

HOWE SOUND/ATL'KA7TSEM – OCEAN WATCH TASK FORCE

STRATEGIC PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APRIL 24, 2019

In 2017, the Coastal Ocean Research Institute (CORI)¹ produced the [Ocean Watch – Howe Sound Edition](#) report (OWHS) on the status of coastal ocean health in the sound. The Howe Sound/Atl'ka7tsem Community Forum (HSCF) – a roundtable of First Nations, local and regional governments working on common issues in the sound – was a key partner. CORI has been working with the Ocean Watch Task Force (OWTF) of the HSCF to advance local government actions in the report. This *Strategic Plan* addresses items 1 – 3 of the OWTF Terms of Reference (below). The next step, for mid-2019, is item 4, designing an *implementation process*.

1. Identify actions in OWHS that are within the mandate and reach of HSCF member communities.
2. Identify what members are already doing on these actions.
3. Identify selected LG actions, highlighting those that include policy integration and collaboration.
4. Recommend a process through which the selected actions get done.

The plan proposes *collective goals, strategies and actions for local government* to protect marine and coastal environments in the Sound. Under each goal are listed strategies and possible actions to achieve that goal.

CROSS-CUTTING THEME: *Acknowledge First Nations historic stewardship of Atl'ka7tsem /Howe Sound, and collaborate with First Nations on protecting coastal ocean health.*

Although Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw is a member of the HSCF, its representatives did not have the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Plan due to timing conflicts. The OWTF recognizes that First Nations have, since time immemorial, been the stewards of Atl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound and that their continued management of their territory has supported the region's ongoing recovery. The task force sees the Strategic Plan as a living document, subject to review and change, as advised by First Nations knowledge holders.

AIMS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

1. Support First Nations and Local Government members of the Howe Sound/Atl'ka7tsem Community Forum to continue providing leadership in protecting coastal ocean health.
2. Provide a strategic framework for pursuing priority local government goals, strategies and actions on coastal ocean health over 2019-21.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

1. Howe Sound Community Forum, and member First Nations and Local Governments; and
2. HSCF partners and collaborators, including senior governments, NGOs, business and community organizations, and citizens.

¹ CORI was established by the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre.

GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS (bullet points)

1. STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO PROTECT MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

1.1 Build Local Government Capacity for Marine Protection

- Provide opportunities for collective professional development and learning on marine and coastal issues for Howe Sound LG elected officials and staff, using existing resources.
- Encourage the development local marine planning and management initiatives by sharing resources, models, examples and expertise from Howe Sound communities and other B.C. marine and coastal initiatives.
- Long-term: Consider creating a [Regional Conservation Fund](#), supported by a levy, trust fund and/or fees on coastal development, to support protection, mitigation and restoration.
- Long-term: Seek funding for a shared marine planner to support LGs in using the Marine Reference Guide and other LG guidance, and to support regional collaboration.

1.2 Strengthen Local Government Marine and Coastal Protection Tools

- Inventory and disseminate LG marine and coastal planning resources and tools among Howe Sound communities, especially [Island Trust Marine Protection resources](#).
- Collectively identify one or more promising resources or tools to apply on a region-wide basis.

1.3 Take Local Action to Protect and Restore Priority Species and Habitats

Marine Protected Areas: Increase the area of Howe Sound covered under MPAs, using local tools.

Eelgrass: Work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations, NGOs and the B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources and Rural Development (FLNRORD) to protect important eelgrass.

Salmon: Protect estuary habitat important for spawning and rearing salmon, and other species.

Protect Eagles and other birds.

2. COLLABORATE ON MARINE AND COASTAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 Continue with Regional Collaboration

- Continue to participate in and support the HSCF semi-annual meetings and information-sharing.
- Continue to support the OWTF work to advance LG's role in protecting coastal ocean health.
- Consider new/revised governance options to strengthen LG regional coordination.
- Organize occasional thematic workshops and forums to advance priority topics.
- Inventory and disseminate reports, plans and strategies on Howe Sound ecosystems.
- Identify options for a long-term secretariat for the HSCF, including supporting the plan.
- Secure funding and expertise to increase regional marine planning capacity for Howe Sound.
- Liaise with and support the [Howe Sound / Atl'ka7tsem UNESCO Biosphere](#) initiative.

2.2 Collaborate with First Nations Marine Planning

Cooperate with the Squamish Nation in developing the Squamish Nation *Alt'Kitsem/Howe Sound Marine Use Plan*, as requested by the Nation.

2.3 Collaborate on Crown Land and Marine Planning and Management

- Collaborate with FLNRORD to improve LG consultation on Crown land tenures under the *B.C. Land Act*, including forest licenses and foreshore leases.
- Continue to liaise with FLNRORD on the *Howe Sound Cumulative Effects Assessment*, which will assess the condition and trends for key environmental values as an aid to decision-making.

3. SUPPORT & USE MARINE DECISION-MAKING AND REPORTING TOOLS

3.1 Support development, maintenance and implementation/use of the [Howe Sound/Atl'ka7tsem Marine Reference Guide](#) (MRG) by local governments.

3.2 Cooperate with CORI on Ocean Watch Howe Sound, 2nd Edition

4. STRENGTHEN MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS

4.1 Collaborate With Senior Government on Monitoring and Enforcement

- Pursue formal LG regional participation in Transport Canada's *Oceans Protection Plan*.
- Establish a collaborative body involving senior government, LGs, First Nations, NGOs and/or adapt an existing process to improve regional coordination on M & E.

4.2 Protect Marine Water Quality

Work with senior government agencies (TC, DFO, ECCC, ENV) to address water issues, especially preventing the entry into the marine environment of contaminants from land-based activities.

4.3 Manage the Impacts of Marine Tourism and Recreation

Work with senior government agencies to assess compliance with laws and regulations affecting tourism and recreation on Crown lands, foreshore and marine areas, and strengthen enforcement, as needed.

4.4 Collaborate on Problem Vessels and Structures

- Contribute collectively to the Vessel of Concern (VOC) Inventory being compiled by Coast Guard (2019); with Bill C-64² coming into force, DFO seeking LG input is assessing risks in the region.
- Build on past collaboration on VOC to establish a multi-stakeholder body (e.g., senior governments, First Nations, LGs, NGOs) and process to share information and find solutions.

5. ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

5.1 Collaborate Regionally on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Work collectively to learn about and apply available LG resources through workshops and other forms of peer learning and experience sharing, e.g., [BC Climate Action Toolkit](#) and [Islands Trust resources](#).

5.2 Address Impacts of Sea Level Rise and Stream Flow Changes

- Increase local capacity to adapt to sea level rise and extreme weather events, (e.g., storms, flooding, landslides, extreme heat and drought), especially in high flood risk areas.
- Share resources and best practices on planning for sea level rise and flood hazard management.
- Work with DFO to strengthen LG regulations protecting riparian areas.
- Work with BC Hydro and DFO to ensure sufficient water flow for fish spawning and migration.

6. SUPPORT MARINE AND COASTAL EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP

- Develop a program to educate and engage local communities and visitors about Howe Sound/Atl'ka7tsem as a bioregion, link the content and methods to strategies 1 – 5.
- Integrate the results of citizen science into LG planning and development decisions.
- Support ongoing education, citizen science and stewardship initiatives through publicity, technical assistance, partnerships and/or funding.

² An Act respecting wrecks, abandoned, dilapidated or hazardous vessels and salvage operations.