

TOWARDS A PROVINCIAL OCEAN AND COASTAL STRATEGY

A Submission by Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society & World Wildlife Fund Canada

OPPORTUNITY: To position BC as a world leader in ocean and coastal management, as a basis for economic prosperity and ocean health.

Rationale

The ocean and coastal zone is critical for ecological health, economic prosperity, and human wellbeing across BC. Properly managed, our ocean can sustain a wide range of economic sectors (including transportation, seafood, energy, and tourism) as well as recreational and cultural pursuits. However, threats to the health of the ocean – including threats to iconic species such as salmon and killer whales – are increasing; at the same time, marine economic activity is expanding,¹ and conflicts over competing ocean uses are continuing. There is no question that we urgently need improved and integrated ocean and coastal zone management; the question now is whether the Province of BC will take this opportunity to establish its leadership role in shaping and determining BC’s marine legacy.

Provincial central and line agencies are already facing a number of pressing, ocean-related policy issues requiring direction: climate change strategies; the release of the Pacific Salmon Forum report; offshore oil and gas development; ongoing Marine Protected Area (MPA), National Wildlife Area and National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) initiatives; First Nations’ assertions of title to coastal and marine areas and interest in marine planning; energy planning; tourism planning; Asia-Pacific gateway development; economic development in coastal communities, and more. An Ocean and Coastal Strategy would provide a sound strategic and policy framework within which BC could respond effectively to existing and emerging ocean issues, in a manner that consistently advances provincial aspirations and priorities.

Without an Ocean and Coastal Strategy, the Province’s options are limited. The options are: either inaction, which will inevitably allow ocean and coastal issues to escalate and intensify with long-term costs to our environment and economy; or the current strategy of piecemeal, weak engagement in ocean programs and processes led by other parties and governments, allowing external priorities to drive BC’s policy agenda. A meaningful BC Ocean and Coastal

¹ Studies commissioned by the BC government confirm the value and importance of its ocean and coastal zone to business, trade, community stability and First Nations culture. Business in the marine environment is already worth \$11.6 Billion in direct revenue. The various components of the ocean sector in total comprise 7-8% of the BC economy, and there is substantial potential for growth in a number of sectors including energy, tourism, and transportation.

Strategy would enable the Province to adopt a proactive approach to protect our natural marine legacy and realize the economic promise of sustainable ocean and coastal resource development.

Our vision: Managing for ocean health and resilience

We firmly believe that the opportunity now exists to make BC's coastline and ocean the world's best-managed marine ecosystems, and that this will bring unparalleled economic and social benefits to the province. Along with our partners and allies, we are working towards six key objectives:

- the establishment of a sound and rigorous ecosystem-based management regime within and across economic sectors, and linking marine and terrestrial ecosystem management;
- the establishment of an ecologically viable network of marine protected areas and/or conservancies;
- the development and implementation of sound, comprehensive, integrated marine spatial plans;
- investment in sustainable, resilient, thriving marine economic sectors, technology, infrastructure, and capacity;
- the development and implementation of strategies to minimize or eliminate the occurrence of pollution or ecological damage;
- the development and implementation of interim protection measures for species, ecosystems, and biological processes threatened by current or future development, and by the impacts of climate change, until final management measures are in place.

While clearly this work involves many parties, we see a number of opportunities for BC to engage and indeed to play a leadership role. As First Nations, federal agencies, western US states, and stakeholders pursue – singly or in collaboration – initiatives in marine spatial planning, conservation, ecosystem-based management, and economic development, BC can bring important expertise as well as a forward-looking, “made-in-BC” style that advances provincial priorities and interests.

Benefits of a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy

As noted above, a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy would establish a clear framework for provincial action and decisions on a range of fronts. It would position the province as a strong and pro-active player with the authority, will, and ability to take charge of its environmental and economic future.

