

Resolution re Cumulative Effects Assessment for Howe Sound

Background:

In 2014 members of The Howe Sound Community Forum - District of West Vancouver, Village of Lions Bay, District of Squamish, Town of Gibsons, Municipality of Bowen Island, Resort Municipality of Whistler, Village of Pemberton, Gambier Island Local Trust, SLRD, SCR D and Metro Vancouver, renewed their commitment to the Principles for Cooperation. The majority of these local governments supported the following resolution passed at UBCM September 2013:

WHEREAS all local governments around Howe Sound are currently dealing with recent multiple referrals and applications for gravel, liquid natural gas, coal and bitumen;

AND WHEREAS Howe Sound is a sensitive, ecologically significant area of unparalleled scenic beauty, and provides important ecosystem services for various First Nations, senior and local governments, and is without a land and marine use plan to facilitate a coordinated approach to land and marine use planning;

AND WHEREAS there has been no discussion between the local governments and the Squamish First Nation regarding the cumulative potential impacts;

AND WHEREAS there is a growing concern regarding the future of Howe Sound as commercial, industrial and recreational uses expand without an approach for assessing the cumulative impacts of those increased uses, thereby putting recent progress of significant ecosystem recovery at risk:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM urge the provincial government to support the development of a Comprehensive Management Plan for Howe Sound that facilitates a coordinated land and marine use planning process between First Nations, senior and local governments, and other local bodies to ensure ongoing recovery and responsible land use planning within Howe Sound.

The request was referred to the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. By way of correspondence, Minister Thomson responded negatively to a Land Resource Management Plan for Howe Sound, but is supportive of planning and acknowledged the potential cumulative effects that multiple projects and expanded development may have on the Howe Sound land and marine region.

In January 2014 the Province of BC, via the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO), committed to implementing a Cumulative Effects Assessment Framework throughout the province over the next several years.

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The Howe Sound Community Forum received presentations and Q & A sessions on the CEAF from Ministry Staff at a Forum meeting in January 2014 and a webinar in February 2014. Forum member communities then expressed interest in further exploring the CEA for Howe Sound through submitting individual Council resolutions to the FLNRO Minister. Ministry staff again presented at Howe Sound Community Forums on May 2nd, and October 17th, 2014.

The use of Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) as a decision support tool was also discussed at the Howe Sound Aquatic Forum in April 2014, an event attended by diverse government and non-government stakeholders and First Nations. The Aquatic Forum report expressed participant support for an integrated planning approach that incorporates multiple complementary tools. These could include strategic (marine) planning; marine spatial planning and management; marine protected areas planning; and action planning; combined with decision support tools, such as CEA and ecosystem services assessments. Project-level environmental assessment is another decision support tool currently being used in the Sound.

On October 17th, FLNRO offered to proceed with a Cumulative Effects Assessment, to be undertaken within the Provincial CEA Framework, but tailored to local governments' request for an area-wide approach. In order to focus on the Howe Sound area, the CEA will generally be based upon the Landscape Units around Howe Sound, with assessment work commencing in early 2015.

Therefore let it be resolved:

As a member of the Howe Sound Community Forum, _____ accepts the FLNRO's offer to conduct a Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) for Howe Sound, within the BC CEA Framework but tailored to the Howe Sound area, with assessment work commencing in early 2015.

It is also recommended that Council continue its commitment to the Howe Sound Community Forum and its ongoing contributions towards achieving comprehensive land and marine planning for Howe Sound over 2014-2018.