

April 14, 2023

Joint Feedback from Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations on the British Columbia Coastal Marine Strategy Policy Intentions Paper

Sent by email: LWRS.CoastMarine@gov.bc.ca

We write to share our support for the direction taken in the Coastal Marine Strategy Policy Intentions Paper and to provide four high-level recommendations on how the intentions listed in the paper can be transformed into a strong and effective Coastal Marine Strategy.

We are pleased to see that the Intentions Paper was co-drafted with representatives from coastal First Nations and that it outlines a roadmap towards conserving and restoring coastal habitats, enhancing climate resilience, supporting community well-being, and incorporating holistic marine use plans. The health of coastal and marine ecosystems is vital, not only to communities on the coast, but to those located throughout the interior of the province – a thriving coast is essential for the future of British Columbia.

While this a promising start, we provide four recommendations to ensure the intentions listed in the paper lead to a meaningful strategy.

1. If we are to fully realize the benefits from the Coastal Marine Strategy, we must ensure that intentions are supported by concrete actions and measurable goals.

We urge you to move beyond generalities within the strategy and strengthen intentions by establishing specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound goals. Setting measurable targets for environmental and socio-cultural outcomes and evaluating progress through iterative reviews can hold partners accountable, identify gaps and emerging issues, and maximize strategy benefits.

2. Enacting or amending legislation is key to strong, integrated coastal management.

In the absence of a coastal law, the strategy is vulnerable to an inevitable change in the political landscape. Without an accompanying coastal law, the strategy would be more likely to fall short of meeting the outcomes listed in the Intentions Paper, thereby failing to make meaningful change. A commitment to legal reforms will strengthen the delivery of the Coastal Marine Strategy and ensure the province has the ability to sufficiently manage coastal ecosystems.

3. Effective monitoring is essential for ensuring the long-term health and protection of the coast.

To ensure a resilient future for the coast, the strategy should include a comprehensive and collaborative monitoring plan to adequately assess ecosystem health and understand the cumulative impacts of anthropogenic activities. Robust monitoring can be achieved through

adequate funding, engaging in collaborative projects with coastal communities and First Nations, and utilizing or expanding upon existing monitoring efforts, such as community science initiatives, Indigenous guardian programs, and nonprofit work.

4. Implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) throughout all phases of this strategy.

While we are pleased to see the co-development of the Intentions Paper with coastal First Nations, it is crucial that collaborative relationships with First Nations continue beyond the drafting process, and are seen in action with future co-management structures and plans. Continued engagement will ensure the strategy is meaningfully co-developed – representing the many viewpoints of coastal First Nations and addressing the issues most pressing to their communities.

All our organizations support the development of the Coastal Marine Strategy and have provided these high-level recommendations, as well as the feedback of our own individual organizations, in order to ensure the strategy will be as strong and resilient as possible. We need a Coastal Marine Strategy that is informed by meaningful engagement with coastal communities, First Nations, and non-governmental organizations, like ours. We encourage all partners to consider this joint feedback and review our individual submissions to ensure we implement a clear, coordinated, and comprehensive strategy for protecting and managing the coast.

We look forward to continuing our work with you and Indigenous governments on this initiative.

Sincerely,

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