Moreover, development and implementation of a sound, clearly articulated ocean and coastal zone strategy would bring recognition that the BC government is a world leader in this area, positioned to address not only BC issues related to sustainable ocean and coastal zone development, but also emerging global issues that affect and are affected by activities on the BC coast. As marine conservation, planning, and management initiatives gain traction around the world, and as public awareness of and concern about ocean issues continues to rise, a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy could enable BC to move from the sidelines to a central role, providing a legacy of ocean leadership to BC, the Pacific Coast Collaborative, and to the world.

With this clear leadership, an effective BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy will have a broad range of both immediate and long-term environmental, economic, and policy benefits:

- *Marine ecosystem health and resilience*, through the application and integration of ecosystem-based management, marine conservation, and climate change adaptation strategies;
- *Socio-economic well-being*, through strategies to stabilize, diversify, and strengthen economic sectors and communities that face impacts from the loss of traditional industries and from the impacts of climate change; and by reducing the ocean user conflicts that create social and economic instability.
- *Internal efficiencies and cost savings*, through improved integration of policies and initiatives. A more cohesive approach based on integrated management will allow for more effective and efficient delivery of provincial commitments and objectives as a result of more streamlined decision-making and harmonized program delivery.
- *Opportunities to leverage resources*, through strategic partnerships and collaborations. Other parties including the government of Canada, First Nations, US states, philanthropic foundations, international NGOs, and businesses are increasingly turning their attention to the ocean and to marine planning. A number of ocean and coastal initiatives are already under way in BC that are drawing significant new expertise, tools, and funding. An Ocean and Coastal Strategy would enable BC to leverage these partnerships and resources towards provincial objectives.
- *Economic certainty and opportunity*, by providing a foundation for sustainable new ocean industries and sectors, as well as both public and private investment in workforce skill development, new technologies, and infrastructure. Marine spatial plans and EBM regimes will support long-term certainty and economic sustainability. This in turn will provide for increased employment, trade, and economic returns in a broad range of sectors. The province would also benefit from increased personal, corporate, and sales tax revenue as a result of a strengthened marine economy.
- *Positive relationships and leadership*, through effective and productive engagement with First Nations, the government of Canada, local governments, and US state governments. An Ocean and Coastal Strategy would enable BC to take an active role in designing and guiding the various marine initiatives now under way in our ocean, instead of a future, reactive role. It would show that BC takes seriously its responsibilities (both legal and moral) as steward of the province's natural resources and owners of the inland waters of most marine water bodies, and would enhance BC's position in any future legal disputes over marine resources and passages, including Queen Charlotte Sound, Hecate Strait and Dixon Entrance.

Key Elements of a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy

a) Core principles

Although a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy would provide an important framework to mesh and strengthen existing provincial policy priorities, the Strategy cannot simply focus on issues and initiatives currently being managed by individual provincial agencies. To be effective, the Strategy must be grounded in a recognition that

- the ocean and coastal zones are central to BC's environmental well-being, to our economic prosperity, and, fundamentally, to our way of life;
- ocean and coastal zones are not biophysically separable from terrestrial ecosystems, and our future sustainability and adaptation to climate change requires that we carefully manage and maintain essential land-sea biological processes;
- decisions about ocean and coastal management, in our own waters and beyond, will have profound impacts on the future of BC communities and industries;
- the management of ocean and coastal zones cannot be constrained by the artificial limits of bureaucratic mandates;
- BC must take strong action to protect and conserve our marine resources and ecosystems, to ensure that the development of our marine economy is sustainable, and to help BC marine industries and coastal communities prepare for the impacts of climate change; and
- the goals and objectives of a BC ocean and coastal strategy can best be achieved in collaboration with others.

b) Outcomes and objectives:

The Strategy should set out clear outcomes and objectives that mesh ecological health and resilience, human and community well-being, and economic prosperity. These objectives should also include measurable targets for indicators of ecological, economic, and community health that can be embedded into a range of ocean-related policies and programs.

c) Implementation strategies:

The Province could pursue these goals and objectives in a variety of ways. We believe that the most effective Ocean and Coastal Strategy would combine three main elements:

1. independent action, where required;
2. engagement in existing and new marine planning and management partnerships and regional initiatives, wherever these can be leveraged to the Province's advantage (Appendix 1 lists a variety of existing and emerging initiatives that provide excellent opportunities for leverage and leadership);
3. the establishment of a venue for coast-wide engagement with sectoral and community leaders to provide ongoing advice and information-sharing.

