

# THE NORTHERN SHELF BIOREGION

Photo by Ken Cripps

## INTRODUCTION

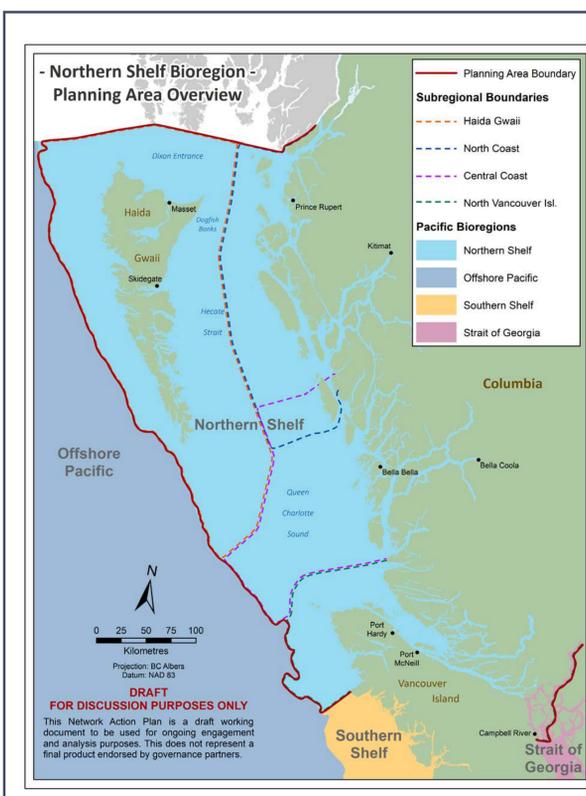
The west coast of Canada is a uniquely beautiful and special place where people and marine life co-exist within a vast seascape of rocky shorelines, kelp forests, deep fjords, open ocean, and intricate archipelagoes. Covering two thirds of coastal British Columbia (B.C.), from the middle of Vancouver Island to the Alaska border, the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) is home to endangered whales, ancient corals, iconic salmon, sea birds, and many other ecologically, culturally, and economically important species. This diversity and abundance of species has provided for First Nations since time immemorial, and today supports coastal communities and marine activities such as fishing and aquaculture, tourism, coastal forestry, and marine transportation.

## Bioregions

The Northern Shelf Bioregion covers 102,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is one of four bioregions located in the Pacific Region. Bioregions are identified based on oceanographic and bathymetric similarities, which are the fundamental physical characteristics that underlie marine habitats and their associated species assemblages.

## Subregions

The Northern Shelf Bioregion has been divided into four subregional planning units (SR) to support planning at a finer scale: Haida Gwaii, Central Coast, North Coast, and North Vancouver Island. The boundaries for these planning areas were determined via a combination of First Nation territorial and local government administrative boundaries and similar ecological characteristics.

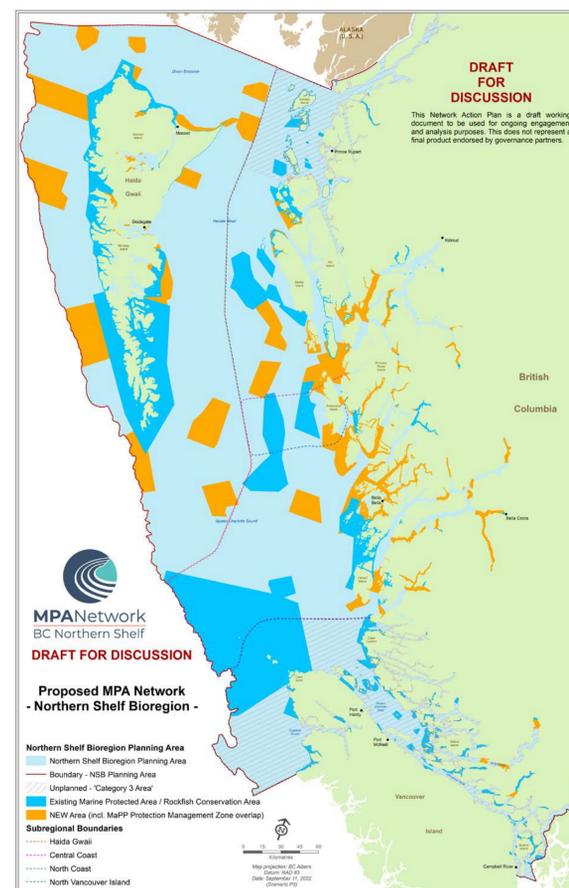


Map of the Northern Shelf Bioregion planning area including subregional planning boundaries. \*Note the planning area boundary extends into the Strait of Georgia bioregion (capturing Bute Inlet) to align with boundaries of previous marine planning initiatives and territorial boundaries of partner First Nations.

## Marine Protected Area (MPA)

“A clearly defined geographical space recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”

(Canada, B.C., 2014; IUCN/WCPA, 2007)



## Marine Protected Area Network

“A collection of individual marine protected areas that operates cooperatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales, and with a range of protection levels, in order to fulfill ecological aims more effectively and comprehensively than individual sites could alone.”

(Canada, B.C., 2014; IUCN/WCPA, 2007)

	Proposed Network Area km <sup>2</sup> (proportion of SR)	Haida Gwaii Area km <sup>2</sup> (proportion of SR)	North Coast Area km <sup>2</sup> (proportion of SR)	Central Coast Area km <sup>2</sup> (proportion of SR)	North Vancouver Island Area km <sup>2</sup> (proportion of SR)
Area in existing MPAs and/or RCAs	18760 (18.5%)	5206 (28%)	2777 (14.3%)	6332 (28.7%)	4445 (32%)
New Area	1173 (11.5%)	6482 (14.1%)	2381 (12.2%)	2777 (12.5%)	93 (0.7%)
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>30493 (30%)</b>	<b>11688 (25.4%)</b>	<b>5158 (26.5%)</b>	<b>9109 (41.2%)</b>	<b>4538 (32.7%)</b>

**Coastline:** The Northern Shelf Bioregion contains just under 30,000 km of coastline. The proposed network scenario captures 58% of the coastline in the region, or just under 17,000 km.