

BC MPA NETWORK PROJECT

# Vision, Goal, Objectives and Guiding Principles for the Collaborative Delivery of a BC MPA Network





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**JUNE 2006**



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH





# Marine Conservation Vision

**W**orld Wildlife Fund Canada, Sierra Club of Canada (BC Chapter), Living Oceans Society, David Suzuki Foundation and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (BC Chapter), have embraced the following shared vision and objectives and are committed to working collaboratively with Federal and Provincial Governments, First Nations and other sectors to realize them.

While Canadians have strong environmental values there is a gap between our values and our record on environmental protection. We have a real opportunity for change. By realizing the vision outlined in this document, Canada and BC will take a significant step towards achieving sustainability. We encourage all governments, industries and individuals to invest in this essential effort.

## Our Vision

Canada, BC and First Nations adopt and implement an ecosystem-based approach to the management of our ocean, coastlines and marine life, resulting in:

- the restoration and maintenance of the abundance and diversity of native marine species;
- healthy and resilient ecosystems;
- sustainable resource use;
- renewable energy development; and,
- healthy, viable coastal communities.

## Achieving The Vision

- Governance models for ocean and coastal management are based on principles, standards and objectives of ecosystem-based management.
- High conservation value areas are identified and managed with conservation priority.
- An MPA network of representative ecosystems and distinctive features is established on the entire coast.

- Policy and practices are reformed to ensure that fisheries are managed in a sustainable manner within natural population and ecosystem limits.
- Free and open access to marine data is established and maintained to enable collaborative research and analysis, ongoing learning, decision-making and adaptive management.
- Aquaculture is transitioned from open cage to closed containment of herbivorous species.
- All commercial and industrial activities are sited under the guiding principle and objectives of EBM.
- Marine and coastal activities are regulated to abate pollutants from entering the marine environment.
- Environmental monitoring and the enforcement of regulation are comprehensive, well-resourced and rigorous.
- The moratorium on offshore oil and gas exploration, development and tanker traffic is maintained.

# Introduction

**T**his document defines a BC MPA network project and identifies the key deliverables and timelines required to achieve the establishment of an MPA network of representative ecosystems and distinctive features on the entire Pacific coast by 2012. It presents our goal, objectives and principles that, if adopted and implemented, would form the basis of a successful, collaborative delivery model. The model and content is based on global best practices and is intended as input to guide the development of an implementation plan and future implementation efforts for the “Subsidiary MOU Respecting a Marine Protection Areas Framework for the Pacific Coast of Canada”.





# BC MPA Network Project

## A. Goal

A project to maintain marine life on the coast by establishing an **MPA network** of representative ecosystems and distinctive features as **one cornerstone of an ecosystem based approach to ocean management and sustainability** that will secure:

- healthy, functioning marine ecosystems and human communities on the BC coast;
- lasting social and economic benefits; and
- certainty for decision making regarding sustainable use/management of coastal natural resources for tourism, recreation, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry & energy purposes.

## B. Objectives

A SET OF MPA NETWORK OBJECTIVES WITH TARGETED, MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

A common set of network objectives will be set out with targeted and measurable outcomes, described in terms that are meaningful to people, to clarify expectations and focus efforts.

The **primary objective of the MPA network is to contribute to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem function** by:

- establishing a network of representative<sup>1</sup> MPAs (i.e. examples of the marine plants and animals with the places they live and natural processes that keep them alive).  
As such, **representation will be the driving criteria in design and assessment of the network**;
- protecting distinctive natural features, including:
  - rare, endangered or threatened species and their critical habitats
  - areas of high biodiversity or biological productivity
  - fishery and aquatic resources and their habitat
- conserving migratory birds and their habitats;

- protecting traditional use, cultural heritage and archaeological resources;
- providing scientific research opportunities and increasing education and awareness; and
- providing opportunities for recreation and recreation-based tourism.

The representative MPA network will be designed, to the greatest extent possible, to achieve multiple objectives. Where all objectives cannot be adequately met in the initial network design, additional MPAs should be systematically selected to more adequately achieve each of the objectives.

