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September 21, 2017

Dear stakeholder,

In 2014, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans embarked on a consultation process to protect nine glass sponge reefs in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound through a process called the *Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative*. In 2015, fishery closures were put in place to protect these nine glass sponge reefs from all bottom contact fishing activities including aboriginal fisheries for Food, Social and Ceremonial purposes.

During the 2014 consultation process, 13 additional sponge reefs were brought to the Department's attention by the Marine Life Sanctuaries Society (MLSS) (Attachment 1.) At the time, it was decided that consultations would proceed on the original nine reefs while the new reefs would be set aside for further research and consideration. Since that time, DFO has initiated work in partnership with MLSS and other groups to gain a better understanding of the location of the new reefs (Attachment 2) and their biological composition.

Although a final report from DFO Science is pending, DFO has concluded that these additional 13 reefs are biologically significant enough to warrant a precautionary management approach and are asking the public to voluntarily avoid fishing in these areas with bottom contact fishing gear until further research and consultation with First Nations and stakeholders can occur. Bottom contact fishing gear includes crab by trap; shrimp by trap; prawn by trap; shrimp by trawl; scallop by trawl; and groundfish by trawl, hook & line, and trap.

Further research will be completed over the coming months with consultations anticipated in Winter 2017. For your information, I have also provided a *Management Update Report* on the management activities DFO has taken since the establishment of the original nine reefs (Attachment 3).

If you have any questions or would like further information on the Strait of Georgia and How Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative, please visit Canada.ca/glass-sponge-closure or contact Aleria Ladwig at Aleria.ladwig@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Sincerely,

Aleria Ladwig
Ecosystems Approach Officer
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Canada

Attachments:

- 1. Map showing newly identified sponge reefs in Howe Sound**
- 2. Table showing Latitudes and Longitudes of reefs where DFO is requesting voluntary avoidance**
- 3. Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Conservation Initiative: Management Update Report, August 2017**

Map 1

Map showing newly identified sponge reefs in relation to existing Sponge Reef Conservation Areas and Rockfish Conservation Areas in Howe Sound.

