

Proposed National Marine Conservation Area Reserve Southern Strait of Georgia

PROJECT UPDATE

Spring 2012

National marine conservation areas (NMCAs) are established to protect, conserve and present examples of Canada’s marine areas for the benefit of present and future generations. Parks Canada, in partnership with the Government of British Columbia, publicly launched a feasibility assessment for an NMCA reserve in the southern Strait of Georgia in 2005. Since then, consultations with First Nations, key stakeholders, communities and the public have occurred, allowing us to

gain a better appreciation of the social, natural, cultural and economic values of this area of the Salish Sea. Informed by those discussions, a proposed boundary for consultation was announced by the provincial and federal Ministers of Environment on October 13, 2011.

This document is designed to provide an update on the feasibility assessment, introduce the proposed boundary and seek feedback.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an NMCA?

A national marine conservation area (NMCA) is a type of marine protected area that is managed and used in an ecologically sustainable manner and that meets the needs of present and future generations. It helps maintain healthy, functioning ecosystems and includes the seabed, the water above it and all living resources.

Activities such as commercial and recreational fishing, commercial shipping, marine transportation, utility corridors, and a range of recreation and tourism activities continue in an NMCA, but with an emphasis on conservation-oriented management practices. Traditional food, social and ceremonial harvesting by First Nations peoples continues in an NMCA reserve. Oil and gas exploration and development, and mining are not allowed. Ocean dumping is only allowed under certain conditions.

In comparison to national parks where the primary goals are conservation, public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment, an NMCA has an *additional* goal of ecologically sustainable use. This approach involves working closely with those who use the coastal lands and waters.

What is the legislation?

The *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act* enables the Government of Canada to establish NMCAs for the purpose of protecting and conserving representative examples of Canada's marine areas for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people of Canada and the world.

Find the Act here: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-7.3/index.html>

What is an NMCA reserve?

An NMCA *reserve* is used to protect the lands and waters without prejudice to unresolved Aboriginal land claims. Existing traditional use activities by Aboriginal people continue while claims are under negotiation. The harvesting rights confirmed in future claim settlement agreements would apply in an NMCA.

Benefits of an NMCA



Protection and conservation of marine habitats, species, and water quality



Ecologically sustainable use of marine resources



Maintaining and restoring biological diversity and habitats



Shared stewardship



NMCA BACKGROUND

How are First Nations involved?

Nineteen First Nations assert a historical relationship with the land and waters in the proposed area. Parks Canada and the Government of British Columbia are committed to developing a lasting cooperative relationship with these First Nations based on mutual respect and shared understanding. Work is underway to engage local First Nations in the assessment process.

What are the benefits of an NMCA?

A healthy marine environment is fundamental to the social, cultural and economic well-being of people living in coastal communities. NMCAs provide opportunities for conservation, for the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources and for people to learn about, appreciate and enjoy Canada's natural and cultural marine heritage.

How would an NMCA reserve be managed?

An NMCA reserve in this region would require the development of a model for government agencies to work together with First Nations, local governments, stakeholders and others. Parks Canada would lead the administration and management of the NMCA reserve. Existing federal legislation such as the *Fisheries Act* and *Canada Shipping Act* would continue to apply, in a manner consistent with conservation, ecologically sustainable use and the objectives for the conservation area.

Zoning is a requirement of the *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*. A minimum of two types of zones is required: 1) full protection and 2) ecologically sustainable use. Zoning is a management tool and would be developed during the interim management planning phase, in consultation with First Nations, local governments and stakeholders.



Education
and visitor
appreciation



Sharing of
traditional
knowledge and
scientific research



Sustainable
recreation and
tourism, and
associated
economic benefits



Collaboration with
First Nations, local
communities,
stakeholders and
governments



Integrated
planning and
coordinated
management

PROPOSED BOUNDARY

The map (pages 6 to 7) shows the boundary for consultation that the governments of Canada and British Columbia announced in October 2011. We want to hear your ideas about the proposed boundary.

