

Coastal Marine Strategy

Policy Intentions Paper Feedback
TBuck Suzuki Foundation

Who We Are

The T. Buck Suzuki Foundation was founded in 1981 by commercial fishermen to protect habitat, prevent pollution, and promote sustainable fisheries. Our namesake, Tatsuro “Buck” Suzuki was an environmentalist and commercial fisherman from the 1920’s, who’s environmental ethics and social justice values ground the organization. The Foundation strongly supports integrated ecosystem based management in marine planning, connecting decision makers with affected communities and stakeholders through open, transparent, collaborative processes. We believe that healthy marine ecosystems and the wellbeing of coastal communities are intrinsically linked. People are a part of ecosystems, and fish harvesters have a direct connection with and knowledge of marine ecosystems. Coastal culture, economy, food supply, and ecosystem connections depend on a well managed access. Local fisheries are essential to the physical, economic, nutritional, cultural, social, and spiritual well-being of the coastal communities in BC.



Introduction

Our coastal people are the most important resource on our coast. It's encouraging to see a representation of the needs and wellbeing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous coastal communities represented in the Coastal Marine Strategy Intentions Paper, it could be stronger. By centering communities, facilitating local dialogue, building respectful relationships, and embracing holistic knowledge sharing we'll be able to tackle issues of climate change, social change, ecological resilience, culture, and economy together on our coast.

TBuck Suzuki Foundation's Ranking of Key Outcomes:

1. Trusting respectful relationships and community wellbeing
2. Holistic learning and knowledge sharing
3. Healthy productive coast, resilience to climate change, and thriving coastal economy

Revisions to CMS Vision

As stewards of coastal ecosystems on behalf of current and future generations, we aim to nurture healthy and productive ecosystems. We will manage them together in a good way to support sustainable prosperity and **(coexist with)** human health and well-being, while investing back into **(our people and)** the ecosystems that sustain us all.

Our coast is a valuable treasure, we support and commend BC's efforts to create a cohesive strategy that protects what makes our coast so special. Along the coastline of BC, communities dot the shore, each with its own unique history and culture, and each shares a life-sustaining relationship with the water. The ocean is at the heart of these communities – providing food, transportation, recreation, a sense of place, a spiritual connection, and much more. The relationship between these communities and the ocean helps to define their economic, social, and cultural fabric. The culture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous coastal communities in this province is intimately bound to fisheries and seafood. Today, the communities along the coast of British Columbia are facing a number of pressing challenges that are affecting the holistic health and well-being of local people. Coastal communities are dealing with a disconnect from decision making, a changing climate, changing social systems, rapidly evolving ecosystems, declining investments, loss of community infrastructure, increasing competition over marine space, loss of access to fisheries, and increasingly complex marine governance regimes. Local communities are feeling the impacts of these pressures and changes in very real ways. Although senior governments are striving to connect indigenous governments to decision making, non-indigenous communities are being left out. The presence of thriving communities on the coast is important for the entire province, as coastal communities are critical for the coastal economy, support food security, be the eyes on the water, act as first responders in the case of emergencies, and work to steward the marine environment. British Columbia's Coastal Marine Strategy presents a great opportunity to address the hard and soft infrastructure needs of communities along the coast and enhance the abundant ecosystem they call home.

Healthy and Productive Coast

Last year the world came together at COP15 in Montreal to protect biodiversity, and agreed to a new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to protect life on this planet¹². Of the 23 agreed on targets, Target 1, managing human activity in an integrated way, is arguably the most critical for protecting biodiversity along our coast. BC and 17 North Coast First Nations have done an admirable job in initiating this work through the North Coast Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP)¹³. Growing this coast wide, and engaging the federal partners in this work, will bring benefits coastwide. The CMS must recognize this valuable work and expand on it. Our foundation is in support of this, and some additional thoughts are described below.

Boost efforts to recover wild salmon

Salmon are vital to the culture, food security and economy of the West Coast, and support to boost salmon populations is needed. An integrated ecosystem based management (EBM) approach is needed. Can we continue to add 10s of millions of freshwater species in critical salmon rearing habitat while not considering the impacts? Should we not be looking at predator management, as commercial and recreational fisheries decline faster than salmon have declined? Given limited resources, should we reconsider the simpler portfolio management approach rather than the more complex weak stock management approach?

