



MPA Network  
Great Bear Sea



Great Bear Sea MPA Network  
**Implementation  
Progress Report Year 2**

# Dear Reader,

On behalf of the Network governance partners, we are pleased to present the Year 2 Progress Report for the Great Bear Sea Marine Protected Area Network in the Northern Shelf Bioregion.

The Year 2 Progress Report summarizes the considerable amount of technical work and collaboration undertaken by the partners — the Gitga’at, Gitxaala, Haisla, Kitselas, Kitsumkalum, Metlakatla, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo Xai’xais, Nuxalk, Wuikinuxv, Da’naxda’xw-Awaetlala, Mamalilikulla, K’ómoks, Kwiakah, Tlowitsis, and Wei Wai Kum First Nations; Council of the Haida Nation; the Province of British Columbia; and the Government of Canada — up until March 2026.

The partners continue to strengthen our governance structures and processes, with particular focus on advancing Network monitoring, integrating Network implementation with related initiatives, and improving our stakeholder engagement and public outreach. Highlights include launching the new [Network website](#), establishing a Bioregional Advisory Committee for engaging stakeholders, and aligning several Network implementation initiatives with the work of the Marine Plan Partnership.

The partners have also made important progress on site establishment, including the designation of four new sites, including the Banks, Xaana Kaahlii, and Gaw Kaahlii Marine Refuges and Kishkosh and Kitkiata Inlets Wildlife Management Area. In addition, fisheries closures are in place and an IPCA has been declared for Homyano, which will be further protected through a marine refuge and Section 17 Land Act conditional withdrawal.

Since the finalization of this report, an establishment agreement has been completed for the National Marine Conservation Area Reserve (NMCAR) in the Central Coast region. On May 22, 2026, leaders from Wuikinuxv, Nuxalk, Kitasoo Xai’xais, Heiltsuk, Gitxaala and Gitga’at Nations, Canada and British Columbia

signed a historic agreement to establish the Mia-yaltwa Ha’lidzogm hoon NMCAR. An Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) was simultaneously declared by the six First Nations over the same area. Mia-yaltwa Ha’lidzogm hoon means “Realm of the Salmon, World of the Salmon” (Me-ah-yall-twa Ha-lee-joh-gom hOH-own). The working boundary covers approximately 6700 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 40% of the area recommended for new and/or enhanced protection in the Network Action Plan and bringing the total area in the Northern Shelf Bioregion under protection to 23%. Next steps include creating a collaborative management board, establishing an advisory committee spanning a range of marine sectors and interests, and beginning the process for developing the site’s management and zoning plan.

For the first time since Network planning, the partners are reporting publicly on our progress toward achieving key design guidelines, including: percentage of newly designated areas, changes in protection level, changes in proportion of highly protected areas, and terrestrial-marine protection connectivity. While we are still in the early stages of Network implementation, tracking and reporting on these guidelines is important to understanding Network performance.

The partners still have much work to do to achieve the Network goals, and we are confident that the structures and institutions we have put in place will lead to an ecologically comprehensive, resilient, and representative network of marine protected areas that will benefit present and future generations.

Sincerely,

**Great Bear Sea MPA Network Committee**



## 1.0 Introduction

The Great Bear Sea Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network (hereafter ‘the Network’) initiative is working to implement a comprehensive, resilient, and representative network of MPAs that protect marine biodiversity and support community, cultural, and economic values for present and future generations of life within the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB).

On June 21, 2024 the Network partners<sup>1</sup> signed several key agreements: the Collaborative Governance Agreement for the Advancement and Implementation of the Northern Shelf Bioregion Marine Protected Areas Network ([MPA Network Agreement](#)), the Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence Closing Agreement ([GBS PFP Closing Agreement](#)), and 17 Nation-to-Nation collaborative governance agreements for the establishment and management of marine protected areas within the Northern Shelf Bioregion (Nation MPA Agreements).

Collectively, these agreements provide the collaborative governance commitments, structures and processes through which the Network partners are striving to reach consensus in the collaborative governance of the Network and the management and establishment of MPAs.

The Network partners have committed to reporting annually on Network progress, covering: (i) the overall status of the MPA Network goals, (ii) progress toward the Network monitoring goals and (iii) progress towards the establishment of protected areas in the Network.

This report summarizes progress in each of these areas up until March 2026. Given the status of Network implementation, the report focuses on specific Network design elements and coordination and collaboration across governance partners.

<sup>1</sup> The Network Partners are: Haida Nation, Gitga’at First Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kitsumkalum Indian Band, Metlakatla First Nation, Heiltsuk Nation, Kitasoo Xai’xais Nation, Nuxalk Nation, Wuikinuxv Nation, Da’naxda’xw-Awaetlala, K’omoks First Nation, Kwiakah First Nation, Mamalilikulla First Nation, Tlowitsis Nation, Wei Wai Kum First Nation, the Government of Canada, and the Government of British Columbia.



## 2.0 MPA Network and Monitoring Goals

The Canada-B.C. [MPA Network Strategy](#) lists six Network goals for the establishment of MPA networks in B.C.:

**Goal 1:** To protect and maintain marine biodiversity, ecological representation and special natural features.

**Goal 2:** To contribute to the conservation and protection of fishery resources and their habitats.

**Goal 3:** To maintain and facilitate opportunities for tourism and recreation.

**Goal 4:** To contribute to social, community and economic certainty and stability.

**Goal 5:** To conserve and protect traditional use, cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

**Goal 6:** To provide opportunities for scientific research, education and awareness.

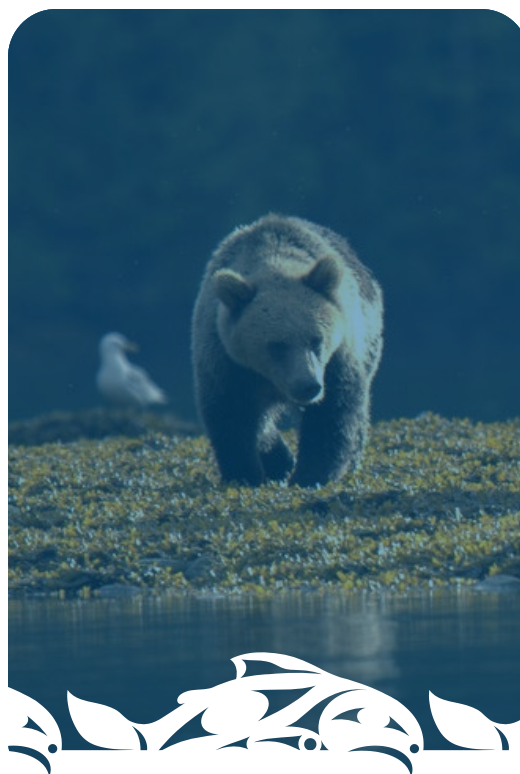
Building on these goals, Network partners developed objectives at the scale of the NSB to identify and focus management priorities and provide a context for finding solutions and resolving challenges, a rationale for decisions made in the development of the proposed Network

design, and a means for assessing Network effectiveness (see [Network Action Plan Section 1.4](#)).