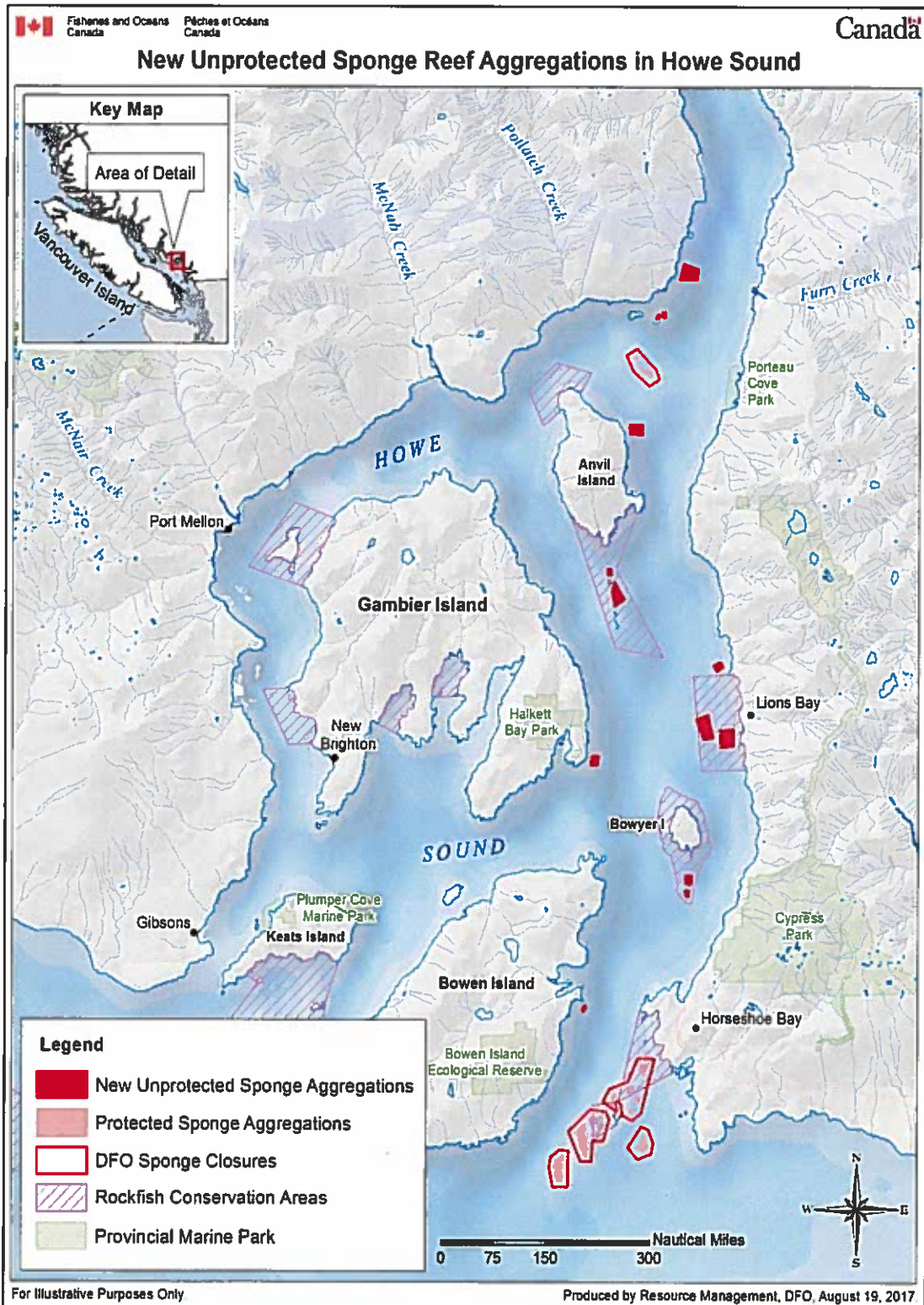


Table 1

Latitude and Longitudes for newly identified sponge reefs in Howe Sound. DFO is asking the public to voluntarily avoid these areas with all bottom contact fishing gear until further scientific analysis and consultations regarding protection measures can occur.

Defence Islands/Ellsemere Creek					
D1-a: Ellsemere Creek bioherm (dead)		D1-b: East Defence Island		D1-c: East Defence Island pinnacle	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
49°35.572'N	123°15.635'W	49°34.639'N	123°16.281'W	49°34.630'N	123°16.449'W
49°35.293'N	123°15.763'W	49°34.653'N	123°16.213'W	49°34.663'N	123°16.366'W
49°35.281'N	123°15.283'W	49°34.728'N	123°16.243'W	49°34.687'N	123°16.422'W
49°35.472'N	123°15.243'W	49°34.713'N	123°16.313'W	49°34.641'N	123°16.481'W
Anvil Island					
A1-a Clayton bioherm		A1-b: North Christie		A1-c: Lost Reef	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
49°32.756'N	123°17.356'W	49°30.208'N	123°18.156'W	49°29.812'N	123°18.043'W
49°32.607'N	123°17.353'W	49°30.118'N	123°18.133'W	49°29.559'N	123°17.970'W
49°32.581'N	123°17.009'W	49°30.116'N	123°18.040'W	49°29.660'N	123°17.701'W
49°32.749'N	123°16.992'W	49°30.208'N	123°18.070'W	49°29.958'N	123°17.961'W
Lions Bay					
LB-a: Brunswick bioherm		LB-b: Lions Bay Seamount		LB-c: Kelvin Grove Seamount	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
49°28.324'N	123°15.062'W	49°27.126'N	123°15.512'W	49°26.973'N	123°15.028'W
49°28.397'N	123°14.886'W	49°27.145'N	123°15.243'W	49°26.981'N	123°14.676'W
49°28.475'N	123°14.959'W	49°27.543'N	123°15.379'W	49°27.270'N	123°14.660'W
49°28.420'N	123°15.154'W	49°27.481'N	123°15.688'W	49°27.260'N	123°15.016'W
Halkett Point, Gambier Island			South Bowyer Island		
HP: Halkett West Pinnacle		SB-a: South Bowyer		SB-b: Southern-South Bowyer	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
49°26.747'N	123°18.825'W	49°24.715'N	123°16.158'W	49°24.352'N	123°16.156'W
49°26.740'N	123°18.658'W	49°24.586'N	123°16.162'W	49°24.357'N	123°16.112'W
49°26.887'N	123°18.598'W	49°24.567'N	123°16.021'W	49°24.448'N	123°16.095'W
49°26.884'N	123°18.790'W	49°24.703'N	123°16.0074'W	49°24.449'N	123°16.185'W
Dorman Point, Bowen Island					
DP: Dorman Point bioherm					
Latitude	Longitude				
49°22.481'N	123°19.241'W				
49°22.416'N	123°19.311'W				
49°22.384'N	123°19.292'W				
49°22.452'N	123°19.209'W				

Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative Management Update Report

August 2017

One of the messages Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) heard during the 2014 consultation process for the *Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative* was the need for ongoing management of conservation closures once established.

Stakeholders, including the environmental and fishing sectors, stated the need for better enforcement and scientific monitoring to ensure the biological objectives of conservation closures are achieved. This *Management Update Report* provides a brief overview of the management actions DFO has taken since the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound glass sponge reef closures were established.

Education and Awareness

DFO has embarked on a number of activities to ensure the public is informed about the new glass sponge reef closures. Actions DFO has taken include:

- The establishment of a dedicated web page for the *Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative*, which can be found at: canada.ca/glass-sponge-closures
- The development and posting of eight alupanel interpretive signs in partnership with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and a number of marinas. These signs can be found at the following locations:
 - Gibsons Landing Harbour Authority
 - Gibsons Marine Education Centre
 - Sewell's Marina in Horseshoe bay
 - Thunderbird Marina in West Vancouver
 - French Creek Harbour Authority (near Parksville)
 - Nanaimo Marina (Nanaimo Port Authority)
 - Whaler Bay Harbour Authority – Whaler Bay (south end of Galiano)
 - Steveston Harbour Authority – Gulf of Georgia (Fisherman's Wharf)
 - False Creek Harbour Authority
 - Deep Bay Harbour Authority (near Bowser/Hornby Island)
- In support of a request made by the Sechelt First Nation during consultations, DFO worked in partnership with the Sechelt Band Office on the development of a custom made sign designed to educate the public about the reefs in their traditional territory.
- Developed 2500 waterproof brochures for Conservation and Protection (C&P) officers to hand out during patrols.
- Developed 3000 non-waterproof brochures for distribution at DFO offices and other distribution locations.
- Developed 500 posters for various public events.

- Posted two Fishery Notices to remind fishers about the closures, and participated in three media events including 1 interview and two newspaper articles.
- Partnered with the Sport Fishing Institute to include the sponge reef closures on the Fishing BC app.

Enforcement

To ensure the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative closures are enforced, DFO has:

- Developed an internal *DFO Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative Enforcement Working Group*.
- Developed a DRAFT *DFO Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation & Protection Compliance Plan* which outlines the different strategies, offices and tools used to ensure the closures are being enforced. This plan is nearing completion and will be posted on the *Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative* web page in the coming months.
- Developed a DRAFT annual reporting template which will share the observations and results of the C&P efforts over the past calendar year. This report will be posted annually on the *Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative* web page.

Scientific Monitoring

Since the establishment of the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef closures, DFO Science has:

- Completed a working paper in March 2017 on the baseline status and monitoring of the glass sponge reefs that was peer reviewed through a formal Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) process. The title of this working paper is: *Glass Sponge Reefs in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound: Status Assessment and Ecological Monitoring Advice*. This SAR is online and available here: http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/Publications/SAR-AS/2017/2017_026-eng.html. The ResDoc is now complete and is in the process of being published by the CSAP office.
- Will be collaborating on a Fisheries Management led initiative to develop a long term monitoring plan in 2018.

Measures taken to date will continue to be discussed and adjusted as necessary through DFO's enforcement and monitoring working groups. DFO is committed to taking the necessary steps to ensure the biological objectives of the *Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Conservation Initiative* are achieved.