

Marine Planning 10:20 min

DES NOBELS Director, Area A, Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District

At one time there was very little going on within the region other than some minor logging and fisheries. That was essentially it. But as of late, in the last couple of decades, we've seen a lot of other interest from other entities within the world to access our place, to get uses out of it. You have the oil and gas industry, you have the renewable energy industry. There's a range of recreational structures that are building up here from cruise ships to major sport fishing and recreational fishing opportunities.

So that is coming our way if it isn't already here, and the pressures are becoming quite substantial in terms of the marine environment. There are a lot of pressures out there. There's a lot of need for access. How do you best develop that? Coming from a governance role, we have a tendency to plan things very rigorously. We're both obligated and legislated, to be perfectly honest, to provide responsible planning on behalf of our constituents.

So this sort of fits in with the overall. We've done a very comprehensive land management plan here in the north coast for a number of years. That was instituted. We have the Central Coast Plan as well. We've done a range of things around the terrestrial, and now it's time to take a look that marine and say, "Alright – how do we want to use this environment, and what would be the best and most responsible uses of this environment?"

JIM McISAAC BC Commercial Fishing Caucus, MaPP Marine Advisory Committee

The idea of integrated planning really comes from the UN Convention of Law of the Sea, which was ratified in 1994.

And one of the major bases for that was to ensure that coastal communities are connected to the resources that are on their doorsteps and that independent fishermen have access to those resources, and that they're not just taken from the oceans by foreign countries coming in and fishing our coast. And the Canadian government's response //was our Oceans Act that set out and tasked the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to take that leadership role and develop integrated plans for sustainable development on our coast to protect the ecosystems. So they have a mandate to lead that, and they really need to step up and take that leadership because of the importance of the oceans to our country and to the people on this planet and to all the other species on this planet as well.

ART STERRITT Executive Director, Coastal First Nations

My name is Art Sterritt and I'm the Executive Director for the Coastal First Nations.

Our territories extend from out the mainland around the top end of Vancouver Island all the way to the BC-Alaska border. So it's about two-thirds of the coast of BC.

And we're an organization that plans for the future. That's really what it's all about. Everything that we do has to be based on a plan. So we began together, working together on a plan to breathe life into the rights and title that we have in this region. We do that by land use planning. We do that by marine use planning. And so we began with a massive land use plan that became known as the Great Bear Rainforest.

Narrator

In the mid-1990s, an epic battle over the clearcutting of ancient rainforests – a battle which came to be known as the War in the Woods - raged along the BC coast. Lasting a decade - this conflict was finally resolved when the opposing parties arrived at a joint vision that created the land use plan for the Great Bear and protected 50% of the Great Bear rain forest.

Narrator

The strategy to resolve conflicts over natural resources by collaborative planning is now being put into action in the waters of the Great Bear Sea – where our demands on the ocean are stressing both the marine environment and local communities - to the limit.

WARREN WARTTIG Biologist, Interfor

And so planning, whether it's terrestrial or marine, is no different.

Looking now, it seems like it was obvious we should have done this a long time ago. Forest companies started to realize pretty early on, particularly with the Great Bear Rainforest, that you couldn't just fight it, it had to be a joint exercise.

A lot of the things I do outside of the planning is restoration, and I learned quite early on that talking with First Nations, and particularly the elders, on what was there before was incredibly valuable information, and it steered a lot of my decision-making.

The relationships with First Nations now that we have in the Great Bear Rainforest are by and large quite good.

ART STERRITT Executive Director, Coastal First Nations

We have taken that blueprint for success on the terrestrial side and moved that over into the marine side. And that's where we always want industry to be with us, whether it's the BC Seafood Alliance, which represents the majority of commercial licenses in the province, or some small sector. We want them all in the room. We want everybody in the room. We're pretty pragmatic. We recognize that people have needs. They have privileges they've been granted by various governments, and we recognize those as well, but they also have to recognize that we have rights that we're not going to allow to be undercut.