The Great Bear Sea MPA Network Monitoring Framework provides three Network monitoring program goals:

1. To contribute toward reconciliation, co-management, and relationship building processes in the Great Bear Sea / Northern Shelf Bioregion.
2. To characterize progress toward reaching Network goals and objectives through integrated Network monitoring of indicators that span environmental, ecological, and human (social, cultural, health, economic, governance) domains, drivers of change, and Network design elements (hereafter Network performance indicators).
3. To inform decision-making and adaptive management.

The Network partners have made progress in many areas that support the achievement of the MPA Network and monitoring goals. In 2025, the Network partners continued to advance coordination and collaboration across the partnership in the areas of Network monitoring, communications and engagement, and governance (Indicator 1). Nation and Crown partners have also made important progress on site establishment and the Network design elements (Indicator 2). This work is expanded upon in section 3 of the report.





## 3.0 Progress towards MPA Network implementation and site establishment

### Indicator 1: Coordination and collaboration across governance partners

#### METRIC 1.1. MONITORING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT STAGE

The Network Action Plan outlines a three-stage process of developing an effective Network monitoring program: develop a Framework (complete), Strategy (in progress), and Plan (not started). Network partners approved the Network Monitoring Framework (hereafter, the Framework) in October 2024, which articulates Network monitoring goals and provides a roadmap for developing the Network Monitoring Strategy (hereafter, the Strategy) and Plan. Network partners are currently developing the Strategy, which will articulate what will be monitored (indicators) and why (guiding questions) to fulfill Network monitoring goals. Work conducted by Network partners in 2025 to advance the Strategy

falls into three main categories: QuILT process, Existing Monitoring Initiatives, and Socioeconomic Assessments.

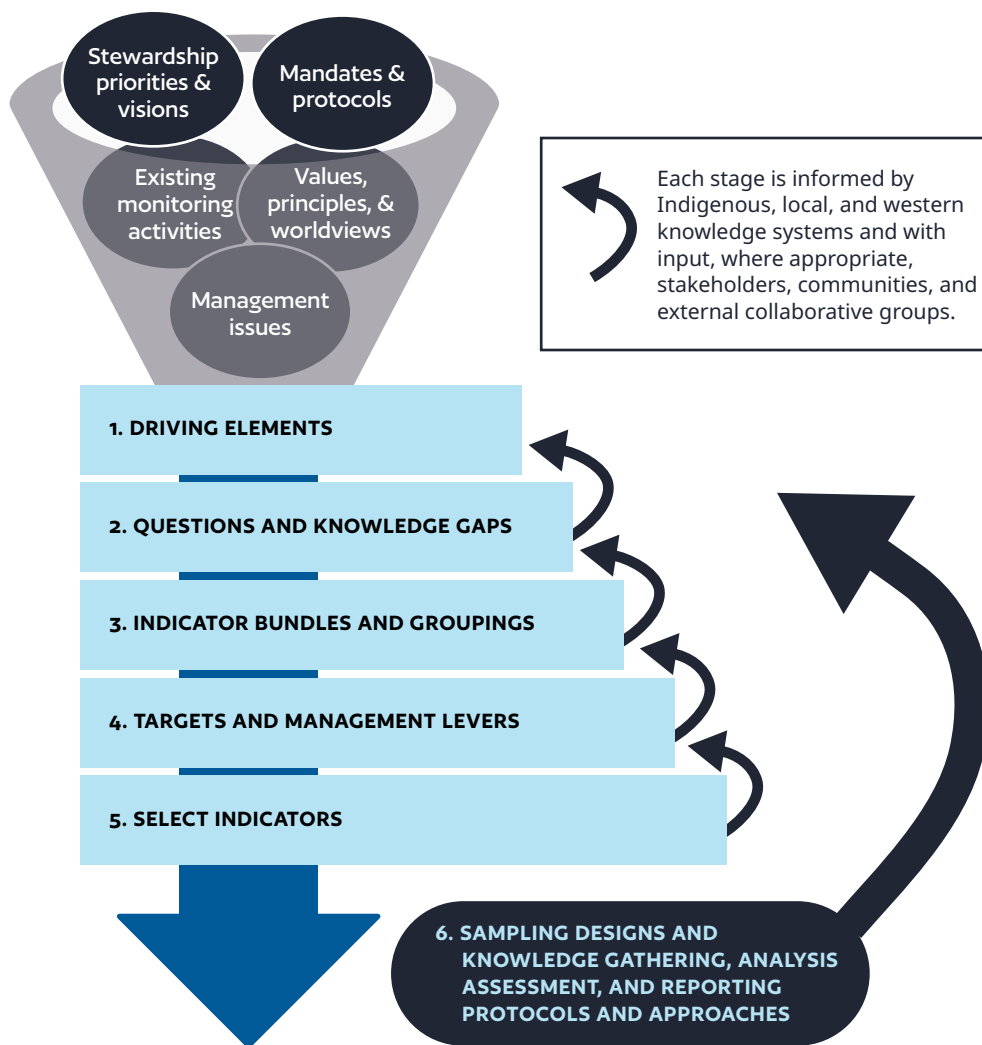
#### QuILT process

The Framework articulates a process to identify questions, indicators, levers, and targets (QuILT) to be monitored and reported on at the Network scale (Figure 1). In 2025, Network partners hosted 16 virtual QuILT working group sessions and two workshops (Figure 2) to collaboratively advance the QuILT process (March and November 2025). Members of the Network Knowledge Advisory Committee (KnAC) provided input on the QuILT process through three meetings and participation in the November workshop (for more details on the KnAC see Metric 1.2).



The results of this collaborative work to advance the QuILT process are:

- Guiding questions have been developed but not yet prioritized for the following themes: Economic, Governance, Social, Network design elements.
- Guiding questions are being developed for the following themes: First Nations Cultural, Ecological, Environmental Drivers of Change, Health.
- Relationships are being built and strengthened across Network partners and with KnAC members.



**FIGURE 1:** Flowchart of the QuILT process. Blue boxes will be conducted during the monitoring Strategy and the (6.) circle will be articulated within the monitoring Plan. Multiple knowledge systems and input from stakeholders, communities, and external collaborators will inform all stages. Each stage builds upon knowledge generated in previous stages, and the flow of activities across stages can be iterative as new information arises that requires re-visiting prior decisions.



**FIGURE 2:** Graphic recording output from Network partner November 2025 QuILT workshops. Art credit: Tanya Gadsby, Fuselight Creative.

### Existing monitoring initiatives and capacity building

The Framework underscores the value of building upon, aligning, and finding synergies between Network, site, and existing monitoring initiatives in the region. To this end, Network partners are engaged with the following research, monitoring, and capacity building activities in the Great Bear Sea region:

- Steering Committee and working group for a DFO-led Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) initiative to evaluate the alignment between DFO-led surveys and Network monitoring objectives (meeting date May 2026).
- Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) monitoring work led by the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP).
- Regional research and monitoring tables coordinated by external collaborators (e.g., Hakai institute).
- Site-level advisory committees led by the Network.
- Co-hosted workshops between Nation partners external collaborators that enhance marine stewardship and monitoring capacity, including: a qualitative research methods training workshop in partnership with Dr. Natalie Ban, Professor & President's Chair, Environmental Studies, University of Victoria; and an eDNA monitoring for marine stewardship workshop in partnership with the Nanwakolas Council, Ocean Diagnostics, and the BC Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences.