## C. Guiding Principles

### ① CLARITY ON MPA DEFINITIONS AND RANGE OF PROTECTION LEVELS

The BC/Pacific coast definition of MPAs and the accompanying range of protection they provide will:

- allow parties to measure and assess progress toward network objectives; and
- distinguish MPAs from the rest of the ocean and other management tools by providing a higher level of protection to biodiversity than is generally achieved in surrounding waters. (i.e. some existing marine designations are not sufficiently protected to be included as contributing to the objectives of the BC MPA network).

The **preferred model for MPAs in BC is to establish no-take areas as well as larger multiple-use MPAs with one or more no-take zones** (e.g. all MPAs should have a no-take area), as this is widely accepted to be the most effective in producing conservation outcomes.

The definition and range of protection levels will be clarified using the following multi-pronged approach (since the case by case determination of allowable uses will not provide adequate certainty):

- Establish minimum protection standards for all MPAs.** There are certain activities that are widely considered to be incompatible with the goals of any type of MPA and therefore should be prohibited in all MPAs. These are all industrial activities or commercial resource extraction that cause large scale habitat disturbance and/or risk of damage to critical marine species (i.e. dredging, mining, seismic, exploratory drilling, oil and gas development, bottom trawling, dumping, dragging, [open cage] fin fish aquaculture) or any other activity that potentially jeopardizes the ecological integrity of the area (Note: does not necessarily preclude fishing). This list of minimum protection standards is generally consistent with IUCN MPA categories I-IV.
- Adopt and apply the internationally recognized IUCN MPA categories to classify BC MPAs.** This will enable parties to achieve clarity regarding management objectives and to measure and assess progress, among other key benefits<sup>2</sup>. As such,

#### **PROPOSED MPA DEFINITION** (A STARTING POINT):

“An area designated to protect marine ecosystems, processes, habitats and species including the essentials of marine biodiversity and which can contribute to the restoration and replenishment of resources for social, economic, and cultural enrichment”.

*NOTE: We are open to using another term for MPAs that is more acceptable to First Nations and stakeholders; our primary interest is to identify and protect areas of high conservation value and interest.*

multiple-use MPAs will be conceived and implemented as areas of nested IUCN MPA categories (with categories corresponding to separate zones within the multiple-use MPA).

- c) **Focus on IUCN MPA categories I-IV as meaningfully contributing** to the goal and objectives of the BC MPA network.
- d) **Establish common management principles to guide allowable use decisions for each of the IUCN MPA categories.** This will ensure that allowable use decisions will be guided by management principles and be consistent with network and individual site objectives.
- e) The final determination of what activities are allowed or not will be resolved by a process of negotiation through an objectives-based, case by case assessment of the impacts of proposed activities on the values to be protected, guided by “to-be-developed” BC management principles for IUCN MPA categories.

## ② COMMON, INTEGRATED, INFORMATION, ANALYSIS AND DECISION SUPPORT

Identify common base for analysis, key information gaps & appropriate analysis/decision support tools.

### Key building blocks:

- **clear, measurable outcomes** for each of the network objectives;
- **agreed-to, common analytical approach and methods** to identify, assess and select areas of conservation interest; and
- **social, economic and ecological criteria and principles** that should guide area assessment and the integration of the biophysical and socio-economic factors.

### Key building blocks:

- **common marine habitat classification system or approach to assessing representation**, to assist in spatially describing the biodiversity of the BC coast and to serve as a gap analysis tool<sup>3</sup>;
- **integrated, agreed-to key data sets** and best available data/information to support coast-wide assessments; and
- **decision support and spatial analysis tool(s)** to assist in design and selection of MPA network options that **maximize benefits and minimize impacts** on communities and users (e.g. a MARXAN-based approach to network design).

### Additional needs, to enable successful implementation include:

- data sharing structures and agreements;
- outsourcing for world-class biophysical, socio, economic and MPA science and expertise;
- collaborative (government and First Nations/NGO/academic), science-based approach to marine analysis and research, including identification of key analysis and science/research questions to meet planning needs in a timely way;

### PROPOSED MPA NETWORK DEFINITION (A STARTING POINT):

MPA networks are composed of individual MPAs that are physically discrete and have separate management structures and regimes. The solution to providing effective biodiversity conservation at the scale of the Pacific coast of Canada is to create an array or network of component MPA units that taken together effectively enhance the management effects/benefits of individual MPAs and provide for the conservation of ecosystem function and effective management of large-scale processes and patterns. In other words, together they meet objectives (e.g. representing a full range of ecosystems and habitat types in a biogeographic region) that single MPAs cannot achieve on their own.