In addition to recommendations from scientists and local Indigenous knowledge, plans for salmon population recovery should



consider recommendations from salmon harvesters. Commercial harvesters have a long relationship with salmon and are deeply invested in supporting the recovery of salmon populations on the West Coast. A gathering in 2021 brought together active salmon harvesters to create a roadmap for a more viable, and sustainable commercial salmon fishery¹.

Recommendations from harvesters fall under two broad categories: boosting the production of salmon, and increasing salmon survival by reducing threats:

- Salmon are currently facing increased threats from exploding pinniped populations. Salmon harvesters are in support of a First Nations harvests for food, social and ceremonial purposes or commercial purposes and a Pinniped IFMP to bring pinnipeds into historical balance.
- Marine based salmon farms are having detrimental effects on wild populations and need to be decommissioned on the West Coast.
- High seas harvests of salmon are increasing. Canada needs to work with other nations to eliminate high seas fisheries that catch salmon and to enforce any existing treaties.
- In addition to these actions we need to increase investments in research to understand what is effecting salmon populations, and what more we can do.

Monitor coastal ecosystem health to better understand and assess risk

BC is currently suffering from weak legislation that has given companies the freedom to apply pesticides to wide areas of habitat with little oversight or monitoring. There needs to be an adjustment to the pest management plan so local communities

and Indigenous nations are consulted and included in the process of monitoring the health of their local ecosystems. In 2003 Bill 53 was passed, which reduced oversight of pest management plans, allowing plans to become valid automatically once they are submitted with no provincial staff review and approval. Unfortunately, this act considerably reduced the government's role in approving pesticide use; the government no longer holds the responsibility of reviewing and approving pest management plans. Instead, permit applicants must simply declare that they have prepared a plan in accordance with the regulations². This change in regulation removed the appeal process for pesticide use permits to the Environmental Appeal Board, removing Indigenous peoples as well as communities ability to participate as stewards of their local environment. Overall, these changes meant that much of the pesticide use on public land could escape scrutiny by the government, the public and the Environmental Appeal Board. We have been working to reinstate this appeal board and put the power of local environmental stewardship back into the hands of communities.





Protect and restore important coastal habitat

Marine protected areas will best serve our ecosystem and coastal communities if we ensure they are informed by local knowledge and established with the needs of adjacent communities in mind.

"It is a mistake to do to people, or for people, we need to do with people," UK Minister of Environment at IMPAC5.

BC's coast deserves an ecosystem-based management approach, integrated and collaborative decision making, building a common understanding of how best to protect our ecosystem while ensuring our coastal communities thrive together.

Resilience to Climate Change

Climate change will have a tremendous impact on coastal communities, and preparing for these changes is important as climate change continues to progress. Harvesters have given some insights into their perspective on climate change in the recent paper *Fishing for Solutions*³.

Changing climate is impacting species, populations and the ecosystems that sustain them with potentially profound consequences for the fisheries and communities that they support. To enhance the resilience of fisheries and fishing communities to climate change and the responsiveness of fisheries management, in-depth knowledge of both the ecological and social components of fisheries systems is needed to inform management. The Coastal Marine Strategy can help make these connections in real time.

As front-line workers for the fisheries sector, harvesters' perspectives and input are crucial to identifying priority areas for responding to the most urgent concerns related to climate change when it comes to fisheries. They are also valuable for developing effective strategies for bolstering resilience and the ability to respond to multiple challenges and emerging opportunities. The paper *Fishing for Solutions* surveyed harvesters to explore their perspectives and perceptions of commercial fish harvesters on the West Coast³.

Key perceptions from the fish harvesters who participated in the survey include the following:

- Climate change is happening and will impact future generations.
- Salmon fisheries are experiencing strong negative impacts from climate change.
- Albacore tuna and hake, as they move

northward, will result in positive B.C. fisheries impacts.