### Socioeconomic assessments

Network partners have also progressed collaborative technical work to develop a Network-level assessment of the potential costs and benefits of Network implementation (hereto referred to as the Network-level Analysis). The Network-level Analysis will support improved transparency on the potential impacts of Network implementation and support the development of long-term social, cultural and economic monitoring within the region by providing a forum for partners and stakeholders to discuss priority impacts of Network implementation and relevant information for monitoring these impacts in the short- and long-term.

Milestones achieved this year include the development of a scoping document for the Network-level Analysis, which provides a blueprint for this technical work going forward and identifies:

- Goals & objectives for the analysis.
- A proposed type of analysis (e.g., multiple criteria).
- Language for describing and organizing the outcomes of the analysis.
- A high-level roadmap for progressing this technical work.

### METRIC 1.2. COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS INVENTORY

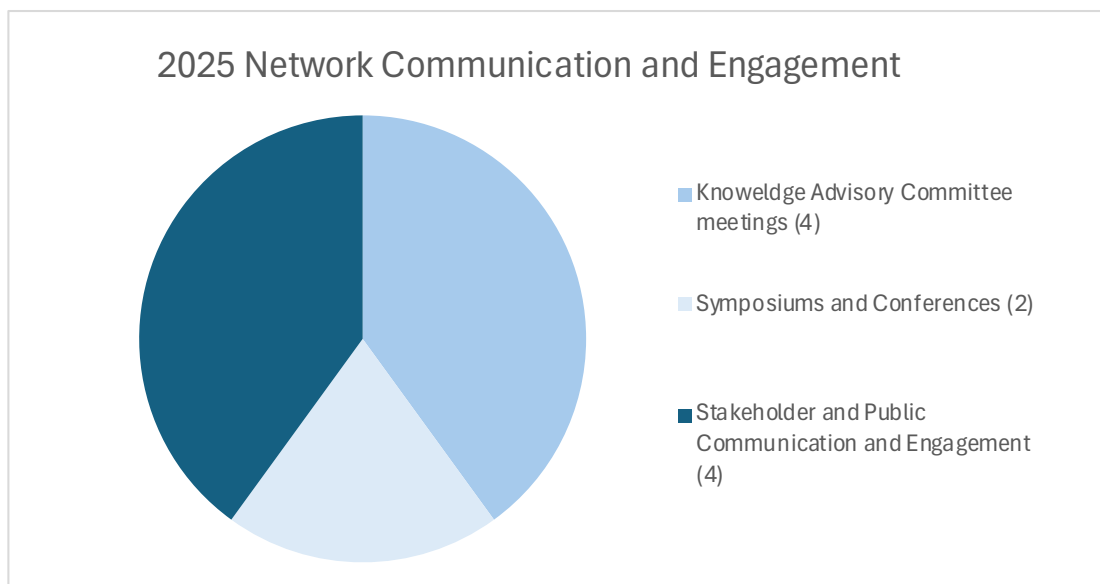
Network partners conducted several external engagement and communications activities in 2025 (Figure 3). The Knowledge Advisory Committee (KnAC) was formed in May 2025 and is comprised of 21 experts and knowledge holders who are external to the Network Partnership (Appendix 1) and advise on the development and implementation of technical processes (e.g., Network monitoring, Network-level Socio-economic Analysis)<sup>2</sup>. In addition to hosting four meetings with

<sup>2</sup> The KnAC performs an analogous role as the Science Advisory Committee that existed during Network Planning; however, the KnAC membership expertise spans a broader range of fields and knowledge systems to align with their role in advising Network implementation.



the KnAC, Network partners and KnAC members hosted a virtual knowledge exchange symposium about MPAs and climate change in the Great Bear Sea. This symposium highlighted existing and ongoing research being advanced by seven speakers from the Network partners and KnAC. The recording is publicly available on the [Network website](#).

In June 2025, a delegation from the Network partners hosted a workshop at Coastal Zone Canada to share lessons learned from the Network planning process and discuss key themes relevant to Network implementation, including governance, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring. Workshop participants spanned Indigenous, Crown, industry, and stakeholder groups from the east, west, and arctic coasts of Canada.



**FIGURE 3:** 2025 Network Communication and Engagement.

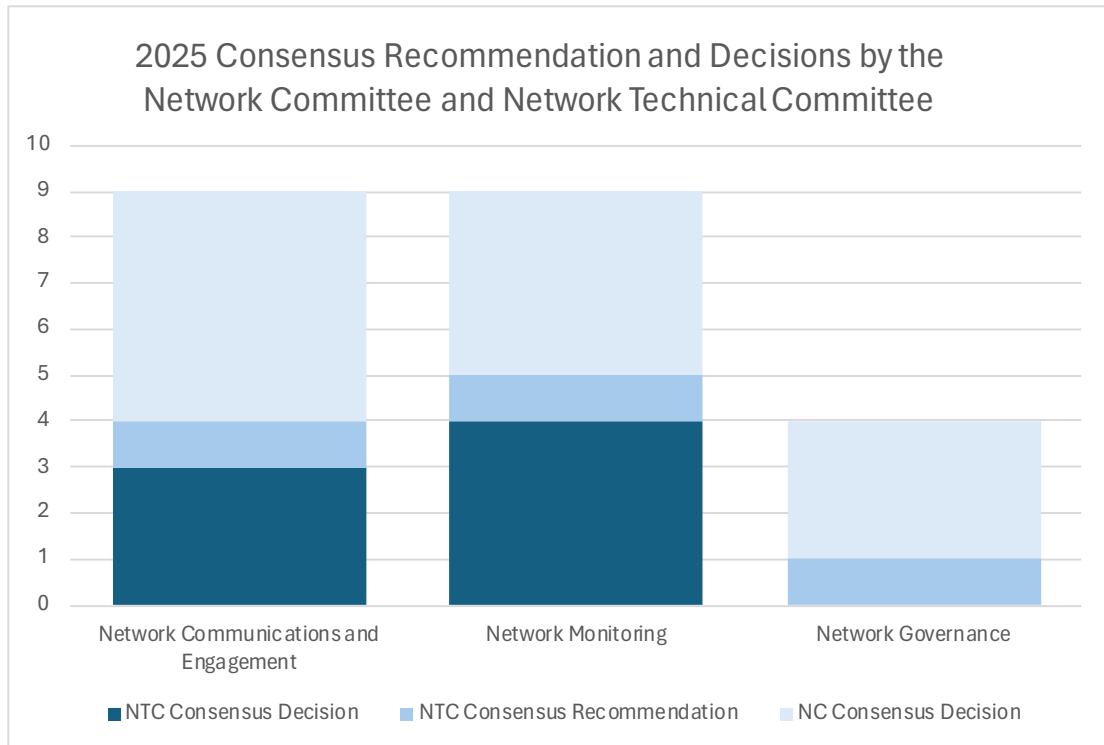
Throughout 2025 partners have improved Network public and stakeholder communications. Network partners worked collaboratively to:

- Update the [Network website](#) that is the central platform for information that best communicates, educates and engages with the diverse audiences interested in the Great Bear Sea MPA Network.
- Deliver two newsletters to approximately 1500 stakeholders, local residents, and the public about the website's launch, and development of the Bioregional Advisory Committee (BAC).
- Hold an information session for interested parties on the establishment of the BAC.