- strategic approach to information including agreement on key data sets, identification and filling of gaps in information (including need to establish a baseline of information), accessing information in the fishing and user community to support MPA planning;
- application of the precautionary principle, in the absence of reliable information;
- user-friendly mapping technology; and
- common habitat sensitivity analysis tool or selection of tools.

### ③ COMMON, SYSTEMATIC IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION OF AREAS OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

The identification, assessment and selection process for an MPA network should address those areas of conservation interest that are already “in process”, upgrades in protection levels for existing provincial and federal sites, and additional areas of conservation interest.

Develop and use a single, common systems-based approach, criteria and methodology to identifying, assessing and advancing the creation of an MPA network.

Potential areas for analysis will be drawn from both existing and new sources, within and external to government.

The identification, assessment and selection process for an MPA network should address those areas of conservation interest that are already “in process”, upgrades in protection levels for existing provincial and federal sites, and additional areas of conservation interest.

Areas of conservation interest and network options will be drawn from the following range of existing and new sources:

- First Nations marine use plans;
- completed coastal zone plans;
- Rockfish Conservation Areas;
- integrated management (IM) planning processes (i.e. LOMA planning);
- community-based, coastal zone planning;
- government agencies;
- First Nations;
- independent scientific assessments;
- SARA recovery planning processes; and
- community and NGO proposals.

Outcomes for areas already “in process” will include:

- Gwaii Haanas (NMCA candidate): initiate and complete the management plan;
- Southern Strait of Georgia (NMCA candidate; roll in Gabriola Passage to study area): complete phase 3 and initiate phase 4 of feasibility study process;
- Race Rocks: legal designation/royal assent as *Oceans Act* MPA;
- Bowie Seamount: legal designation/royal assent as *Oceans Act* MPA;
- Sponge Reefs: legal designation/royal assent as *Oceans Act* MPA; and
- Scott Islands: ready for final regulatory review process.

Outcomes for the review of existing provincial and federal marine sites will include:

- a list of priority sites for upgrades in protection; and
- upgrade decisions for priority sites.

Additional outcomes for the MPA network identification, assessment and selection process will include:

- a completed gap analysis, based on the network objectives and targeted outcomes and common analytical approach, methods and criteria;
- the identification of a comprehensive set of areas of conservation interest and network options to fill gaps and complete the network; and
- the ongoing identification of areas of conservation interest to create a comprehensive and representative network that achieves the network objectives by 2012.

All areas of conservation interest (and priority sites for upgrade) will undergo a common/joint technical review and assessment, prior to initiating site-specific public and stakeholder review, consultation and decision making. This joint technical review and assessment will include a discussion of the most appropriate types of conservation measures.

#### ④ SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL CRITERIA AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE AREA ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION OF NETWORK OPTIONS

Assessment of each area of conservation interest will ensure all relevant interests are identified and that conservation decisions are made in a fully informed socio-economic and community health context (*e.g. we're as committed to making communities healthy*). As such, the common/joint technical review and assessment will:

- use a systematic, analytical approach and framework;
- be based on ecological and socio-economic criteria and operating principles (*to be built with science community and multi-stakeholder input*);
- use consistent information/data sets, analytical approach and roll-up to assist in determining which network options and areas of conservation interest will be selected for broader public consultation/review and possible establishment;
- be completed in a coast wide context;
- be science supported, not science controlled; and
- be transparent to public and stakeholders.

The ecological assessment and socio-economic assessments will be completed separately and then integrated into the decision process according to the “to-be-developed” operating principles.

Assessment results will include:

- known and potential ecological value;
- known and potential value for other uses and relevant interests;
- known and potential costs (opportunity, compensation, ongoing management);

Assessment of each area of conservation interest will ensure all relevant interests are identified and that conservation decisions are made in a fully informed socio-economic and community health context (*e.g. we're as committed to making communities healthy*).

- contribution/significance of each site to primary and other specific network objectives;
- primary and secondary objective(s) for site and applicable IUCN category(s);
- conceptual boundaries;
- proposed management regime/plan to ensure any and all activities which may be allowed within an MPA are consistent with its values and objectives; and
- appropriate legislative tools for management.

