

# PROVINCIAL MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Whale watching near Robson Bight Michael Bigg Ecological Reserve



Tubeworms feeding in Gabriola Pass, Wakes Cove Park



Strawberry anemones in high current area in Surge Narrows Park



Parksville-Qualicum Wildlife Management Area protects the Craig Creek Estuary



Outer coast sea lion haul out in Hakai Lúxvbálfís Conservancy



Red rock crab in Ten Mile Point Ecological Reserve



BCParks

Ministry of Environment  
Environmental Stewardship Division  
Parks and Protected Areas Branch  
[www.bcparks.ca](http://www.bcparks.ca)

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### ***Rich and Diverse Coastal and Marine Ecosystems***

British Columbia's Pacific coast is one of the world's most biologically diverse and productive temperate marine environments. Island archipelagos, deep fjords, shallow mudflats, estuaries, kelp and eel grass beds, strong tidal currents and massive upwellings all contribute to an abundant and diverse expression of marine biodiversity. The northeast Pacific also ranks among the world's best for coastal cruising, scuba diving, sea kayaking, sport fishing and whale watching. Communities have been sustained on the coast for thousands of years and have developed a close relationship with the land and sea, creating a rich cultural history.

### ***Cooperative Management of Marine Resources***

Comprehensive protection of marine resources requires the cooperation of a full range of agencies involved in ocean management: federal and provincial governments and First Nations. The provincial government is responsible for the management of over 29,500 km of shoreline and seabed in the inshore and nearshore waters of B.C. The Province works with other levels of government on the management of resources under federal and local jurisdiction. As part of this coastal/marine stewardship mandate, the provincial government has established many marine protected areas (MPAs).

### ***Growing Marine Protected Area System***

B.C. has been the most active of all Canadian provinces in the establishment of MPAs. The first marine waters were protected in 1911 as part of the establishment of the province's first provincial park, Strathcona. The first marine parks at Montague Harbour and Rebecca Spit were created in 1957, primarily to provide safe anchorages and scenic shorelines for coastal cruisers. In 1961, Mitlenatch Island and the surrounding seafloor were designated as the first provincial park dedicated to the conservation of marine flora, fauna and habitat. Starting in the 1970s, MPAs began to be recognized as tools for marine ecosystem conservation. B.C. responded with the creation of new and larger areas such as Desolation Sound Provincial Park and Checleset Bay Ecological Reserve. The provincial government, through the Ministry of Environment, currently protects 149 marine areas in a system that stretches along the entire coast (as of August 2007).