- Fishing is strongly tied to harvesters' well-being, identity, and connections.
- Changes in fisheries are stressful and affect harvester well-being.
- Current capacity for harvesters and management to adapt to fishery changes is low.
- Calculated vulnerability was higher for herring and salmon fisheries; it was lower for crab, halibut and rockfish fisheries.
- Harvesters have strong concerns about fishery management, access, and habitat loss.
- Participatory processes could help build more flexible, responsive management.



Trusting, Respectful Relationships

Open, transparent and collaborative governance is key for creating a resilient coast. Good facilitation can help diverse voices sing, and make knowledge accessible for decision makers. Process is the product: supporting roundtables, committees and councils that build respectful relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous coastal communities needs to be at the heart of the CMS so other elements can be carried out successfully. However, many harvesters and coastal communities currently feel disconnected when it comes to marine decision making. Taking time to understand the diverse histories and perspectives along the coast will go a long way when it comes to building trusting relationships and a successful Coastal Marine Strategy.

A clear CMS can help the province articulate on goals shared with communities and stakeholders in federal processes. Many communities and stakeholders are disconnected from federal government decision making regarding the marine resources they rely on for their livelihood. Often members of coastal communities who engage in governmental processes and advocate on behalf of fisheries on their coast don't see their point of view reflected or integrated into government planning. For example, fish harvesters are suffering from feelings of disempowerment and inability to create a stable future in the industry. A survey of Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters asked participants to rate how satisfied they are with their voice in decision making, and found that over 60% of harvesters were unsatisfied with their voice in decision making⁴. In addition, harvesters were unsatisfied with the future outlook. A full 77% of harvesters interviewed were concerned for future generations, they felt powerless to influence this future, effect positive change for their communities or offer secure livelihoods for future generations of harvesters⁴. Creating opportunities for a more engaged and local decision making process gives communities the opportunity to be heard and their needs considered, and it gives decision makers an opportunity to see first hand the communities their decisions effect.