#### ⑤ BROAD ENGAGEMENT OF SCIENCE COMMUNITY (*IN AREA IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION*)

Engage the scientific community to establish credible process and outcomes. (Government alone does not have the science capacity to do a credible job; government will have better results in the long term if government partners and engages the broader scientific community).

Develop a collaborative governance model that aims to harness the best science locally and globally (biophysical, socio-economic and MPA science) to support area identification, assessment and selection, network design, and to effectively integrate biophysical and socio-economic analysis and interests at the decision process stage.

#### ⑥ INTERIM PROTECTION FOR AREAS OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

Define interim protection measures to ensure protection of conservation values in areas of conservation interest.

These interim protection measures would at a minimum:

- apply to all areas of conservation interest selected for further public review and consultation;
- include prohibiting all large-scale habitat disturbance and risk of damage to critical marine species by industrial activities or commercial resource extraction (i.e. dredging, mining, seismic, exploratory drilling, oil and gas development, bottom trawling, dumping, dragging, [open cage] fin fish aquaculture) or any other activity that potentially jeopardizes the ecological integrity of the area (i.e. equivalent to the minimum protection standards for all MPAs);
- allow for additional interim protection measures for other activities/uses, to be determined on a case by case basis, based on an assessment of the extent of threat posed to the values of the area; and
- remain in place until MPA establishment decisions have been made.

Government will have better results in the long term if government partners and engages the broader scientific community.

Interim protection measures would at a minimum apply to all areas of conservation interest selected for further public review and consultation.

## 7 NEW, COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE MODEL

Create a new institutional mechanism to implement the vision, objectives and principles of the BC MPA network project.

The new mechanism will be structured and resourced in such a way as to demonstrate government commitment and leadership.

The new mechanism will facilitate or ensure:

- joint government decision-making (i.e. Canada/BC Regional Director General – Deputy Minister Steering Committee);
- First Nations involvement in identification, assessment and decision making;
- central and more streamlined inter-agency and inter-governmental coordination and collaboration for all program components, such as integrated policy, information, analysis, decision making, outreach;
- ongoing linkage/ relevance to local communities, business and environmental organizations;
- broad engagement of science community;
- increased capacity for analysis and science;
- effective integration of biophysical/ecological and socio-economic analysis and interests;
- adequate resources, capacity and leadership;
- ability to enter into partnerships, agreements and negotiations (e.g. co-management; cost-sharing); and
- regular, public progress reporting.

At the provincial level, our expectation is that this will require:

- putting in place a central agency/secretariat with:
  - high level accountability, headed by a deputy minister
  - well resourced; \$2million/yr, 4-8 FTEs
  - business plan, including action plan, performance measures, and timetable.
- negotiating a Trilateral Agreement with First Nations and the Federal Government to formalize and enable the Canada/BC Oceans MOU. The Trilateral Agreement will be:
  - a principle-based protocol agreement with First Nations on the content of the Canada/BC Oceans MOU and the contents of the 5 subagreements.

The new mechanism will ensure joint government decision-making, First Nations involvement, central and more streamlined inter-agency and inter-governmental coordination and collaboration for all program components, relevance to local communities, engagement of science community, integration of biophysical/ ecological and socio-economic analysis, adequate resources, partnerships, progress reporting.

### ⑧ INCLUSIVE AND EFFECTIVE MPA DECISION MAKING

Establish a differentiated coast-wide MPA delivery vehicle (e.g. differentiated from IM planning processes), allowing delivery of MPA establishment and site upgrade decisions both within the context of integrated ocean management planning processes as well as on a stand-alone basis.

Establish a differentiated coast-wide MPA delivery vehicle (e.g. differentiated from IM planning processes), allowing delivery of MPA establishment and site upgrade decisions both within the context of integrated ocean management planning processes as well as on a stand-alone basis. This approach will enable/facilitate a coast-wide context for all MPA designation decisions and allow MPA decisions to proceed in regions of the coast without IM planning processes, in regions with IM planning but where such processes break-down or get bogged down, or for specific areas of conservation interest within an IM plan area which warrant immediate protection.