Network partners established the BAC, which will serve as a Network-level forum to update stakeholders on progress towards Network implementation and seek their advice on key pillars of this work (Appendix 2).

#### **METRIC 1.3: INVENTORY OF CONSENSUS DECISIONS BY THE NETWORK COMMITTEE AND NETWORK TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

Under the MPA Network Agreement, the Network Committee and Network Technical Committee are required to make recommendations and decisions by consensus. Twenty-two substantive proposals for recommendation and/or decision were brought to the Network Committee and Network Technical Committee in 2025, and consensus was achieved in each instance (Figure 4). These proposals fell under three broad themes: Advancing Network communications and engagement, advancing and integrating Network monitoring, and advancing Network governance. Decisions under each theme is briefly expanded on below.



**FIGURE 4:** 2025 Network partner consensus recommendations and decisions

### Advancing communications and engagement

There were nine collaborative recommendations and/or decisions related to communications and engagement. These included:

- Approving a communications and engagement framework, which provides guidance on how partners will communicate and engage with stakeholders, local residents, and the public.
- Recommending and approving foundational components for establishing the BAC, including mandate, roles and responsibilities, nomination process, and committee establishment guidelines.
- Establishing the KnAC, which provides knowledge and expertise, information and technical advice to assist Network partners with meeting Network Goals and Design Elements and advancing Network implementation.

- Launching a new Network website that acts as a central place for Network and site level updates and publicly available documents.

### Advancing and integrating Network monitoring

There were nine collaborative recommendations and/or decisions related to Network monitoring. These included:

- Integrating the development of Network and governance monitoring requirements under a single collaborative process.
- Integrating Network and MaPP SeaSketch, an online mapping tool, under a single platform and refining to improve the tool's utility for site establishment and Network implementation.
- Approving a Network level socio-economic analysis scoping document that provides guidance for future socio-economic analysis and reporting.

### Advancing Network governance

There were four collaborative recommendations and/or decisions related to Network governance including:

- Refining the Network Technical Committee Terms of Reference.
- Establishing a subcommittee under the Network Committee to advance Schedule 7 of the GBS PFP Closing Agreement on blackwater and greywater discharge from cruise ships.
- Approving the 2025/26 Network implementation workplan and budget.

### METRIC 1.4: NUMBER AND STATUS OF ACTIVITIES BETWEEN THE NETWORK AND OTHER INITIATIVES

Under the Network Agreement the parties are required to develop processes to improve collaboration and integration within and between the partners. The partners identified three program areas where Network implementation could be enhanced through collaboration



with related initiatives, including the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (MaPP), blackwater and greywater discharge from cruise ships, and the Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement process. Across these three initiatives, six activities have been integrated and are summarized below.

### Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP)

MaPP is a co-led process between 17 First Nations and the Province of British Columbia that is implementing sub-regional plans and the Regional Action Framework for marine uses on the North Pacific Coast of British Columbia. The MaPP sub-regional marine plans and the Regional Action Framework are intended to balance sustainable economic development with environmental stewardship, help improve the efficiency of approval processes within existing policies and procedures, reduce spatial conflicts among marine users, and provide business certainty.

Given that both projects occur in the NSB, have many of the same partners, and are addressing similar issues, the partners identified several synergies and opportunities for integration. In 2025, the Network and MaPP:

- Proposed integrating and aligning the stakeholder engagement processes for each initiative to the MaPP regional advisory committee and requested feedback to help create process efficiencies and reduce engagement fatigue.
- Developed shared positions, working groups, and decision-support tools to support MaPP and MPA Network implementation (e.g., SeaSketch, SeaSketch working group, GIS and data management contractor).
- Agreed to explore the development of a shared collaborative research policy and protocol to streamline research requests from external collaborators and enhance overall coordination of regional research that supports both initiatives.

- Created complimentary participation in subcommittees and working groups advancing monitoring for each initiative and codeveloped an eelgrass state of knowledge assessment.

### **Blackwater and greywater discharge from cruise ships**

Under Schedule 7 of the GBS PFP Closing Agreement, the Network partners and Transport Canada committed to exploring enhanced cruise ship discharge standards for greywater and sewage. To advance this initiative, the Network Committee established a dedicated subcommittee and terms of reference. Building upon work completed and underway through existing co-governance structures under the *Reconciliation Framework Agreements for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection*, the Network partnership provides the necessary governance and technical expertise to move this work forward.

### **Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRRA)**

Coastal First Nations and DFO have been working to collaboratively govern and manage some of the local fisheries (on a species-specific basis), including certain aspects of fisheries monitoring (e.g. Community-Based Fishery groundfish monitoring, Central Coast First Nations catch monitoring program). In 2025, Network partners started introductory discussions with FRRRA Coastal First Nations to identify opportunities to align monitoring initiatives.

## **Indicator 2: Network Design Elements**

### **METRIC 2.1: STAGE OF SITE ESTABLISHMENT**

To assess this metric, as it relates to Crown tools listed in Table 4, the Network partners have adopted the *MPA Guide Stages of MPA Establishment* (see [MPA Guide](#)). The stage of establishment specifies an MPA's status in the process of creating an MPA. There are four stages of establishment (see Appendix 3 for complete definitions):

1. **Committed** by a governing or other organizing body. The site has been identified for conservation and formally announced.
2. **Designated** by legal or other effective means. The MPA has clear boundaries established for the long-term conservation of the area and clearly defined goals with biodiversity conservation as a primary objective.
3. **Implemented** with regulations active. The MPA exists and is operational, not just on paper. The MPA is being managed for conservation and biodiversity benefits.
4. **Actively Managed** with ongoing monitoring and adaptive management.

*The MPA Guide Stages of MPA Establishment* are broad and may not offer detailed insights into year-to-year progress. To address this, metric 2.1 includes an evaluation of the status for each stage of MPA establishment. The four status markers are:

1. **Complete.** All the key components of the MPA site stage of establishment are completed.
2. **On track.** Progress toward the MPA site stage of establishment is consistent with Schedule 4 of the MPA Network Agreement Conservation Plan.

3. **Delayed.** Progress toward the MPA site stage of establishment is behind the timeline anticipated in Schedule 4 of the MPA Network Agreement Conservation Plan.
4. **Not started.** Collaborative work on the MPA site stage of establishment has not begun.

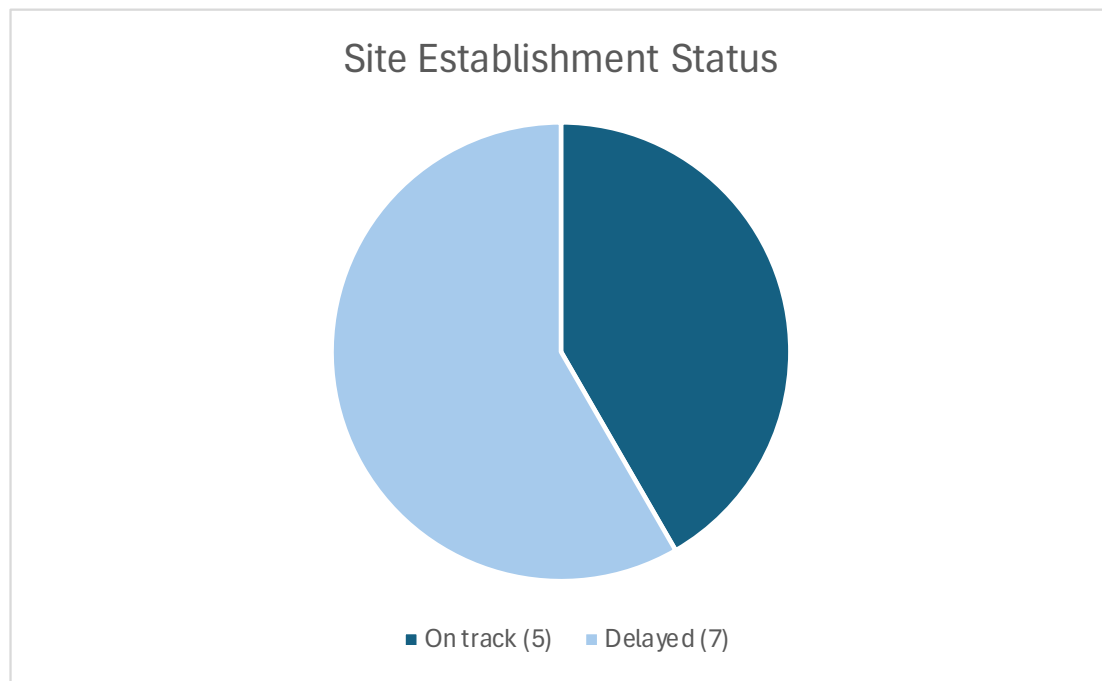
In this report, we are focusing on the new proposed MPAs in the Network, and do not include assessments of existing MPAs. There are eleven new MPA sites identified in the MPA Network Agreement and Nation MPA agreements proposed for establishment (Table 1, Figure 6).

By early 2026, five out of eleven sites have been designated. One of these sites nearing full implementation, **Gwaxdlala/ Nalaxdlala Marine Refuge and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)** was designated in 2023 and has active regulations protecting the conservation objectives. In 2025, an IPCA Strategic Management Plan (Nation-Province) was completed (Phase 1) and

is being actively implemented. A Marine Refuge Management Plan (Nation-DFO) is also nearing completion.

Three marine refuges, including **Xaana Kaahlíi** and **Gaw Káahlíi**, and **Banks** were designated in 2025, all ahead of schedule. In addition to the marine refuge designation, **Xaana Kaahlíi** and **Gaw Káahlíi** both have complimentary Fisheries Management Direction issued by the Council of the Haida Nation. **Kishkosh and Kitkiata Inlets Wildlife Management Area** was also designated in 2025. Fishery closures are in place and an IPCA has been declared for **Homayno**. Complimentary requests for decisions have been submitted for Marine Refuge status and Section 17 *Land Act* conditional withdrawal. For each of these sites, partners are turning their focus to the development of management plans.

Six of the MPA sites are in the designation stage, with anticipated designation dates ranging from 2026 to 2028. Each of these sites is delayed (Figure 5). More detail is provided below.



**FIGURE 5:** Site Establishment Status

### Offshore Haida Gwaii

The Council of the Haida Nation and DFO are assessing the feasibility of implementing the Offshore Haida Gwaii Site in context of the Haida Nation MPA Agreement and Network Action Plan. Preliminary technical work has started and includes the Ecological and Biological Overview (2022) and the Mineral Resource Overview. Next steps include preparation for establishing co-led engagement processes necessary to support establishment through collaborative advancement of the draft framework and blended-approach that are currently in development.

### Nearshore Haida Gwaii marine National Wildlife Area

Over the last year, the Council of the Haida Nation and Environment and Climate Change Canada have advanced many of the foundational pieces of a feasibility assessment, which will inform the draft regulatory strategy. These components include: an ecosystem overview report, mineral report, socioeconomic overview,



and the convening of a co-led blended advisory committee, comprised of both the Haida Gwaii Integrated Advisory Committee and sector-elected representation.

### Kitkatla Inlet Oceans Act MPA

Site partners are assessing the feasibility of implementing this Oceans Act Area of Interest (AOI) site in the context of the Network Action Plan. The [Ecological and Biophysical Overview](#) and the Mineral Resource Overview are complete and available.

As a next step, re-engagement among governance partners will be required to review technical materials, confirm shared priorities, and provide direction on next steps, including future engagement processes.

### North Coast Fjords (formerly Caamano Sound) Oceans Act MPA

Site partners are assessing the feasibility of implementing this Oceans Act Area of Interest (AOI) site in the context of the Network Action Plan. Preliminary technical work has been initiated, including completion of the [Ecological and Biophysical Overview](#) and the Mineral Resource Overview, which are ready for external presentation.

As a next step, re-engagement among governance partners will be required to review technical materials, confirm shared priorities, and provide direction on next steps, including future engagement processes.

### Central Coast National Marine Conservation Area Reserve

A feasibility assessment completed in 2024 found that establishing a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) Reserve in the Central Coast region was both feasible and desirable. Partners have since been negotiating an establishment agreement anticipated to be finalized in 2026, after which the NMCAR will proceed into the implementation phase and will involve the development of a

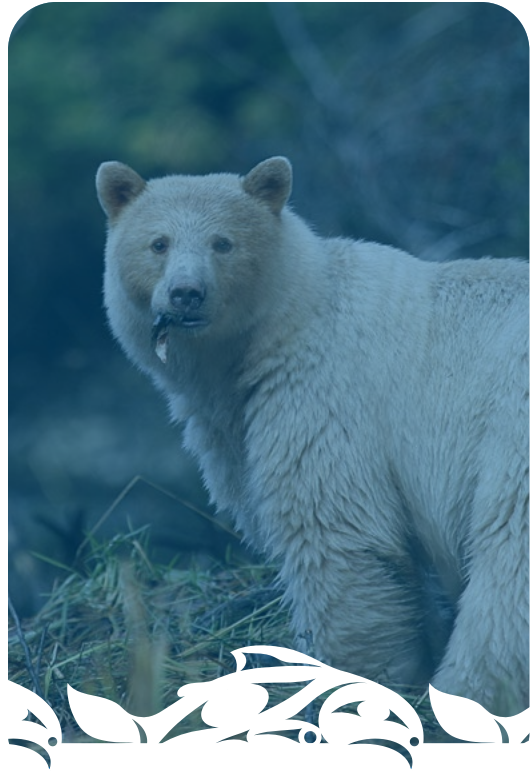
management plan, including a zoning plan. This work will be supported by an advisory committee spanning a range of marine sectors and interests, comprising residents and stakeholders.

### **Xaana Kaahlíi and Gaw Káahlíi Land Act Section 16 Withdrawal**

Throughout 2025, Council of the Haida Nation and the Province worked together to identify a new approach for protecting these sites (initially proposed as a Wildlife Management Area). As an interim measure, Council of the Haida Nation and the Province have been working towards a Section 16 withdrawal of disposition under the BC Land Act. A Section 16 will best serve the Xaana Kaahlíi and Gaw Káahlíi conservation objectives identified in the Network Action Plan. Additionally, the proposed interim Section 16 is intended to overlap with the existing Xaana Kaahlíi and Gaw Káahlíi Marine Refuges, providing additional protection. During the transition period, Council of the Haida Nation and the Province will continue to implement Gaayhllxid • Gíihlagalgang Rising Tide Haida Title Lands Agreement to identify the best approach for management of Xaana Kaahlíi and Gaw Káahlíi. The partners are working to have the Section 16 in place by end of 2026.

### **Category 2 zones and Category 3 areas**

The MPA Network Agreement Conservation Plan includes a 2030 anticipated establishment date for all Category 2 zones in the Conservation Plan with further planning work beginning in 2025. Although the plan was to have identified conservation tools for Category 2 zones in 2025 the partners agreed to focus on Category 1 sites.



The Network Action Plan and Conservation Plan include areas (referred to in the plan as Category 3 areas) where further work is required among the Network partners and other First Nations to advance planning on existing or new MPA sites which may contribute to the Network objectives. Once agreement on proposed boundaries, conservation objectives and designation tools of a proposed MPA site within these areas has been reached, including, where relevant, the enhancement or expansion of existing sites, then by agreement the site will be added to the Nation MPA Agreement Conservation Pathway and will be tracked as part of metric 2.1.

**TABLE 1.** Establishment stage and status for potential Network MPA sites. Each establishment stage (committed, designated, implemented, and actively managed — see Appendix 3 for definitions) is assigned a status (complete, on track, delayed, not started) based on the alignment with the timelines outlined in the MPA Network Agreement Conservation Plan.

Site	Total Area (sq-km)	Anticipated designation date <sup>1</sup>	Stage of site establishment			
			Committed	Designated <sup>2</sup>	Implemented	Actively managed
Xaana Kaahlíi and Gaw Káahlíi Marine Refuges	29	2025	Complete	Complete	On track	Not started
Xaana Kaahlíi / Gaw Káahlíi Land Act Section 16 Withdrawal	30	2024	Complete	Delayed	Not started	Not started
Haida Gwaii Nearshore marine National Wildlife Area	2,268	2028	Complete	Delayed	Not started	Not started
Haida Gwaii Offshore Marine Protected Area	3,976	2028	Complete	Delayed	Not started	Not started
North Coast Fjords Marine Protected Area	454	2028	Complete	Delayed	Not started	Not started
Kitkatla Inlet Marine Protected Area	440	2028	Complete	Delayed	Not started	Not started
Kishkosh and Kitkiata Inlets Wildlife Management Area	17	2025	Complete	Complete	On track	Not started
Banks Marine Refuge	435	2026	Complete	Complete	On track	Not started
Central Coast National Marine Conservation Area Reserve	7,064	2025	Complete	Delayed	Not started	Not started
Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala Marine Refuge Land Act Section 17 withdrawal & IPCA	21	2023	Complete	Complete	Complete	On track
Homayno Marine Refuge Land Act Section 17 withdrawal & IPCA	28	2026	Complete	Complete*	On track	Not started
Category 2 zones	2,779	2030	Delayed	Not started	Not started	Not started

\* Homayno fishery closures are in place and an IPCA has been declared. Section 17 Land Act Conditional Withdrawal and Marine Refuge status have been submitted for decision.

<sup>1</sup> Under the Network Agreement, Establishment means advancing, planning, feasibility, design, and designation of an MPA. For more details about the specific establishment requirement for each tool see the Conservation Plan in the Network Agreement.

<sup>2</sup> Marine Refuges are recognized by the Minister of Fisheries.

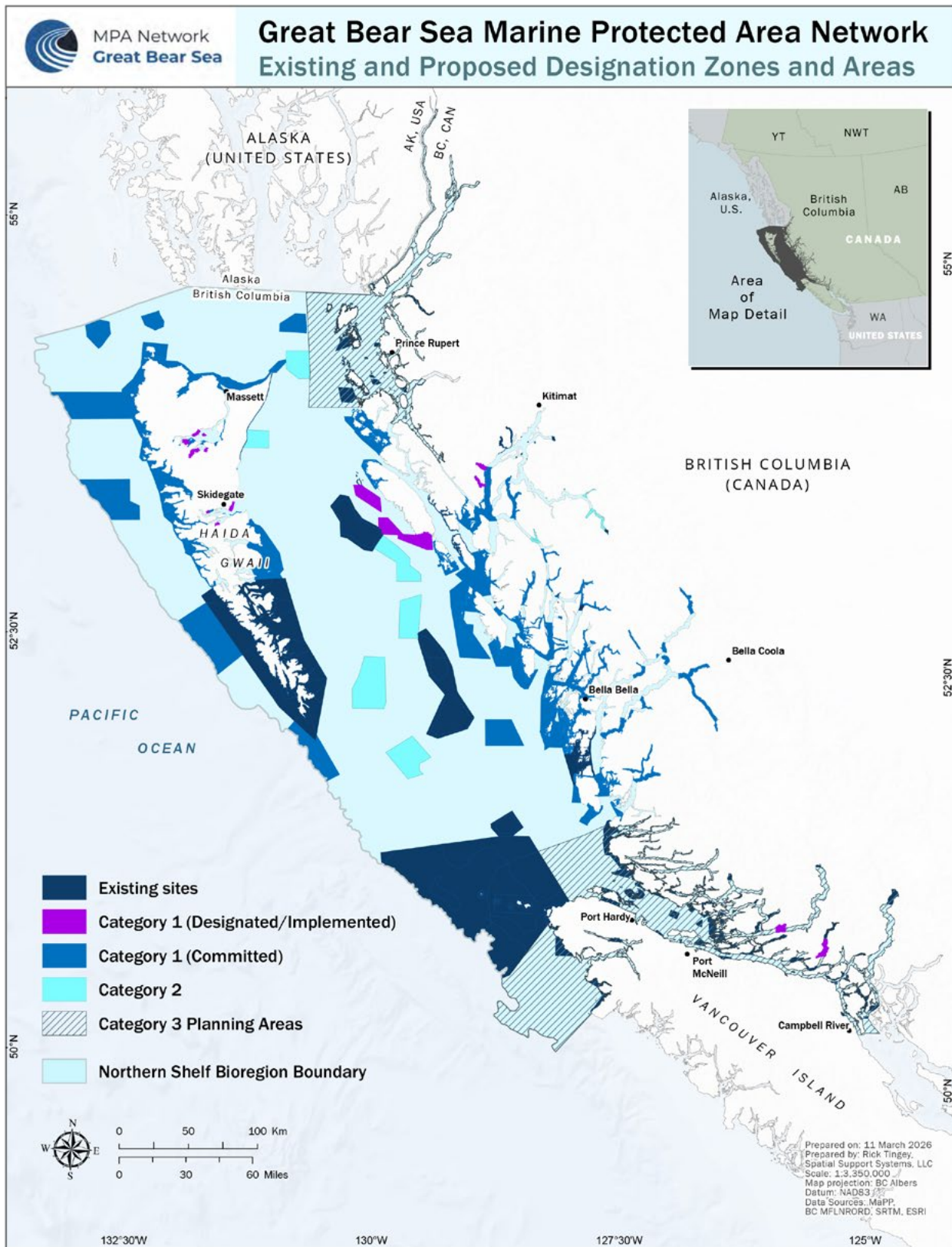


FIGURE 6: Great Bear Sea Marine Protected Area Network. Existing and Proposed Designation Zones and Areas

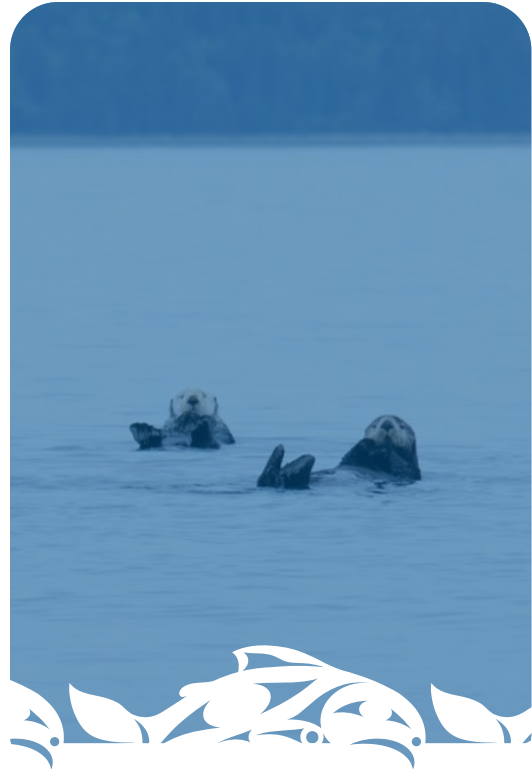
All metrics reported in the remainder of this section are based on changes to zone boundaries identified in the Network Action Plan, and an updated scenario that was assembled by Network partners in August 2025. The updated scenario includes boundaries for Category 1 sites designated by August 2025, and any other relevant revisions to existing and committed zones in the Network.

This report includes the following classifications of protected areas within the Proposed Network:

1. **Existing MPA/RCAs 'as-is, where-is':** These areas represent MPA and RCAs that existed prior to the Network Action Plan's publication and are not modified.
2. **Category 1 designated/implemented - new:** These areas represent Category 1 zones established in areas that were previously not protected.
3. **Category 1 designated/implemented - pre-existing:** These areas represent Category 1 zones established in areas that overlap with existing MPA/RCAs.
4. **Category 1 committed:** These areas represent Category 1 zones that have yet to be established.
5. **Category 2 areas:** These areas represent Category 2 zones that have yet to be established.

#### **METRIC 2.2. PERCENT CHANGE IN PROPOSED NETWORK AND NEWLY DESIGNATED AREAS**

The five Category 1 sites designated between March 2023 – August 2025 span 15 zones that comprise a total of 502.1 square kilometres (Table 2). This represents 1.7% of the Proposed Network, and 0.5% of the Great Bear Sea area. The newly designated Category 1 sites include four marine refuges (Xaana Kaahlii, Gaw Káahlii, Banks, and Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala), and one wildlife management area (Kishkosh and Kitkiata Inlets).



Of the Category 1 designated sites, 66.3 km<sup>2</sup> is newly protected area and 435.8 km<sup>2</sup> overlaps with pre-existing RCAs. The latter category comprises the three Banks Marine Refuge zones that overlap with three RCAs.

The total Proposed Network area declined by 0.24% (from 30,493 km<sup>2</sup> to 30,420km<sup>2</sup>, Table 2) between 2023 and 2025 due to a North Vancouver Island zone reclassification to Category 3 planning area. Another small zone reclassification in the Existing MPA/RCAs led to the slight increase in Existing MPA/RCAs area (Table 2). As of August 2025, no substantial edits were made to other zone boundaries within the Proposed Network that impact the overall footprint of the Network.

**TABLE 2.** Network scenario area calculations based on the comparison of the 2023 and 2025 Network scenarios.

Scenario / subset	Proposed Network Area km <sup>2</sup>	Existing MPA Area km <sup>2</sup>	Cat 1 Designated (new)	Cat 1 Designated (modified)	Newly Designated Category 1 areas
2023	30,493.0	15,140.0	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
2025	30,420.0	15,145.0	66.3	435.8	502.1
Percent Change	-0.24	0.03			

**TABLE 3.** Levels of protection metrics across the 2023 and 2025 Network scenarios. Levels of protection are based on the IUCN categories for protected areas.

Scenario	Level of protection	Type of MPA	Area km <sup>2</sup>	Proportion of Proposed Network	Proportion of GBS
2023	High Protection	Existing MPAs	2,932.84	0.096	0.029
	Moderate / Limited Protection	Existing MPAs	12,207.28	0.400	0.120
2025	High Protection	Category 1 — designated	50.8	0.002	0.001
	High Protection	Category 1 — designated that overlaps with Existing MPAs	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Moderate / Limited Protection	Category 1 — designated	451.3	0.015	0.004
	Moderate / Limited protection	Category 1 — designated that overlaps with Existing MPAs	435.80	0.014	0.004

**TABLE 4.** Comparison of the amount of adjacent marine and terrestrial protected areas and coastline in the 2023 and 2025 Network scenarios.

Zones adjacent to terrestrial protection			
Scenario	MPA type	# Zones	Proportion of GBS Zones
2023	All	229	0.640
	All	227	0.645
2025	Category 1 — designated	2	0.01
Percent Change (all)		-0.87	0.76

Coastline adjacent to terrestrial protected area			
Scenario	MPA type	Proposed Network Area (km)	Proportion of GBS Coastline
2023	All	11,359.9	0.923
	All	11,314.60	0.919
2025	Category 1 — established	221.50	0.02
Percent Change (all)		-0.40	-0.40

### METRIC 2.3. CHANGE IN PROTECTION LEVEL OF EXISTING MPA/RCAS IN THE NETWORK

Existing MPA/RCAs in the Network were categorized into two categories of protection during the Network planning process:

1. **High protection:** corresponds with IUCN levels 1a, 1b, II, and III
2. **Low/moderate protection:** corresponds with the IUCN levels IV and VI

The Network design strategies recommend that 20-50% of the Network be in high protection to increase MPA and Network effectiveness (see [Design Strategies](#)). Committed areas were not evaluated for protection level because management measures had not yet been identified. Sites and zones will be classified upon designation.

The only Category 1 designated/implemented – pre-existing zones in 2025 are the Banks Marine Refuge that overlap with the West Banks Island RCA, North Danger Rocks RCA, and Otter Passage RCA. New protections offered by the Marine Refuge include prohibitions on commercial and recreational prawn and crab by trap, which layer upon the RCA protections on commercial trawl and hook-and-line fisheries and recreational hook-and-line fisheries (see [RCA Prohibitions](#)).

Despite this increase in protection, the Banks Marine Refuge is still categorized as low/moderate protection level according to the IUCN levels of protection used during the planning process (see [IUCN categories](#)), because existing fisheries such as commercial invertebrate dive and recreational invertebrate dive and handpick that do not pose a risk to the conservation objectives remain open. According to the [2022 OECM Guidance](#), only the risks from existing and foreseeable activities are assessed. In the instance for Banks Marine Refuge, commercial salmon and herring gillnet are neither existing nor foreseeable activities. That is, there is no change in

the categorized level of protection from Moderate to High of Existing MPA/RCAs in the Network based on the Category 1 established – pre-existing (Table 3).

### METRIC 2.4. CHANGE IN PROPORTION OF PROTECTED AREA CONSIDERED TO BE HIGHLY PROTECTED

The five Category 1 sites designated since 2023 span both categories of protection. Three marine refuges ([Xaana Kaahlii](#) and [Gaw Káahlii](#), and [Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala](#)) are categorized as high protection, while the Banks Marine Refuge and Kishkosh and Kitkiata Inlets Wildlife Management Area are categorized as Moderate/Low protection. The three high protection marine refuges total 50.8 square kilometres, and the Moderate/Low protected areas comprise 451.3 square kilometres (Table 3).

The total amount of the Proposed Network that is classified as highly protected is 2,983.64 square kilometres (9.8% of the Proposed Network and 3% of the Great Bear Sea, Table 3).

### METRIC 2.5. PERCENT CHANGE IN TERRESTRIAL – MARINE PROTECTION CONNECTIVITY (NUMBER OF ZONES AND PERCENT OF COASTLINE ADJACENT TO TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS)

Two of the Category 1 designated sites are adjacent to terrestrial protected areas. This increases the amount of coastline that connects land and marine protected areas by 221.50 km (Table 4). The total coastline that connects land and marine protected areas has decreased by 0.4% due to the revisions to the Proposed Network zones discussed in Metric 2.2 (Table 4).



## 4. Looking Forward

The Network partners have made significant progress in setting up the structures and frameworks required to support effective Network implementation and MPA site establishment and management, including advancing Network monitoring and communications and engagement.

The site partners continue to make important progress on site establishment for all sites; however, only half of the sites are on track, relative to the MPA Network Agreement Conservation Plan.

In 2026/27 the Network partners plan to further advance Network monitoring and research, engage advisory committees to support collaborative governance and engagement, including working with stakeholders to explore and implement

stakeholder engagement integration between the Network and MaPP, improve communication and outreach through an updated website, continue to advance MPA site establishment in-line with the Conservation Plan timelines, and strengthen the structures and processes that support Network implementation and site establishment.



## Appendix 1: Knowledge Advisory Committee membership

Name	Affiliation
Alejandro Frid	Simon Fraser University and University of Victoria
Anne Salomon	Simon Fraser University
Dan Okamoto	University of California Berkeley
Káníhkás Desiree Lawson	Heiltsuk Nation
Gerald Singh	University of Victoria
Iain McKechnie	University of Victoria
Jenn Walkus	Wuikinuxv Nation
Jennifer Sunday	McGill University
Juliano Palacios Abrantes	University of British Columbia
Kii'iljuus Barbara Wilson	Haida Nation / Simon Fraser University
Kirsten Grorud-Colvert	Oregon State University
Louise Teh	University of British Columbia
Lydia Teh	University of British Columbia
Margot Hessing-Lewis	Hakai Institute & University of British Columbia
Mark Carr	University of California Santa Cruz
Maycira Costa	University of Victoria
Natalie Ban	University of Victoria
Nataschia Tamburello	ESSA
Nicole Jung	University of British Columbia
Ryan Stanley	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
William Cheung	University of British Columbia





## Appendix 2: **Bioregional Advisory Committee (BAC) Composition**

Sector	Members	Alternates
Local Advisors	Colin Masson , Norm Sloan, Chris Carlson, Garrett Newkirk, Janie Wray	N/A
Marine research institutes	Daniela Loock	Vacant
Recreational fishery service providers	John Willis	Vacant
Shellfish aquaculture	Nico Prins	Vacant
Public recreation	Nick Heath	Vacant
Commercial tourism	Mollie Cameron	Vacant
Commercial fisheries	Chris Sporer, Emily Orr, Grant Dovey	Zoe Ahnert, Alaina Pyde, Mike Atkins
Marine conservation	Natalie Groulx, Elise Pullar	Sidney Dixon, Michael Bissonnette
Public recreation fishery	Vacant	Vacant
Seafood processing	Vacant	Vacant
Commercial Marine plant harvest	Vacant	Vacant
Marine plant aquaculture	Vacant	Vacant
Local government (one per regional district)	Vacant	Vacant
Coastal forestry	Vacant	Vacant
Finfish aquaculture	Vacant	Vacant
Renewable energy	Vacant	Vacant
Marine transportation and shipping	Vacant	Vacant
Non-renewable energy	Vacant	Vacant
Marine infrastructure	Vacant	Vacant
Other representatives (as appropriate)	Vacant	Vacant



## Appendix 3: MPA Guide Stages of Establishment Definitions

**Proposed/Committed:** The site has been identified for conservation, and conservation is the primary objective of the site. The intention to designate the site has been announced in some formal manner. However, the announcement is non-binding.

**Designated:** The MPA is established through legal means or another form of authoritative rulemaking. The MPA has clear boundaries established for the long-term conservation of the area. The goals of the site's designation are clearly defined and stated, with biodiversity conservation as a primary stated objective. There is a clear process in place to define allowed uses and the associated regulations and rules to control the impact of authorized activities.

**Implemented:** The MPA exists and is operational, not just on paper. Plans for management are activated, and biodiversity benefits can begin to accrue. The MPA has a plan (a management plan or equivalent) for regulating activities. Governance of the MPA exists within a managing body or people group, such as an Indigenous People, government agency, NGO, or

shared governance among these. Resource users, such as fishers or tourism operators, are aware of the MPA regulations.

**Actively Managed:** Management and scientific monitoring of the MPA is ongoing and subject to periodic review. Management is able to adapt and make changes as needed to achieve stated biodiversity conservation and other social and ecological goals of the MPA. MPA management is ongoing, with scientific monitoring, periodic reviews, and adjustments made as needed to achieve the goals. There is active and ongoing monitoring, community engagement, and management evaluation.





# MPA Network Great Bear Sea

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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