Perceptions of wellbeing

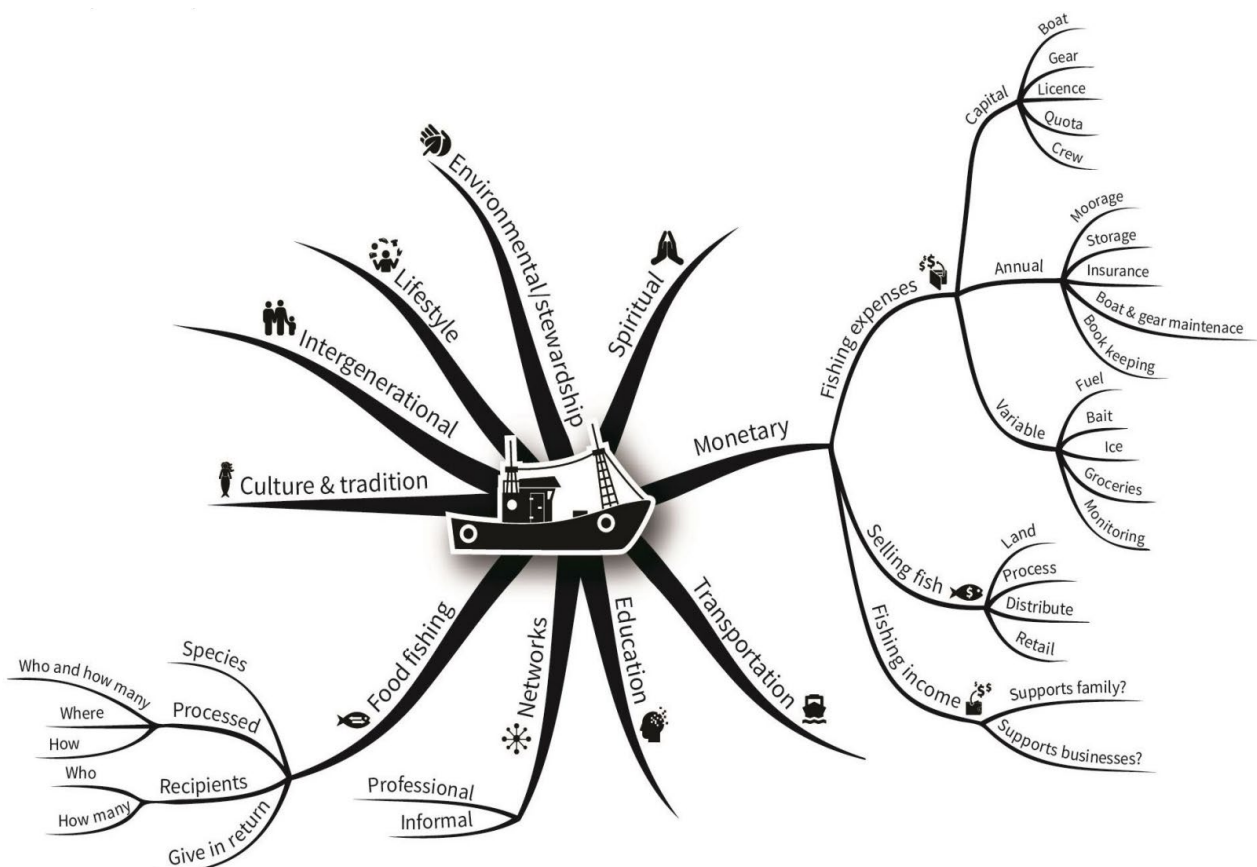


Source: Fishing for a Future, 2021

Holistic Learning and Knowledge Sharing

The objective to regularly collect and assess information and data on marine is critical for good management. The tangible economic values of the ocean-based economy are much easier to discern than the intangible values, the cultural ecosystem services. Getting a better understanding of these values including: socio-cultural, ecological, aesthetic, and spiritual values, derived from our ocean is of high importance, and deserves recognition in the creation of the Coastal Marine Strategy.

For example, the role commercial fishing plays in rural coastal communities is poorly documented; this is the case in Canada's Pacific North Coast. The role commercial fisheries play in the formal economy is only one of the values that fisheries bring to communities. In order to have effective management and planning processes, it is essential for decision-makers to understand and include the intangible values fisheries bring. In BC, commercial fish harvesters are historically important stakeholders of the marine environment, but the full value that this industry brings to families and communities is not well documented.



Source: Understanding Values in Canada's North Pacific: Capturing Values from Commercial Fisheries



Harvesters interviewed about their livelihood described a wide breadth of values that stem from fishing. Values included ecosystem connection, culture and tradition, intergenerational knowledge transfer, environmental stewardship, spiritual connection, transportation, networking, education, and seafood sharing⁵

Although these non-monetary values are less apparent or measurable in the formal economy, they contribute significantly to social capital, well-being, and resilience of coastal communities and therefore economies. Therefore, this full suite of benefits should be presented for consideration to decision makers.

What marine information or data would you be interested in?

The tangible economic values of the ocean-based economy are much easier to discern than the intangible values, the cultural ecosystem services. Getting a better understanding of these values including: socio-cultural, ecological, aesthetic, and spiritual values, derived from our ocean is of high importance, and deserves recognition in the creation of the Coastal Marine Strategy. This type of data is typically not available on maps, some ingenuity in sharing would be useful.

In terms of infrastructure, employment, services, and resources, the data and information that would support coastal communities, mapping this data to show opportunities and gaps is needed. Marine mapping is an incredibly useful tool, however many marine data layers needed are outdated or inaccessible to those who need it. Updating these data layers and making them openly available at a high resolution would be an incredible tool for marine scientists, industry and decision makers. Uniform high resolution layers allow for analysis to be more precise and localized.

Community Well-Being

There are a huge number of challenges facing rural coastal communities. The Coastal Marine Strategy for BC needs to address some of these, and hold improving community wellbeing as a core objective when making decisions on how to develop and change our coast.

Overall, human wellbeing in rural coastal communities is declining. This is driven, in part, by declining access to fish and a deterioration of a vibrant fisheries economy. The results of this include declining investments in coastal communities, crumbling infrastructure, lower retention of youth, reduced access to capital, declining local transportation, school closures, increasing costs for goods and services, higher unemployment, and increasing drug and alcohol use, and mental health challenges⁵.

