

## THE GREAT BEAR SEA

“What I like and respect about WWF is they don’t try to impose their beliefs on you. They do the research and provide information to help others make decisions.”

—Art Sterritt, Executive Director, Coastal First Nations

HUMPBACK WHALES, GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA © ANDREW S. WRIGHT / WWF-CANADA



### November 2011

The provincial government and First Nations organizations commit to MaPP

### July 2013

Stakeholders, including WWF, agree on a MaPP vision statement

### April 2015

MaPP plans are completed and approved by 18 coastal First Nations and the B.C. government

### 2020

The federal government draws on the information in the MaPP plans to establish new marine protected areas on B.C.'s North Coast

# PLANNING FOR THRIVING ECOSYSTEMS AND ECONOMIES

On April 27, 2015, the province of British Columbia and 18 First Nations signed the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP); an agreement to sustainably manage 102,000 square kilometres of Canada's northwestern Pacific coast.

The MaPP agreement will change the way decisions are made about how British Columbians use their marine environment. The agreement recog-

nizes that healthy marine ecosystems create the foundation for strong economies and resilient communities.

It calls for a coordinated approach that recognizes many ocean uses, including traditional harvesting, commercial fishing, tourism, marine transportation, and renewable energy.

"What's unique about the MaPP plan is that it's quite detailed, it's ground-up, and it's largely driven by First Nations," says Mike Ambach, our marine planning specialist based in WWF's Prince Rupert office.

MaPP draws on extensive scientific, traditional, and local ecological knowledge about the region—hundreds of layers of data—as well as the values of the coastal communities.

WWF is proud to have taken an active role in this process, ensuring that

conservation was central to MaPP. But it doesn't end there. "Signing off on a plan is just good intentions," says Mike. Now the work begins to ensure the MaPP plan gets put into action through legislation, policy, and careful management.

## Humpback whales

Since Hermann Meuter and Janie Wray first established the Cetacealab research station on Gil Island, roughly 140 km south of Prince Rupert in the territory of the Gitga'at First Nation, humpback whales have made a comeback—from just 45 in 2001 to more than 300 in the area today.

Each spring, humpbacks migrate nearly 5,000 kilometres to coastal British Columbia to feast on fish and krill. But if the Northern Gateway pipeline goes ahead, bringing crude oil from Alberta to the port of Kitimat, 240 tankers a year could make their way through nearby channels, significantly increasing the danger of ship strikes and oil spills. It also brings noise, drowning out the songs of humpbacks. "The ability to communicate and find food for these whales is going to be more difficult if shipping increases," says Hermann.

New underwater microphones funded by WWF are helping Cetacealab and the Gitga'at establish baseline noise readings for the area to prove how important this haven is for humpbacks and other whales.

## Art Sterritt: A blueprint for the future

According to Coastal First Nations former executive director Art Sterritt, the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP) agreement creates a blueprint for ensuring the sustainability of coastal ecosystems for

generations to come—much like the historic Great Bear Rainforest agreement created sustainability on land. "MaPP and the Great Bear Rainforest agreements aren't five- or ten-year plans," Art says. "They're forever plans."



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