The proposed boundary is in a populated area that is used by people for many purposes, including recreation, marine transportation, commercial fishing and other uses. The marine life along the west coast of British Columbia is among the most diverse in the world's temperate waters. This highly productive habitat supports rich subtidal communities, lush kelp forests, harbour seals, killer whales, sea lions, porpoises, seabird colonies, thousands of invertebrate species, and the world's largest octopus, the Giant Pacific Octopus.

What areas are included?

The proposed boundary for consultation covers approximately 1,400 sq. km, stretching from Cordova Bay to southern Gabriola Island, including Saanich Inlet. This proposed boundary is the result of feedback received during consultations, and technical and scientific assessments.



The proposed boundary aims to:

- Conserve a wide range of physical habitats and biological features representative of the marine region
- Minimize socio-economic impacts on marine users, coastal communities and tenure holders
- Protect rare and special features, and sensitive ecosystems
- Maintain the biological integrity and function of ecosystems
- Encourage opportunities for public understanding, education and enjoyment
- Consider operational and management viability

Gulf Islands National Park Reserve

Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, established in 2003, is located in the southern Gulf Islands. The park safeguards a mosaic of meadows, forested hills, rocky headlands, quiet coves and sandy beaches, and includes some marine waters. Some of these waters could be included in the NMCA reserve, if it is established. The proposed NMCA reserve would surround Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. Together, they would provide diverse visitor opportunities and significant protection for both the land and waters.

What areas are not included?

Select areas are proposed to be excluded from the boundary. These exclusions are outlined below.

Areas of High Tenure Concentration

Areas with high concentrations of commercial and industrial uses have been excluded from the proposed boundary including: Sidney, Swartz Bay, Brentwood Bay, Mill Bay, Ganges Harbour, Maple Bay, Crofton, Chemainus, Ladysmith, Telegraph Harbour, and portions of Cowichan Bay.



Specific Tenures

The following tenures have been excluded from the proposed boundary: ferry terminals, marinas, sewer/effluent lines, and all commercial and industrial tenures except for shellfish aquaculture. There is a 200-metre buffer around the excluded tenures to allow for possible future tenure expansion or changes in location.

