

# Marine Planning Case Study

## Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) in British Columbia, Canada

*This case study has been prepared as part of implementation of Victoria's Marine Spatial Planning Framework and to support Traditional Owners to self-determine their role in marine spatial planning.*

### Case Study Snapshot

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Location</b>     | British Columbia, Canada  |
| <b>Jurisdiction</b> | Nearshore and foreshore areas managed by the British Columbia Government  |
| <b>Area</b>         | Approx. 120,000 km <sup>2</sup>   |
| <b>Partners</b>     | British Columbia Government and 17 First Nation groups                    |
| <b>Key Driver</b>   | Shared desire by partners to move forward with integrated marine planning |
| <b>Outputs</b>      | 4 sub-regional marine plans and a regional action framework               |
| <b>Funding</b>      | Public-private model  |
| <b>Timeline</b>     |   |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2007 | First Nation groups self-organise to advocate for the protection of Aboriginal values and rights within the bioregion by developing marine use plans (2007-2011).                  |
| 2008 | The federal government and First Nation groups signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to create the Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area (PNCIMA).                   |
| 2010 | The British Columbia Government joined the MoU.  |
| 2011 | The federal government withdrew support for the PNCIMA, resulting in the formation of the MaPP by the remaining members (First Nation groups and the British Columbia Government). |
| 2015 | MaPP sub-regional marine plans published.  |
| 2016 | MaPP regional action framework published.  |
| 2024 | MaPP continuing its role in marine stewardship.  |

### What is the MaPP?

The Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) sets the marine and coastal policy direction for Canada's Northern Shelf Bioregion. The MaPP is a successful example of collaborative marine planning between First Nations governments and British Columbia's Government.

The MaPP developed localised coastal and marine plans for each of the four sub-regions, which aimed to achieve protection of ecological and cultural values, while supporting sustainable economic use. They also produced a regional action framework that outlined the collaborative actions to be implemented at a regional scale.

Prior to the establishment of the MaPP, each participating First Nation commenced community-based territorial marine planning. These set a foundation of Indigenous knowledge to integrate into the MaPP outputs. A co-led governance structure ensured First Nations rights, knowledge and values were prioritised in decision making.

### The study area

The MaPP study area stretches along two thirds of British Columbia's north coast, with the boundaries for the area based on a mix of ecological considerations and administrative boundaries. The study area was divided into four sub-regions: the North Coast, Central Coast, North Vancouver Island and the Haida Gwaii archipelago.

The study area covers Canada's biologically and culturally diverse Northern Shelf Bioregion. The bioregion is home to over 30 First Nations whose way of life, culture and economy is closely tied to the sea. First Nations in British Columbia have continued to use and maintain this land for over 14,000 years.

Economic sectors in the study area include commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, transportation, forestry, research, and tourism. Ports and harbours act as important links to international markets.

## Policy context

Canada was the first country to adopt comprehensive legislation for integrated ocean management through their *Oceans Act 1996*. This authorised the development of Canada's Ocean Strategy 2002 and laid the groundwork for marine planning in Canada.

The majority of British Columbia is unceded land, many First Nations who governed this land prior to colonisation retain unextinguished rights to it. Aboriginal rights and title are recognised and affirmed in the *Constitution Act 1982*, but not defined. Various court decisions since the 1970s have reinforced Indigenous land rights and set an expectation of consultation and collaborative planning with First Nations from Canada's federal and provincial governments. In some cases, First Nations consent is required for use and development in British Columbia.

The British Columbia provincial government is responsible for the issuing of licenses and tenures for provincially owned seabeds and for permitting use and development of the foreshore (i.e. the intertidal zone), coastal 'inland waters' on the outer coast, and the lands covered by these waters. The federal government has authority for all other areas extending from the low water mark out to 12 nautical miles, and within Canada's exclusive economic zone (extends from 12 nautical miles to 200 nautical miles offshore).

Given the complex jurisdictional responsibilities within the study area, the MaPP set a scope focused on the partners' collective authorities. As such, the plans focused on areas such as:

- coastal and marine tenures for specific activities (e.g. ports, docks, clean energy, underwater cables)
- provincial seafood development programs (e.g. seafood marketing, processing, and distribution)
- marine conservation
- community, social and economic programs related to marine and ocean interests
- marine spill preparedness and response programs (e.g. oil spills or other debris discharge)

The plans are not legally binding or embedded in legislation. However, subsequent reviews have found that Provincial authorisation officers continue to reference the plans when reporting to decision makers. The outcomes of these decisions are highly consistent with the policy direction outlined within the plans.