DOUGLAS NEASLOSS Kitasoo Band Council & Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Integrated Resource Authority Stewardship Director

I remember the first battles for the Great Bear Rainforest back in the 90s, and I was still in high school then and I remember going to some of the meetings that they had. A lot of forest companies kind of had a schedule to come and log the Great Bear Rainforest. It wasn't known as the Great Bear Rainforest back then, but at the time, you know, my community basically said that we have plans for our land and for our water, and we talked about protection. We talked about protection for both, and we didn't really see land and water as two separate things.

But unfortunately the way the provincial and federal governments work, that's the only - land is provincial and feds is water, so we had to separate the two in order to come forward with some solid protections. So I think we started working on the land use planning first, and back then we looked at about 50% protection for the territory, which is huge, for the area, but wanted to protect values that the Kitasoo/Xai'Xais people had in those areas. So we picked some very key areas and looked at protecting, you know, all the species within those areas, including the forests. Now we have about 47.5% of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais' territory locked up in protected area.

Now we're able to sit down with forestry companies and determine where forestry is going to happen, and making sure that those forest companies aren't impacting food areas, cultural areas, ecological areas. So that's been very important.

And I think now we want to kind of translate that sort of management on to the marine side. By developing these marine spatial zones, like we have on the land side that will help us protect multiple species and make sure that those species continue to be there, and not just for First Nations, but for everyone.

GARY WILSON General Manager, Heiltsuk Economic Development Corporation

We've got to strike this balance, and it's very difficult. We have to be profit oriented, but at the same time we have to consider our environment. And the value of that environment is part of our balance sheet.

We look at that environment as a way to sustain us now and into the future.

It's not like we're saying 'no' to business, but what we're saying is 'no' to destructive development that's gonna destroy our ecosystems and our environment,

We're doing business in a different way so that when you want to come into our territory you know that there's going to be a viable opportunity here long term. And that if, if industry, whether they're independent or larger corporations, work with us we know that we can guarantee a long term access, whatever resource is in our territory, but we have to protect what's left. It's very important.

LARRY GREBA Director, Kitasoo Development Corporation

the ecosystem has to support itself first, before it can support anyone from the outside. So the conservation needs to maintain the species that are here, to maintain the people that are living in it, whether it's a First Nation or non-First Nation community. And then if, if there's surplus that can support people from the outside, then by all means, there's those opportunities.

So this has allowed people to take stock, I think, in marine planning in terms of all the resources. So all that detail work was done, looking at every resource: what needed to be protected for conservation, which areas? What system of protection was necessary? Which areas were important culturally for people to access for food. And then you look at – OK, what's the fat that's left over in terms of the opportunity, once you've looked after the ecosystem and cultural needs, and then of course you identify certain areas as well that can support certain types of industry, whether it is shellfish farming, whether it is fin fish farming, whether it's a marine hydro project, you know, with a turbine and a tidal turbine. Wind power is being looked after in terms of energy needs because that's often a marine industry, because they build the towers in marine sites. So all of these things are being kind of looked at into the future.

Shipping 2:00 min

Narrator

Marine traffic is estimated to increase three fold over the next decades along the British Columbia coast – the Marine Planning Partnership is asking for a comprehensive analysis of the inherent risks and impacts that are associated with increased ship traffic and for an emergency response plan to reduce the threat and impacts of an incident.

STAFFORD REID EnviroEmerg Consulting

Well we have actually a lot of shipping right now in BC. We don't even have to talk about enhanced shipping. There's enough out there to warrant investments.

I used to be the environmental emergency planner and analyst for the BC Ministry of Environment for the last 20 years, with a particular focus on marine oil spill response. And that segued into looking at marine vessel casualty in general.

We haven't looked at the whole matter of coastal protection as it relates to marine vessels – whether it's the marine vessel casualty, the ability of all vessels and not just oil spills, and as well as the chronic impacts of operational impacts from noise, sound, acoustical noise, and emissions and evasive species.

Another example is chemicals. We carry chemicals in bulk in carriers. Chemicals are very much a big part of our container vessel casualty, and we don't have a marine chemical response regime yet. We don't have that capability

And that's one of the reasons why MaPP is stepping out and talking about marine vessel casualties, all types of shipping sectors, all types of cargoes, all types of risks to bring it into the context of good coastal management, good coastal planning, and bring it in within their overall planning strategy. And then once you get that going, then you can ask the right questions and make sure that there's action being taken.