Over the past three years, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the closures of and reductions to two important West Coast fisheries have only compounded these issues. It is imperative that the Coastal Marine Strategy keep the wellbeing of coastal communities at the forefront, and strongly consider the importance of less tangible values of the coastal economy: food systems, transportation, ecosystem connections, stewardship and monitoring of local resources, and intergenerational transfer of knowledge⁵.



A Sustainable, Thriving Ocean Economy

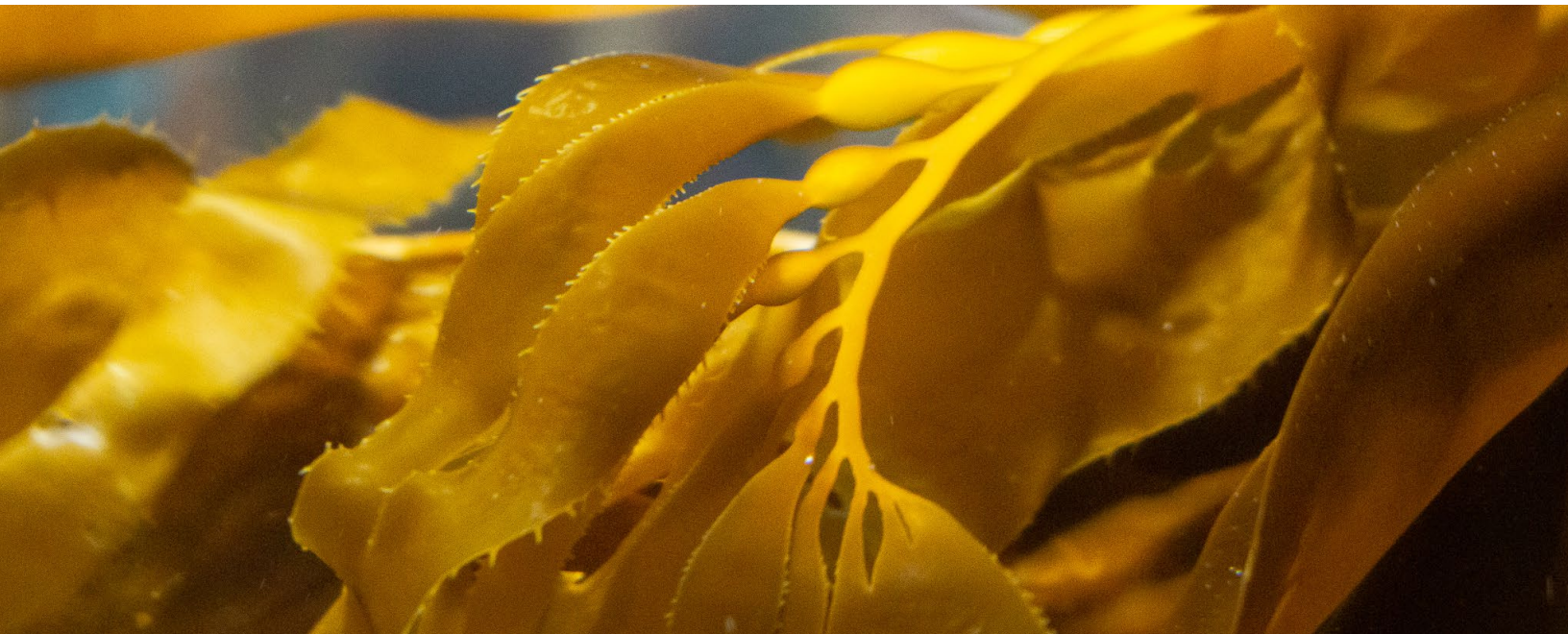
With regard to the ocean economy, BC's Coastal Marine Strategy needs to ensure existing and burgeoning industries provide economic and social benefits to coastal communities.