### The MaPP co-led governance structure

A co-led governance structure underpins each of the sub-regional marine plans. First Nations and Provincial government partners had equal decision-making authority on all aspects of the initiative (e.g. allocation of resources and funding, process design, plan context and approach to stakeholder/public engagement).

All plans were prepared by the partners, with marine stakeholders from inter-disciplinary backgrounds and a wide range of industries providing input and advice. Advice was gathered through Advisory Committees (four sub-regional and one regional), and a Scientific Advisory Committee.

## First Nations community-based territorial marine planning

Marine use plans were developed by each First Nation within the bioregion, prior to the establishment of the MaPP. The marine use plans were informed by traditional, economic and scientific studies conducted to identify areas of cultural and ecological significance, as well as ensure sustainable future use. These studies included traditional ecological knowledge research, community socio-economic surveys, community harvest needs studies, and zoning matrices.

Traditional ecological knowledge research was undertaken through interviews with community knowledge holders. Participating First Nations then spatially mapped this information to allow for further analysis (e.g. comparisons between identified high value areas and potential conflicts). Resulting outputs included species distribution and abundance maps, point location maps (e.g. cultural and spiritual sites, fishing areas, migration routes, spawning grounds) and heat maps to identify comparisons/conflicts between resource use and abundance.

Community socio-economic surveys were conducted to examine current and future priorities, including alignment of values and interests with industrial uses. Additionally, some First Nations undertook a community harvest needs study to measure food security and support ongoing access to marine resources for food, trade and feasting purposes. Participating First Nations identified zoning options (e.g. habitat management zones, marine conservancy zone), and developed a

matrix to assess conflicts and compatibilities between these and human uses or activities.

By starting at a territory scale the MaPP was able to embed the area-based detail and local knowledge from the marine use plans, into the sub-regional plans. This ensured that First Nations values and land use priorities were at the forefront. As not all the areas or topics included in the marine use plans are present in the sub-regional plans, the marine use plans remain the primary guiding documents for Indigenous use, management and development of the respective territories.

*Further information on the development of the marine use plans is available in [The Marine Plan Partnership: Indigenous community-based marine spatial planning](#), Diggon et al. 2019.*

### MaPP sub-regional marine plans

The sub-regional marine plans make recommendations for marine conservation, as well as commercial, recreational, and agricultural, uses and activities. The plans communicate the shared values, policy goals and strategies for each sub-region, and inform decisions regarding the sustainable economic development and stewardship of the area.

All plans use the same three zones (Protection Management Zone (PMZ), Special Management Zone (SMZ) and General Management Zone (GMZ). These zones provide guidance for future land use policy decisions including permits for marine tenures, offshore renewable energy siting, additional sites for marine protected areas, and improvements to coastal infrastructure.

Indigenous areas of significance are identified within both the PMZ and SMZ. The PMZ is used for conservation purposes including culturally significant vegetation and wildlife. The SMZ is applied to areas of culturally significant economic, social, and ceremonial uses.

## Relevance to Victoria

There are several lessons from the MaPP that may guide the application of MSP in Victoria.

- Establishing a formal, and legal partnering agreement, with a clearly defined governance structure, will aid in ensuring First Nations rights, knowledge and values are prioritised in decision making.
- Partnerships should set a clear process and structure for conflict resolution between partners, rightsholders and stakeholders. This will support positive relationships and allows the process to move forward when consensus is difficult to achieve.
- Clearly defining the scope, focussing on what will and will not be addressed in the resulting plan, can safeguard successful implementation.
- Early and upfront community-based marine planning by First Nations groups can support self-determination and the protection of culturally significant areas and uses.
- Availability of adequate funding encourages broad and consistent stakeholder engagement, and commitment to long-term implementation.
- Designing an adaptable plan and approach enables application across multiple scales (e.g. temporal, spatial).

## More information

Further information on the MaPP can be found [here](#).

For more information on MSP in Victoria, please visit [DEECA Marine and Coasts](#) or contact the

Marine Spatial Planning Team  
([marine.spatial.planning@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:marine.spatial.planning@delwp.vic.gov.au)).

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