Provincial Parks

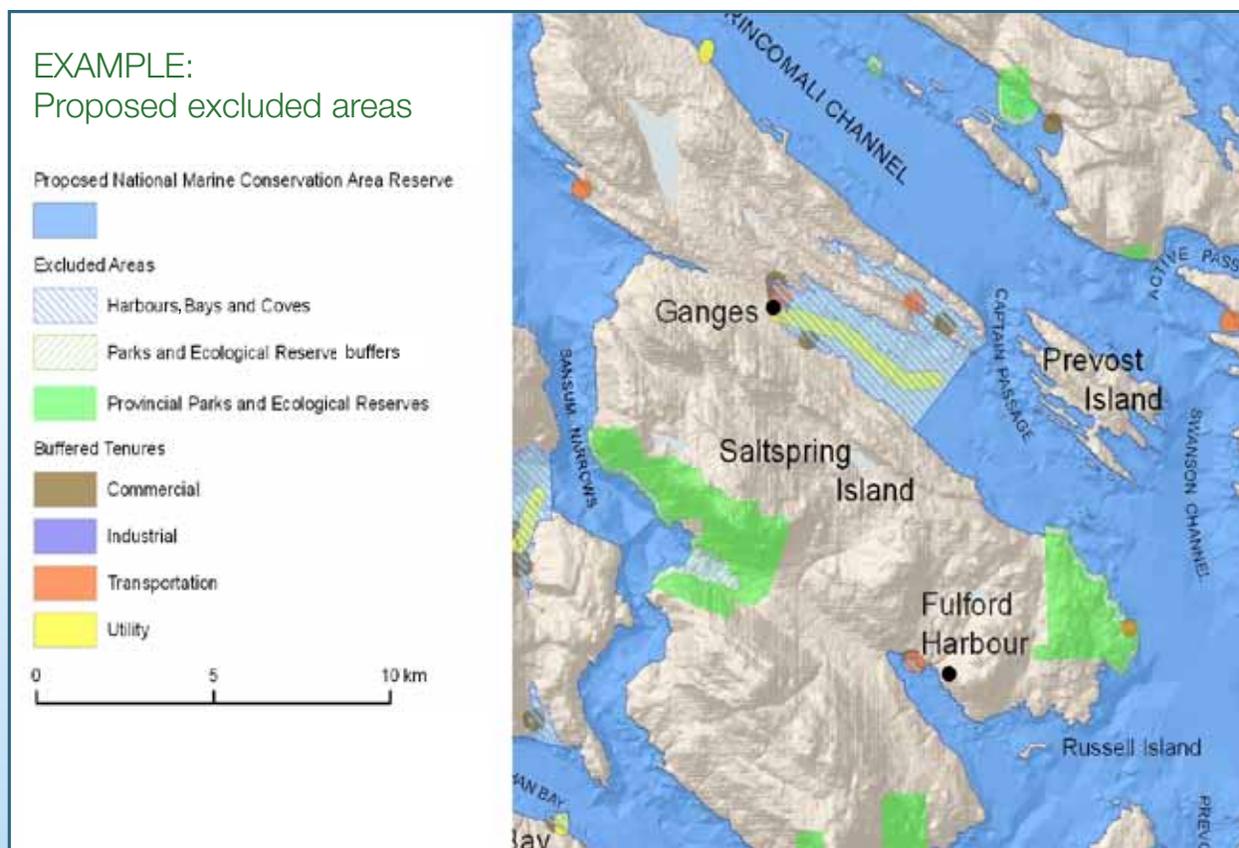
Marine components of existing provincial parks (e.g. Gowlland Tod, Goldstream and Montague Harbour Marine) have been excluded from the proposed boundary. Additionally, a 200-metre buffer has been placed around existing provincial parks currently without a marine component (e.g. Ruckle, Wallace Island and Burgoyne Bay) to enable them to expand into the adjacent marine environment.

Rectangle Off Galiano and Valdes Islands

The rectangular area to the northeast of Galiano and Valdes islands was removed in 2007 in order to minimize the overall size of the NMCA reserve, while ensuring protection for key ecological features representative of the Strait of Georgia. The boundary roughly follows the 200-metre bathymetric contour.