Inclusive and effective involvement of interested parties at all stages of process, with the following attributes:

- early involvement;
- maximum participation - always open to stakeholder input;
- employ multiple techniques (e.g. stakeholder workshops, public meetings, community information sessions, websites);
- tailor process to individual community needs; and
- open, transparent dissemination of information, input, data, results, etc (e.g. reporting systems).

### ⑨ PUBLIC OUTREACH

Outreach needs to inform the public and stakeholders that BC's marine environment is 'under pressure', and that MPAs are a key part of the solution

Outreach needs to inform the public and stakeholders that BC's marine environment is 'under pressure', and that MPAs are a key part of the solution. In addition, outreach should improve public understanding of the potential size and scope and costs and benefits of an MPA network.

Conduct public, community and stakeholder outreach with the following attributes:

- planned, pre-emptive, strategic approach to communicate messages appropriately tailored to different stakeholder groups/interests;
- well resourced;
- variety of techniques and tools;
- balanced (benefits and costs of MPAs for all user types); and
- delivery through public-private partnerships.

## D. Key, Joint Deliverables and Timelines for Federal and Provincial Government

### BY DECEMBER 2006:

- clear MPA definitions and range of protection levels;
- a set of specific MPA network objectives with targeted, measurable outcomes, with a primary objective of contributing to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem function;
- common analytical approach and methods to identify, assess and select areas of conservation interest;
- social, economic and ecological criteria and principles that should guide area assessment and the integration of the biophysical and socio-economic factors;
- new, collaborative governance model, including structure, accountabilities, mandate and budget; and
- a trilateral principle-based protocol agreement with First Nations and the Federal Government.

### BY JUNE 2007:

- common marine habitat classification system or approach to assessing representation, to assist in spatially describing the biodiversity of the BC coast and to serve as a gap analysis tool;
- integrated, agreed-to key data sets and information;
- decision support and spatial analysis tool(s) to assist in design and selection of alternative network solutions (e.g. a MARXAN-based approach to network design);
- interim protection measures defined to ensure protection of conservation values in areas of conservation interest; and
- a list of priority, existing provincial and federal marine sites for upgrades in protection.

### BY DECEMBER 2007:

- outcomes achieved for areas already “in process”;
  - Gwaii Haanas (NMCA candidate): initiate and complete the management plan
  - Southern Strait of Georgia (NMCA candidate; roll in Gabriola Passage to study area): complete phase 3 and initiate phase 4 of feasibility study process
  - Race Rocks: legal designation/royal assent as *Oceans Act* MPA
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  - Sponge Reefs: legal designation/royal assent as *Oceans Act* MPA
  - Scott Islands: ready for final regulatory review process
- upgrade decisions for priority, existing provincial and federal marine sites;
- gap analysis completed; and
- MPA project fully operational.

BY JUNE 2008:

- identification of a comprehensive set of areas of conservation interest and network options to fill gaps and complete the network.

BY DECEMBER 2012:

- a comprehensive and representative network of MPAs in place.

## NOTES

- 1 Why? International commitments on MPAs are around representation; representation is widely regarded internationally as the most efficient and effective mechanism for protecting biodiversity, especially when knowledge is limited; representation provides a solid ecological basis from which threatened species and habitats can recover; because it's a measurable objective; representation has been used to successfully drive the design of the terrestrial PA network in BC and terrestrial and marine PA networks around the world.
- 2 Benefits of adopting the IUCN MPA categories:
  - Imposes a requirement for clarity in stating objectives and consistency across the system.
  - Describes the rationale behind the selection of an area for protection and the actions permissible in the area.
  - Facilitates more accurate international comparisons and reporting across jurisdictions using very different nomenclature for their MPAs.
  - System is flexible and supports innovations (e.g. categorizing water column vertically as well as horizontally – Tasmanian Seamount; upper zone Cat VI, lower zone Cat. 1a)
  - Given the range of legal and regulatory tools in place, and the emerging vision of the network, BC is well positioned to adopt and apply the IUCN classification system.
- 3 This was seen as an essential foundation for subsequent planning in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The system was developed over 18 month period with collaboration of experts, planners and public (fishers, coastal residents, park rangers, and others with specialized knowledge) through iterative workshops.

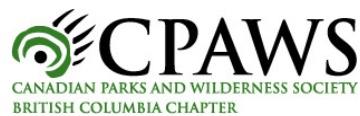




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