Kelp forest at Race Rocks Ecological Reserve



Black brant geese protected in the Parksville-Qualicum Wildlife Management Area



Diver and anemone, Gowlland Tod Park



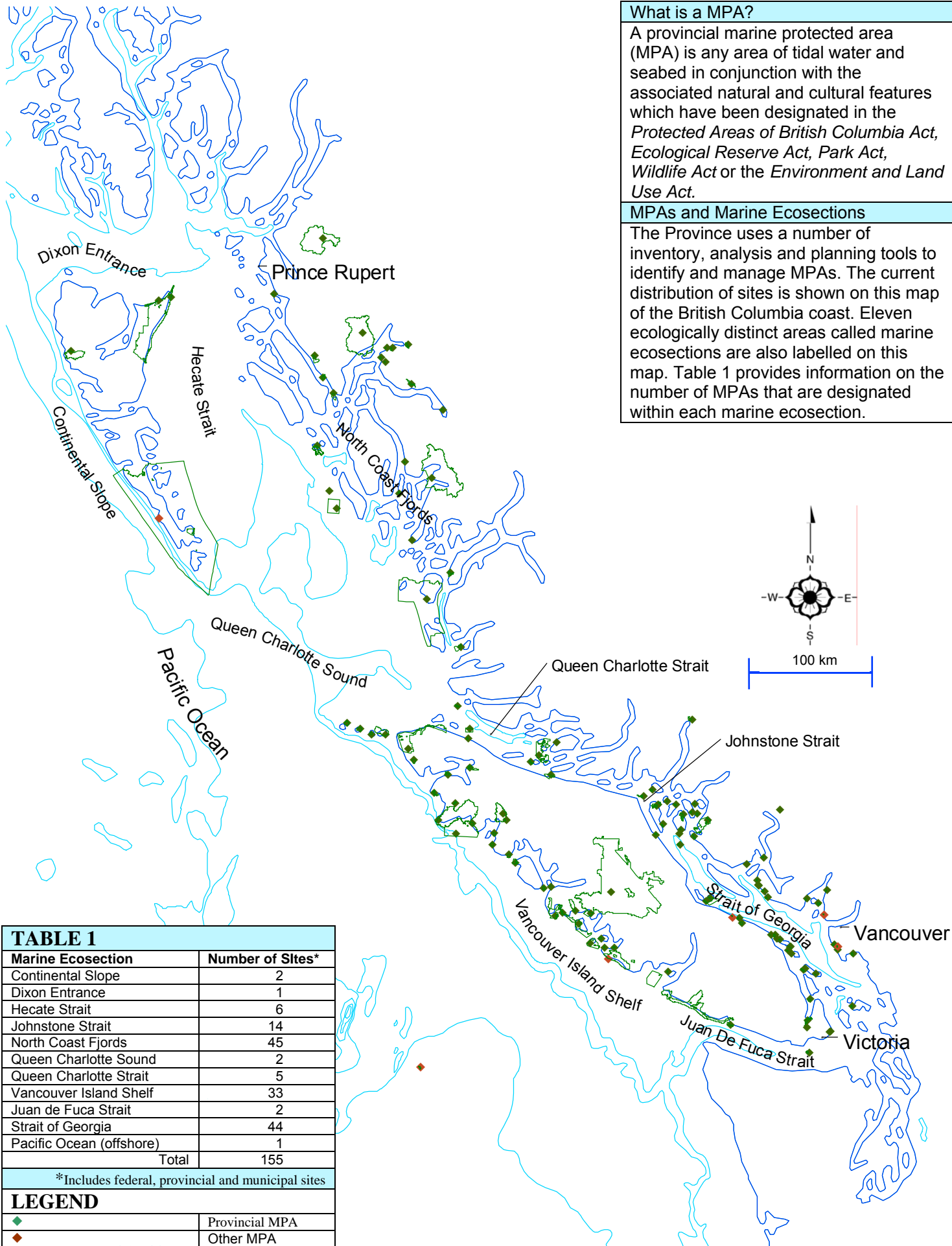
Safe anchorage in Octopus Islands Marine Park

**What is a MPA?**

A provincial marine protected area (MPA) is any area of tidal water and seabed in conjunction with the associated natural and cultural features which have been designated in the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*, *Ecological Reserve Act*, *Park Act*, *Wildlife Act* or the *Environment and Land Use Act*.

**MPAs and Marine Ecosystems**

The Province uses a number of inventory, analysis and planning tools to identify and manage MPAs. The current distribution of sites is shown on this map of the British Columbia coast. Eleven ecologically distinct areas called marine ecosystems are also labelled on this map. Table 1 provides information on the number of MPAs that are designated within each marine ecosystem.



Marine Ecosystem	Number of Sites*
Continental Slope	2
Dixon Entrance	1
Hecate Strait	6
Johnstone Strait	14
North Coast Fjords	45
Queen Charlotte Sound	2
Queen Charlotte Strait	5
Vancouver Island Shelf	33
Juan de Fuca Strait	2
Strait of Georgia	44
Pacific Ocean (offshore)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>

\*Includes federal, provincial and municipal sites

	Provincial MPA
	Other MPA



## *Threats to Marine Ecosystems*

- Physical alteration of critical habitat and marine areas
- Excessive harvest of resources
- Pollution
- Foreign or exotic species of fishes and marine plants
- Global climate changes



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## *Working in Co-operation with Others*

Some threats to marine ecosystems may be addressed through provincial MPA status:

- Most habitat-altering activities are prohibited or limited in MPAs
- All marine plants are protected from harvest
- Conservation-focussed fishing regulations are in place in a number of MPAs
- Voluntary holding of sewage by pleasure craft is encouraged
- Entry into sensitive estuaries is limited or prohibited

The Ministry of Environment is working with federal and local agencies, First Nations, coastal communities and others to cooperatively address issues such as:

- Determining guidelines and standards for recreational activities such as whale watching, commercial touring, sea kayaking and coastal cruising
- Establishing complementary conservation status for some MPAs
- Restoring degraded ecosystems and rebuilding overexploited fish stocks.



Diver and sponges near Satellite Channel Ecological Reserve



Tidal adventures in Saltery Bay Park



Cutthroat fishing in Newcastle Island Marine Park

## *For More Information*

For more information regarding British Columbia's provincial marine protected area system visit the BC Parks website at: [www.bcparks.ca](http://www.bcparks.ca)