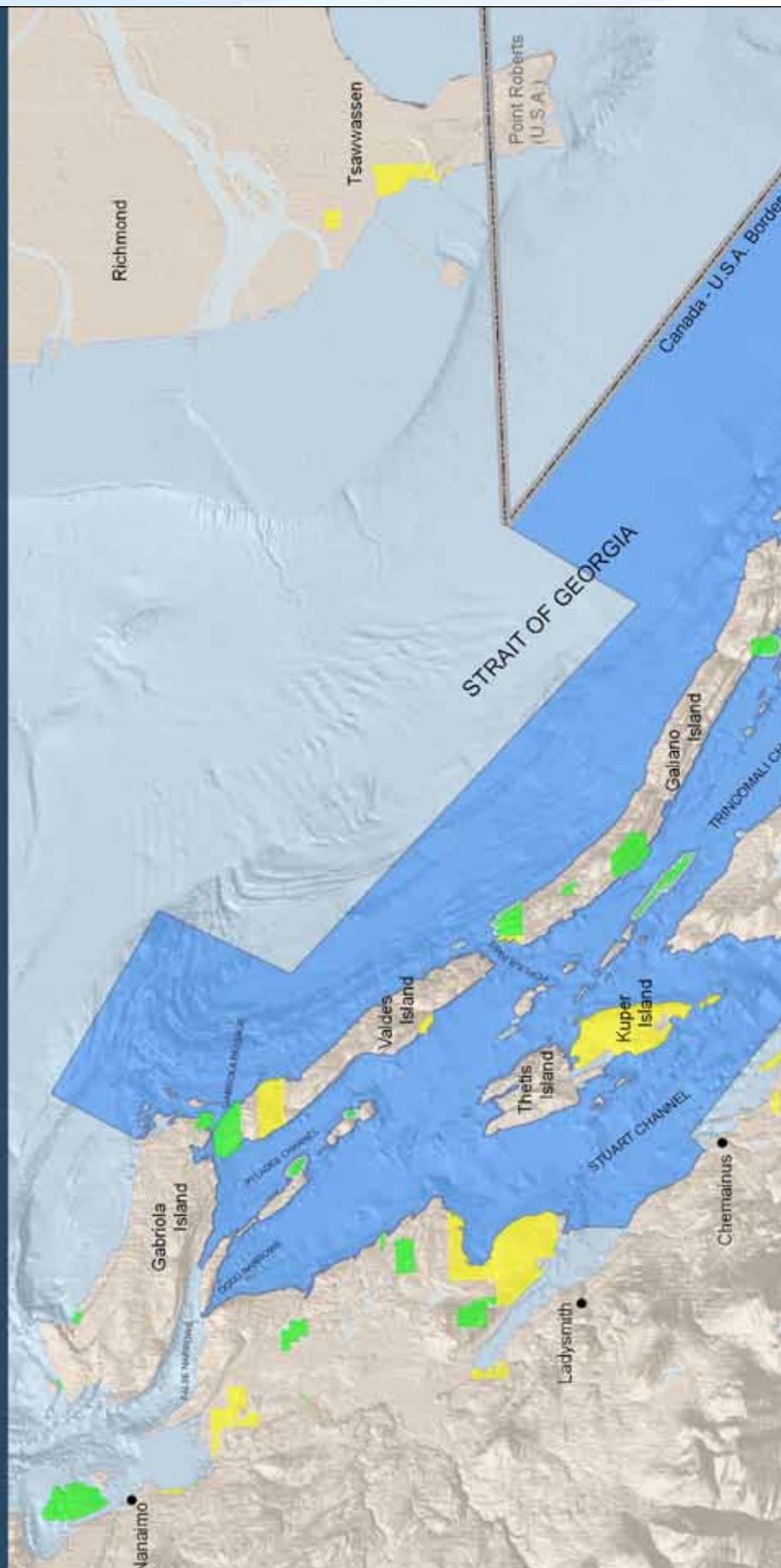
What are your thoughts?