An Ocean and Coastal Strategy that combines all of these items would clearly position BC to determine its own future, while also demonstrating a commitment to develop meaningful collaborative management structures, partnerships and processes. It would allow the Province to

respond quickly and consistently to issues as they arise, while taking advantage of the opportunities offered by partnerships and longer-term leadership initiatives. It would enable BC to tailor programs to the distinct needs of individual economic sectors and geographic regions, while maintaining a consistent, made-in-BC, coast-wide policy framework.

A BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy based on strong coherent action, collaborative governance, and forward-looking engagement is crucial for our future health and prosperity. Along with many other parties among BC communities and economic sectors, we look forward to working with the BC government to make our ocean and coastal zones the best-managed in the world.

Appendix 1

Potential avenues for implementing a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy

The Province has nothing to gain – and much to lose – by excluding itself from the conversations that are currently under way to decide the future management of the Pacific Ocean and coastal zone; or by approaching these in a piecemeal, isolated fashion. The following existing and emerging initiatives all offer avenues for the implementation of a BC Ocean and Coastal Strategy, and each also offers distinct leadership opportunities:

- *Pacific Coast Collaborative*: Continued engagement offers BC an opportunity to take concrete steps to address pressing issues related to ocean health and climate change impacts. As California and other states move into more focused work on marine spatial planning, BC's engagement will help to secure essential biological and economic linkages, while also positioning BC as an important player in this coastal alliance.
- *Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area (PNCIMA) ocean planning process*: Many industry leaders and coastal communities are demanding that BC join the PNCIMA process to represent the interests of BC citizens and businesses. This process also offers BC the opportunity to build on its landmark success in the Great Bear Rainforest, by offering the world its first model of integrated rainforest/ocean management: a regime designed to sustain biological processes and socio-economic interests that cross marine and terrestrial systems. First Nations have already commenced their own marine plans as sub-components of PNCIMA planning and will be identifying conservation and development opportunities in their territories that will impact BC government programs and objectives.
- *Innovative ocean partnership*: Coastal First Nations, DFO, and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation are currently exploring the possibility of establishing a public-private partnership vehicle to support the PNCIMA planning process. BC's participation would demonstrate a commitment to planning for the future of our natural resources and communities, while also allowing BC to benefit from a substantial investment of new private-sector funding.
- *Ocean Leadership Council*: There has been discussion among a number of ocean sector leaders and funders about the possibility of establishing a venue for information-sharing and solution-building with respect to ocean issues. This could offer an important vehicle for collaboration and advice between BC and many of its key constituents.
- *West Coast Aquatic Management Board*: This existing collaborative body includes BC government agencies and brings a new approach to managing aquatic and ocean resources in the Nuuchahnulth territory. By uniting First Nations, local, provincial and federal government agencies, industry and marine conservation organizations, this region provides another model for developing an integrated oceans management plan. The

province provided important leadership that should be maintained and meshed with other provincial ocean and coastal actions.

- *MPA Network*: The three federal agencies with MPA responsibilities are developing a collaborative, science-based approach to the identification and designation of a network of marine protected areas on each of Canada's coasts. BC has had a longstanding interest in MPAs and could finalize the draft agreement with the federal government and partner in the establishment of this network, which would include some long standing sites like the proposed Gwaii Haanas and Southern Strait of Georgia NMCAs.