Advance Sustainable Aquaculture

There is growing interest and financial investment in seaweed aquaculture on the coast. While the aquaculture industry promises huge potential, there are still substantial gaps in knowledge about what benefits can realistically be drawn from seaweed aquaculture on the West Coast and insufficient regulation to protect communities and the environment. This industry should be developed with a precautionary approach: conservation minded, at an appropriate scale, and with local ownership and control. Farms should be small scale until knowledge gaps can be satisfactorily filled and the impact on wild coastal ecosystems and coastal communities is shown to be minimal. History has shown that allowing corporations to scale up without appropriate regulations often

results in far-reaching detrimental effects on both the environment and the socio-economic health of the communities where they operate.

Allowing corporations to monopolize where and how seaweed is farmed risks devastating impacts on coastal ecologies, economies, and cultures. In order to support biodiversity, economically sustainable coastal communities, cultural vitality, and climate change resiliency, the province needs to evaluate the best seaweed farming practices in North America and seek regulatory frameworks based on those results before allowing corporations to build large-scale seaweed farms. In depth recommendations can be found in the position paper: *A Precautionary Approach to Seaweed Aquaculture in North America*⁷.

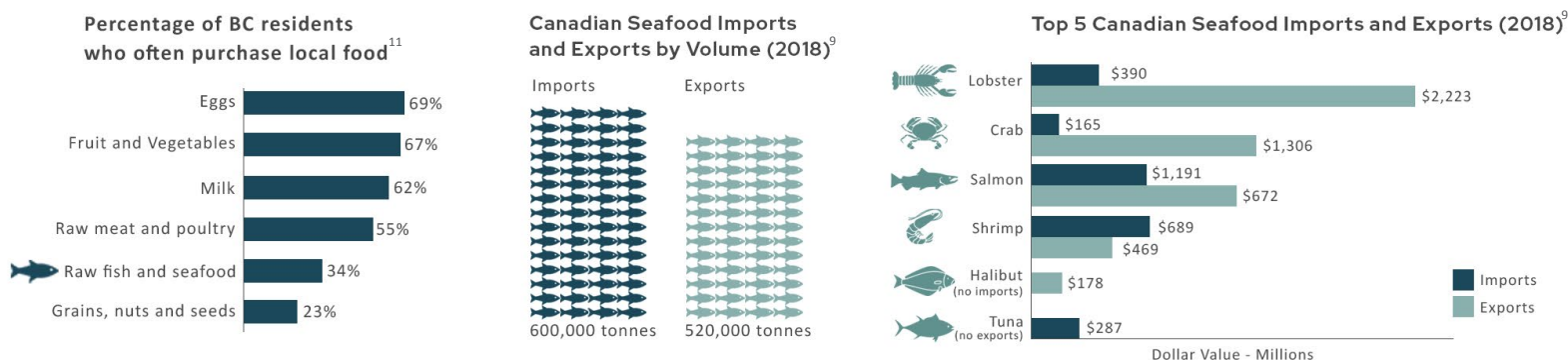


Support Marine Fisheries Economy

Coastal communities need access and infrastructure to remain linked to each other, and to link to adjacent fisheries resources, with local landings, processing and distribution possible from remote coastal communities. Working towards boosting processing and marketing of BC seafood, and exploring expansion of domestic processing are goals that align well with the needs of small-scale fish harvesters on the coast.

Increasing these opportunities will allow harvesters to increase the value of their products, and make BC seafood more accessible to local markets. Currently there is very limited availability of local seafood in many rural coastal communities, as the majority of wild seafood is exported to be processed and sold.

Despite BC's status as a top seafood producer in Canada (producing 171,128 metric tons in 2020⁸) the consumption of local seafood is low¹¹. Residents who live in BC and frequently shop locally are not commonly buying seafood. Lack of infrastructure and local access is a huge part of this problem.



Canada exports 90% of its seafood, and imports 85% of the seafood consumed in Canada every year. Furthermore many of the same types of seafood are exported, only to be imported from other countries with higher pollution and lower ecosystem protections for Canadian consumption⁹. We are missing out on the many social, economic, and ecological benefits of investing in our local food systems.

In addition to business infrastructure coastal communities are currently facing severe declines in infrastructure to support basic human needs. Harvesters are facing a lack of washroom and shower facilities¹⁰. These facilities used to be commonly available on fishing docks along the coast, but many have closed indefinitely in recent years. Harvesters rely on facilities like this after long fishing trips. The scarcity of such basic infrastructure is a sign of the immensity of barriers that harvesters are facing when navigating the steps to get fish from the boat to the plate.

Sources

1. [The Future of BC Commercial Salmon Fishing: An Active Fishermen's Guide to a Viable, Vibrant, and Sustainable Commercial Fishery. 2021](#)
2. [West Coast Environmental Law Deregulation Backgrounder Bill 53, 2023 - The Integrated Pest Management Act. 2003](#)
3. [Fishing for Solutions, Harvester perceptions of climate change vulnerability in Canada's Pacific Fisheries. 2022](#)
4. [Fishing For a Future. 2020](#)
5. [Understanding Values in Canada's North Pacific: Capturing Values from Commercial Fisheries. 2013](#)
6. Robinson Consulting and Associates Ltd. (2012). Socio-economic and Cultural Overview and Assessment Report for the Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ecosystem Management Branch, Oceans Division
7. [A Precautionary Approach to Seaweed Aquaculture in North America; Position Paper by the Seaweed Commons. 2022](#)
8. [Seafisheries landed quantity by province, 2020. Department of Fisheries and Oceans](#)
9. [Canada's Fish and Seafood Trade. 2018](#)
10. [How Does A Fisherman Know When His Industry Is In Trouble? The Shower Is Closed. 2023](#)
11. [BC Agrifood and Seafood Domestic Consumption Study. 2018](#)
12. [Final text of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. 2022](#)
13. [Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast \(website\)](#)



Appendix

Below are suggested revisions to wording of items in the Coastal Marine Strategy in blue

Vision:

As stewards of coastal ecosystems on behalf of current and future generations, we aim to nurture healthy and productive ecosystems. We will manage them together in a good way to support sustainable prosperity and **(coexist with)** human health and well-being, while investing back into **(our people and)** the ecosystems that sustain us all.

Outcome C: Trusting, Respectful Relationships

Responsible governance starts with respect: for the natural environment, for the connections between people and place, and for the management and stewardship responsibilities of all parties who share a role in taking care of the ocean. We intend to:

- Respect and uphold First Nations rights
- Evaluate the need for comprehensive coastal zone legislation to govern and manage BC coastal marine areas
- Advance collaborative stewardship between provincial, federal, local and Indigenous governments **(and active marine stakeholders)**
- Engage British Columbians in coastal marine management (e.g., more participatory structures, education and communication)

Outcome D: Holistic Learning and Knowledge Sharing

The best available information and data **(and knowledge)** help decision makers make more informed decisions about the coastal and marine environment. There are gaps in our knowledge and understanding of our coast **(we need to commit to continually learn and adaptively manage as we learn)**. To elevate marine information and learning we intend to work in partnership **(collaboration)** with others to:

Work with Indigenous partners to weave traditional knowledge with **(local and technical knowledge from marine stakeholders and)** western science for a deeper understanding of marine and coastal systems

Assess the value of the ocean-based economy holistically to account for socio-cultural, ecological, aesthetic, and spiritual values of the ocean

Enhance marine spatial data by mapping ecological and human use values, filling data gaps, and keeping information current

Improve availability of marine and coastal information (e.g., accessible open data, update provincial platforms, acknowledge and respect traditional **(and local)** knowledge)

Outcome F: A Sustainable, Thriving Ocean Economy

We need to transition to a resilient blue economy which is the sustainable use of marine resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean. We intend to:

- Invest in a diverse coastal and marine economy (e.g., renewable energy, conservation or restoration **(or regenerative)** economy, ecotourism)
- Co-develop enduring fiscal relations with First Nations governments
- Support the marine fisheries economy (e.g., secure fair allocation of stocks, boost processing and marketing of BC seafood, **(support identification and development of underutilized species)** explore expansion of domestic processing)
- Advance sustainable aquaculture (e.g., diversify finfish, shellfish and marine plant aquaculture, build skills in aquatic farming, advance innovative solutions)
- Support regenerative marine tourism (e.g., support sustainable travel that regenerates the environment)
- Manage cumulative effects (e.g., measure and respond to cumulative effects of resource use decisions on the ocean)

