



To: **Strathcona Regional District Board members**

July 12, 2023

Purpose

A summary of the June 20th North Vancouver Island Marine Plan Advisory Committee meeting I attended as the appointed SRD representative to the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP).

The MaPP plan is beginning a review process. The plan will be amended to correct errors, reflect current local & environmental conditions and align with current priorities of MaPP partners. This is an opportunity for the SRD to provide input, strengthen the plan and make it relevant for implementation over the next 10 years.

A report on cultural tourism opportunities within the North Vancouver Island region is underway. The report includes an inventory of cultural tourism products in the subregion and across Canada, a case-study of Knight Inlet Lodge (owned by Nanwakolas Council), and exercises to assist in developing new cultural tourism businesses.

A report on loxiwe (clam garden) restoration is almost complete. MaPP partners have collaborated with researchers in BC and Washington State to develop a document for First Nations interested in revitalizing clam tending practices and restoring previously tended clam gardens. The report will include best practices and case studies from the Southern Gulf Islands National Park Reserve and Swinomish Indian Band.

A summary of kelp monitoring was presented. Kelp monitoring by First Nations Guardians has been underway for several years now and has spanned from Quadra Island to Malcolm Island.

- The abundance of bull kelp in the North Vancouver Island sub-region has declined by notable amounts over the past four years. Decreases have been observed in the north end of Quadra Island, the Johnstone Strait, and the Broughton Archipelago. Declines have typically been observed in areas that share similar characteristics of shelter from high currents and large populations of urchins.
- In 2021 the Wei Wai Kum Guardians observed a decrease in kelp abundance across many of their kelp survey sites; subsequent liaison with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations resulted in a precautionary closure of kelp harvest.
- Two of the largest kelp beds in the Discovery Islands, located at the north end of Quadra Island, have recently decreased considerably in spatial cover and abundance. Owen Bay is a unique location; the urchin in Owen Bay has been exceptionally high since surveys started. The primary bed in Owen Bay has decreased in size by 42% relative to its peak in 2020. The Chain Islands in Kanish Bay are habitat for another historically large bull kelp bed. The urchin population in this area is also high. The largest of the kelp beds in the Chain Islands has decreased in size by over 70% from 2019 to 2022.
- Guardian monitoring and field research will continue to collect information on oceanographic conditions, urchin abundance, and other potential stressors across areas where persistent kelp decline has been observed along with areas where kelp may be more resilient. Genomics work is underway to learn more about the differences between west coast and inner coast bull kelp, which will aid future kelp recovery efforts.
- There is a very interesting storymap on Regional Kelp Monitoring on the North Pacific Coast produced by MaPP available [here](#).