: TIMELINE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

Drafting the Strategy:

- Project Scoping** Jan – Nov 2021
- First Nations-B.C. Leadership Dialogues** Jan – Feb 2022
Primary challenges and opportunities identified.
- First Nations-B.C. Technical Sessions** Mar – Apr 2022
Some solutions to primary challenges and opportunities identified.
- First Nations-B.C. Writing Team** Jun – Nov 2022
Team members undertook research, agreed on policy framework and structure, developed vision, identified and refined priority actions.

Intentions Paper

- Public Engagement** Dec 2022 – Apr 2023
- Policy Forum and Indigenous Youth Summit** Mar 2023
Stakeholders and local governments exchanged feedback on Intentions Paper. Indigenous youth gathered to discuss Intentions Paper.

Finalizing the Strategy:

- Analysis of Submissions** Apr – Jun 2023
- First Nations-B.C. Technical Sessions** May – Jun 2023
Specific goals, actions, activities developed in response to submissions.
- What We Heard** Aug 2023
Public engagement results shared with the public.
- Draft Strategy Development** Aug – Dec 2023
Actions and activities further refined with collaborators. Supporting text reviewed and updated with help of third-party writer.
- Draft Strategy** Apr 2024
Draft shared with First Nations, provincial ministries, federal and local governments for review. Feedback incorporated into a final strategy.
- Government Review** May 2024

B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy