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# Marine System Management

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# Marine System Management

## Introduction

BC Parks manages a system of parks and ecological reserves with a marine component. According to the World Centre for Marine Conservation, “marine protected areas are a crucial tool in almost any overall strategy for saving, studying, and sustainably using marine biological diversity”. BC Parks’ challenge is increased by the numerous provincial and federal jurisdictions that manage the marine environment. This section outlines the policies under which BC Parks will manage the marine environment within British Columbia’s park and ecological reserve system. The direction has come from several sources, including work undertaken by the Coastal Resource Strategy Study team, the Marine Protected Areas Working Group and the federal government’s National Marine Conservation Areas Policy.

## Legislation and Other Guidance

- ***Park Act (BC)***

Few references to specific management of the marine environment, although it has general applicability to the management of marine protected areas.
- ***Ecological Reserve Act (BC)***

Provides for the protection of marine features in ecological reserves.
- ***Wildlife Act (BC)***

Fish and marine wildlife species under provincial jurisdiction are managed in accordance with this legislation; administered by Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.
- ***Fisheries Act (BC)***

Refers to fisheries within the province or its coastal waters and the regulation of the aquaculture industry including oysters and kelp harvesting and other aquatic plants; administered by Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.
- ***Fish Protection Act (BC)***

Provides protection to fish and fish habitat; administered by Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.
- ***Fisheries Act (CAN)***

Management of offshore and tidal waters fisheries (including shellfish) is a federal Crown responsibility. Sets regulations for fishing and shellfish harvesting, and formulates fisheries management plans; administered by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- ***Canada Shipping Act (CAN)***  
Involves site selection, installation, and maintenance of transportation, navigation, and aids to navigation, and the operation of pleasure craft; administered by the Ministry of Transport.
- ***Pleasure Craft Sewage Pollution Prevention Regulations (CAN)***  
Enables the province to restrict the discharge of sewage into British Columbia waters, both marine and fresh water; administered by BC Environment on behalf of the federal Ministry of Transport.
- ***Migratory Birds Convention Act (CAN)***  
Guides the management of waterfowl and migratory birds, wherever found within the province; administered by the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.
- ***Oceans Act (CAN)***  
Part II provides for the development and implementation of a national strategy for the management of estuarine, coastal, and marine ecosystems; administered by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.
- **BC Parks Permit Administration Manual**  
Outlines policy and procedures concerning the administration of park use, resource use, research, and ecological reserve permits.
- **BC Parks Management Planning Policy**  
Governs the formulation of provincial park and ecological reserve management plans and management direction statements.
- **Procedures for Avoiding Infringement of Aboriginal Rights, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, July 1995**  
The procedures address the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks' policy to avoid, mitigate, or justify infringement on aboriginal rights when carrying out its mandate responsibilities, in a manner that is timely and considerate of the rights of all British Columbians. These procedures stem from the Cabinet-approved *Crown Land Activities and Aboriginal Rights Policy Framework* (1996), which applies to all provincial ministries overseeing activities and decisions on Crown land.

## **Policy – Management for Representation**

*BC Parks' park and ecological reserve system will be managed to maintain representative marine habitats.*

### ***Associated Policy***

#### **Inventory of Marine Features**

- BC Parks will complete inventories to determine the presence and abundance of representative features and features of management interest, particularly features at risk in the marine system (i.e., of biological communities, resident marine mammals and birds, fish, invertebrates, and plants, migratory use as well as special geological and oceanographic features within parks and ecological reserves).
- Areas, communities, and organisms subject to harvesting or considered potentially threatened otherwise will receive first priority for inventory efforts and will be subject to biological monitoring.

#### **Marine System Management Planning**

- BC Parks' marine protected areas management policies will complement those of other agencies responsible for conserving marine environments (includes upland and/or upstream environments).
- As part of the BC Parks' management planning program, separate marine management plans may be prepared to guide marine system management actions.
- Recognizing the important contribution of others to marine protected areas management, BC Parks will maintain strong alliances with user groups, universities, conservation organizations, and the private sector.
- BC Parks will undertake management activities that support provincial, interprovincial, and international marine initiatives.

## **Policy - Management of Special Features**

*Endangered, threatened, and vulnerable species and special or unique marine features will receive high management priority.*

### ***Associated Policy***

#### **Migratory and Special Behaviour Locations**

- Recognizing that parks and ecological reserves in the marine environment may have migratory use and special features associated with migratory use (mating, spawning, nursery locations), migratory use and migratory features will be assessed for significance.
- Areas that contain special or unique behaviour locations (such as rubbing beaches) will receive special management emphasis.

## **Policy – Conservation and Use**

*The conservation of viable, natural marine ecosystems in British Columbia's park and ecological reserve system will always take precedence over their use by people.*

### ***Associated Policy***

#### **Management**

- Marine protected areas will be managed to maintain marine ecosystem components and processes in as natural a state as possible.

#### **Consumptive Use**

- Within British Columbia's marine protected area system, a representative range of marine habitats will be closed to any consumptive use (i.e., strict preservation management category, Protected Areas Strategy).
- Consumptive use of the marine ecosystem may occur only in a sustainable manner and provided conservation objectives are not compromised.
- Once conservation needs have been met, consumptive uses that may be allowed include recreational fishing and recreational shellfish harvesting when consistent with the conservation and recreation objectives of individual parks.
- Allowable harvest levels of marine vertebrates and invertebrates will generally be more conservative in parks than adjacent areas.
- BC Parks will, in consultation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, phase out commercial harvest of those species that are attached to, and/or are otherwise part of the sea bottom ecosystem within the boundaries of parks and ecological reserves.
- Aquaculture is not an appropriate use within British Columbia's park and ecological reserve system.
- Vessel access within marine parks may be restricted in order to avoid disturbance or pollution of threatened, endangered or vulnerable species and/or their habitats.
- Those First Nations who have an aboriginal or a treaty right to fish for sustenance or ceremonial purposes may do so in all marine protected areas managed by BC Parks, subject to conservation requirements and public safety concerns.
- Artificial reefs will only be permitted in marine protected areas if identified in an approved management plan, an impact assessment has been completed, and provided that there is no adverse impact on the natural environment.

- Where compatible with the conservation and recreational objectives (as stated in the management plan) of the protected area, commercial fishing of transient species (e.g., salmon, herring) will be allowed subject to federal fisheries regulations.

## **Policy – Management of Knowledge**

*BC Parks will promote acquiring and sharing of knowledge to facilitate the effective conservation of the marine environment within British Columbia's park and ecological reserve system.*

### ***Associated Policy***

#### **Staff Training**

- BC Parks will train its staff to ensure that they have knowledge of sound marine management principles.

#### **Community/Partner Involvement**

- Recognizing that the effective conservation of marine environment relies on a well-informed and involved public, BC Parks will assist academic, public, and private groups and individuals by providing existing marine data related to parks and ecological reserves.
- BC Parks will encourage involvement with partners, academic, private, and public, in such activities as inventory, monitoring, and research to assist in acquiring more knowledge.

#### **Sensitive Information**

- Data which is sensitive for conservation reasons will not be released in response to routine requests, in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act*, s.18. Exceptions will be made only under specific circumstances (e.g., research necessary for conservation management purposes, impact assessments, etc.), and on the understanding that the information will not be released.