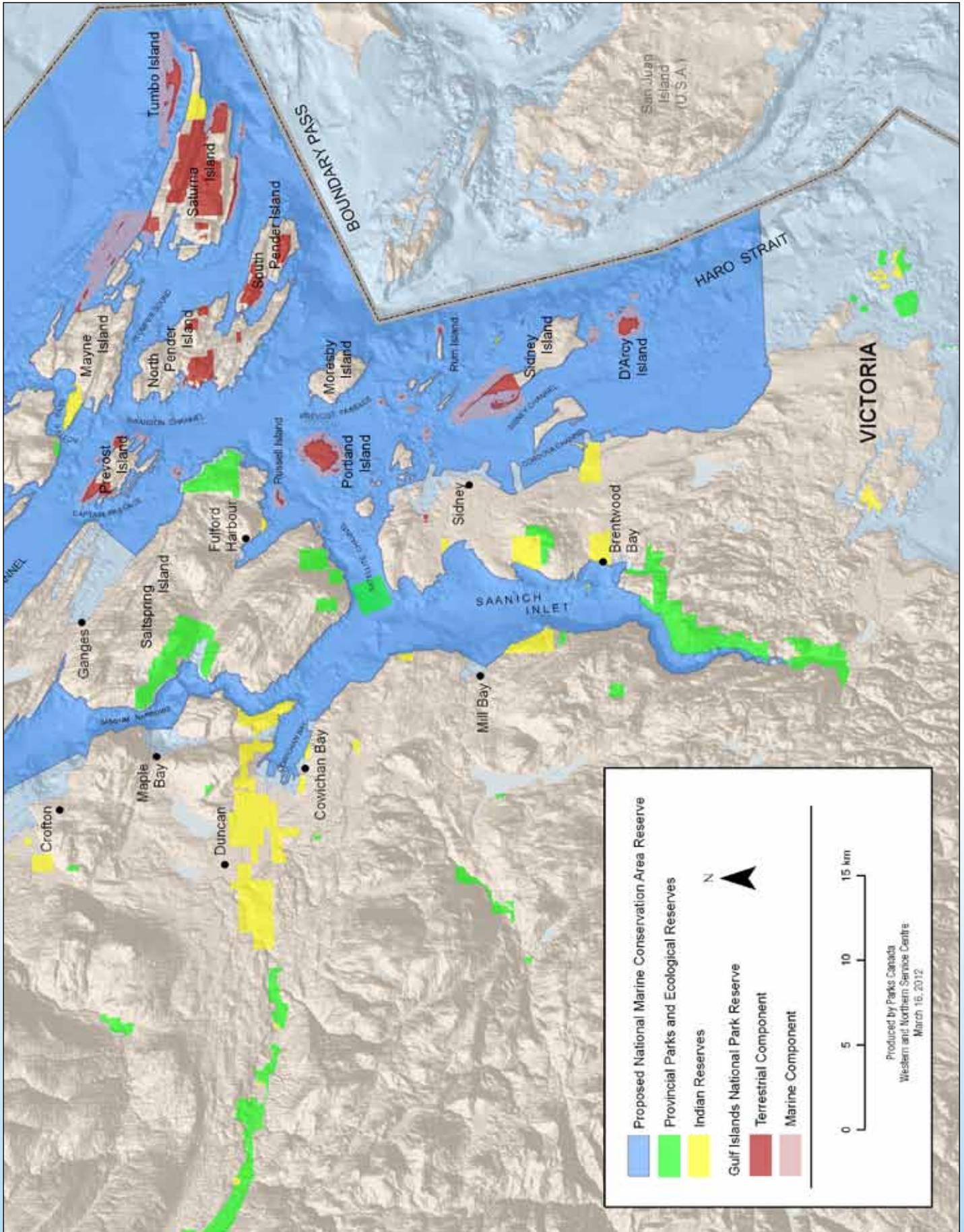
We are looking for feedback on the proposed boundary. What works? What doesn't work? Are there cultural, economic, environmental or other factors (e.g. navigation or management) that need to be considered?



National Marine Conservation Area Reserve Southern Strait of Georgia Proposed Boundary

This is the boundary for consultation that the governments of Canada and British Columbia proposed in 2011. We want to hear your ideas about the proposed boundary and which areas are important to you.





PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

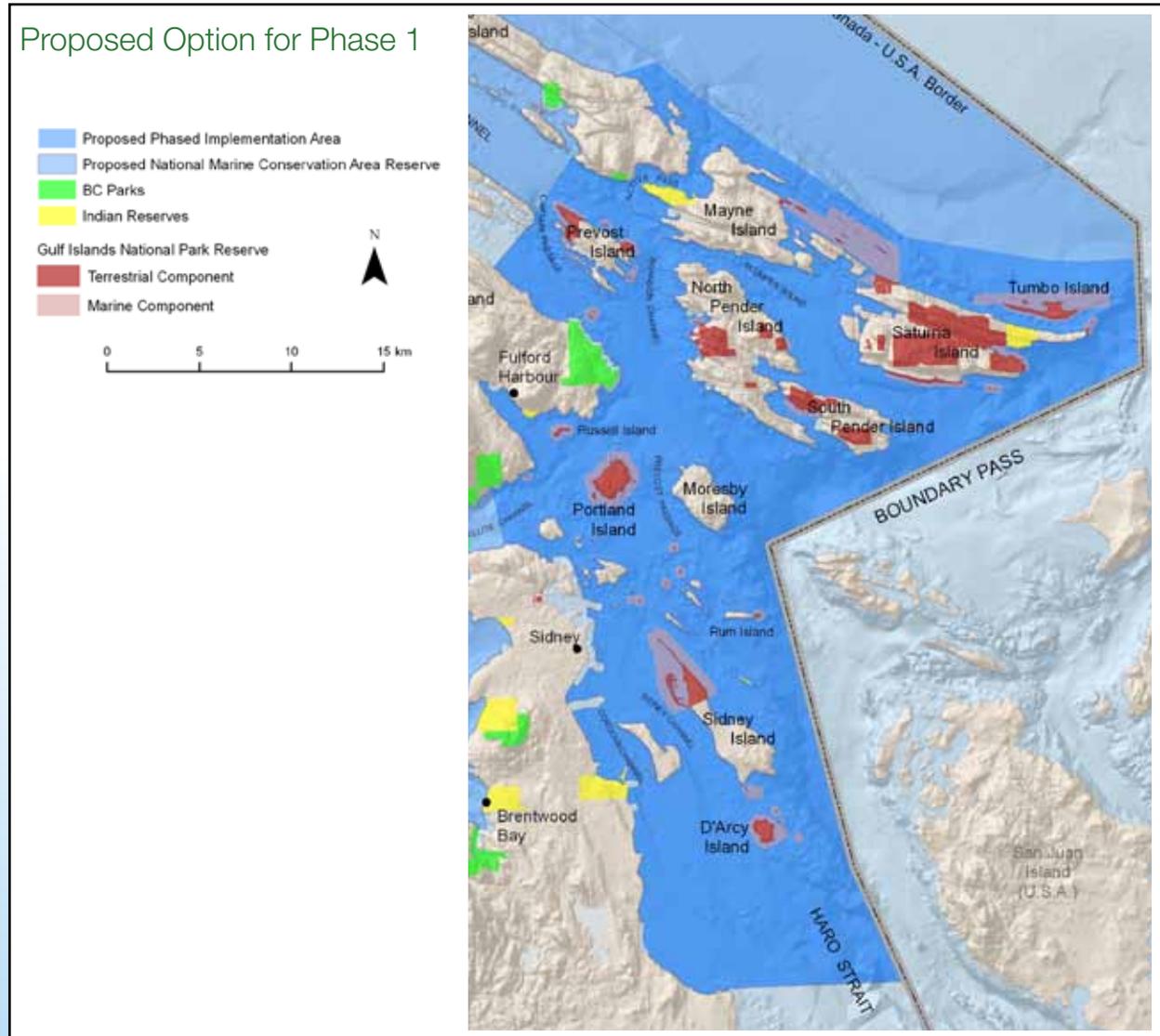
It is proposed that the NMCA reserve would be established in phases. Practical options for phased implementation are being explored. One option being considered is to begin with a core section of about 800 sq. km surrounding Gulf Islands National Park Reserve before designating the entire NMCA reserve.

This phased approach is being considered as a way to allow governments, First Nations, stakeholders and the public to develop experience

working collaboratively to manage the complex issues that exist in this area, such as applicable regulations, tenure management and zoning.

What are your thoughts?

What do you see as the advantages and challenges of a phased approach? What do you think of the area proposed for the first phase?



NMCA BACKGROUND

Where are other NMCAs?

Parks Canada has identified 29 marine regions; each one has a distinct combination of physical and biological characteristics. A national system of NMCAs, once fully in place, will collectively protect examples of Canada’s marine heritage for present and future generations.

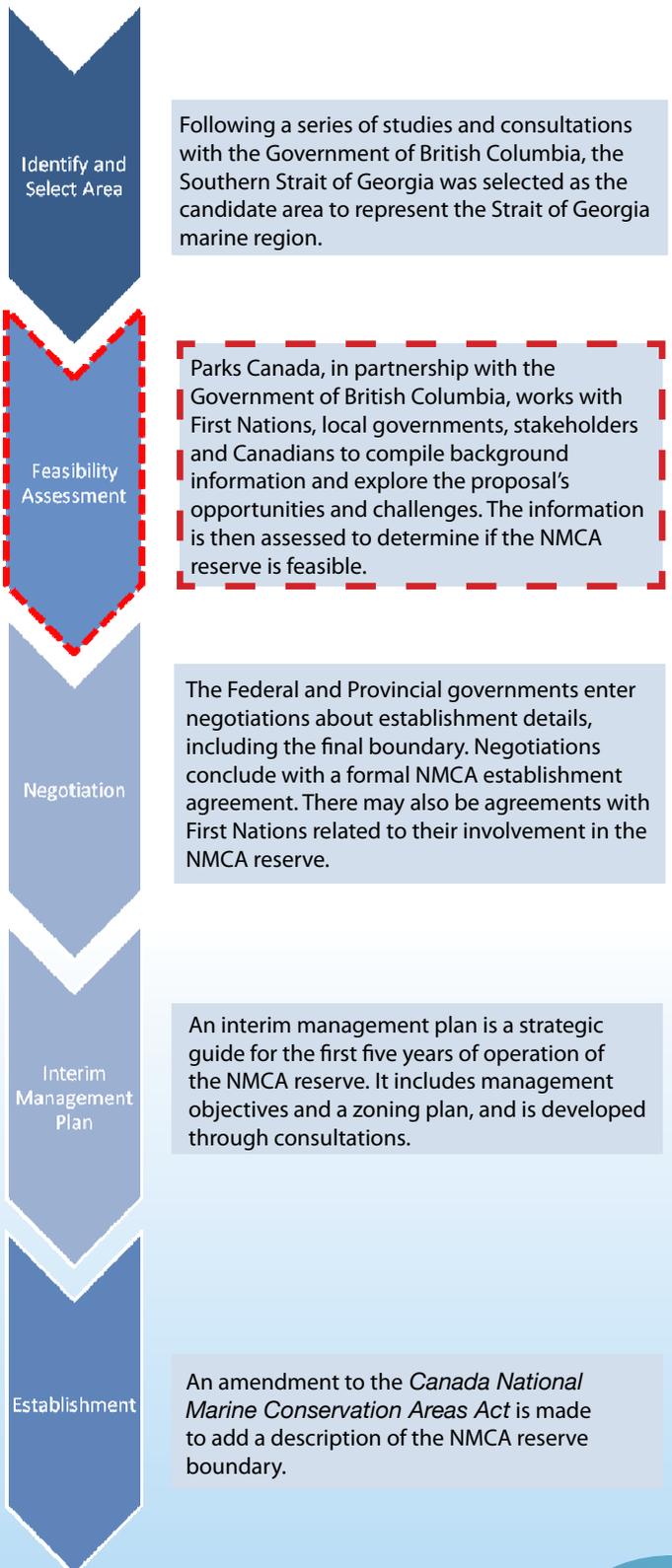
Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve and Haida Heritage Site was the first NMCA to be designated under the *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*. Other sites operating as part of the NMCA system include Saguenay St-Lawrence Marine Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park.

Proposals in Lancaster Sound and les Îles de la Madeleine are currently being assessed. In addition, an interim management plan is being developed for Lake Superior NMCA.



Gwaii Haanas

NMCA establishment process



GET INVOLVED

The feedback we receive from First Nations, local governments, stakeholders and the public will contribute to an eventual decision on the feasibility of the proposed NMCA reserve.

Let us know what you think about the proposed boundary and the phased approach.

CONTACT US

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NEW RESOURCES

Marine Atlas

Parks Canada has published an atlas containing information about oceanographic features, coastal habitats, species, near-shore ecosystems, public values, recreational activities, commercial fishing, and biodiversity 'hot spots' in the southern Strait of Georgia. DVD copies of the atlas are available by request.

Secrets of the Emerald Sea DVD

Secrets of the Emerald Sea invites you to explore BC's West Coast and uncover the ocean's astonishing secrets. Produced by Parks Canada and the Vancouver Aquarium, the film explores the mysteries of the ocean, from unusual animals to incredible underwater formations—some of which have only recently been discovered. *Secrets of the Emerald Sea* can be borrowed from regional libraries or purchased from the Gift Shop at the Vancouver Aquarium.



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