



# Georgia Basin

## ACTION PLAN:

Sustaining a healthy  
ecosystem and healthy  
communities

2003 - 2008

***Environment Canada  
Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection  
Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management  
Fisheries & Oceans Canada  
Parks Canada***

## ***A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION***



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

# WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GEORGIA BASIN

*We share a vision of healthy, productive AND sustainable  
ecosystems AND communities IN THE GEORGIA BASIN*

... where people of all ages can breathe clean air, drink clean water, swim on clean beaches, and enjoy unparalleled vistas of mountain, ocean and shore.

... where the integrity of natural ecosystems are protected, and the future of forests, wildlife, fish and marine mammals is secure.

... where our common goal of sustainable communities – embracing individual human and social well-being, economic opportunities and environmental quality – can be realized by today's generations and by those yet to come.

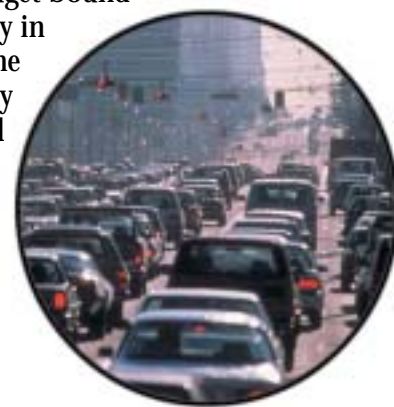
*AND WE BELIEVE THAT ...*

## ... THE GEORGIA BASIN IS A GIFT OF BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY

The Georgia Basin ecosystem is one of the most diverse regions of North America: diverse in its ecology, in its landscape, and in its peoples. It is part of a larger transboundary ecosystem, often referred to as the Georgia Basin – Puget Sound region. The ecosystem supports a rich biodiversity — it provides vital habitat for millions of birds that migrate each year along the Pacific Flyway; its marine and fresh waters are home to a rich variety of life forms, including five species of salmon, and marine mammals such as whales and seals. Nearly 3 million people in Canada, and 4 million people in the United States, now call the Basin “home”. Many have been drawn here by the quality of life, and recreation, tourism and economic opportunities abound.

## ... THE ECOSYSTEM IS THREATENED BY HUMAN IMPACTS

In the past 25 years, the population in the Georgia Basin ecosystem has more than doubled. By 2020, the population in the Basin is expected to reach 4 million in Canada, and in excess of 5 million in the Puget Sound region. The growing population of the Georgia Basin – Puget Sound region, particularly in areas outside the established urban centres, is a major underlying force contributing to the cumulative stresses on the land, air, water and other ecosystem resources. Successfully managing the impacts of this growth presents significant environmental, economic and social challenges both locally and across the basin ecosystem.



Through the Georgia Basin Action Plan (GBAP), we collectively apply our mandates, values and resources to address the challenges confronting the Georgia Basin ecosystem and provide an opportunity and invitation to others to join us in achieving our vision. We will contribute to the partnership and its goals by providing expertise and resources as outlined by our departmental mandates and interests:

***Environment Canada.*** Preserving and enhancing the quality of the natural environment, including water, air and soil quality; conserving Canada's renewable resources, including migratory birds and other non-domestic flora and fauna; conserving and protecting Canada's water resources.

***Fisheries and Oceans Canada.*** Managing Canada's oceans, the conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources and the habitats that support them, and safe effective and environmentally sound marine services, responsive to the needs of Canadians in a global economy.

***Parks Canada.*** Protecting and presenting nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and fostering public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

***BC Ministry of Water, Land, and Air Protection.*** Protecting human health and safety by ensuring clean and safe water, land and air; maintaining and restoring the natural diversity of ecosystems, and fish and wildlife species and their habitat; and providing park and wildlife recreation services and opportunities to British Columbians and visitors.

***BC Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management.*** Providing strong provincial leadership to achieve sustainable development of the province's land, water and resources while protecting environmental values.

We recognize that we cannot fulfil our shared vision of healthy, sustainable and productive ecosystems and communities on our own. The challenges ahead of protecting and restoring environmental health in a manner that also supports a vibrant economy, and

enhances human and social well-being are complex and interconnected. Therefore, we will engage the considerable skills, energy and resources of various agencies of the federal, provincial, regional and local governments, Coast Salish First Nations, community groups, industry, businesses and residents of the Georgia Basin, as well as those of our neighbours in the Puget Sound.

### **...Local decision-makers are critical to our ecosystem efforts.**

We believe that a successful effort to preserve and enhance the future of the Georgia Basin ecosystem should be founded on action at the community and local government level and that local decision-makers play a key role in bringing us closer to our vision of sustainability. It is therefore important to incorporate local participants and their knowledge into our actions, as well as keep share information and lessons learned through effective reporting, communications and outreach.

### **... First Nations have always played a stewardship role in the future of the ecosystem**

The geographic area of the Georgia Basin and Puget Sound corresponds almost exactly with the traditional territory of the Coast Salish People. For many thousands of years or since "time immemorial", the Coast Salish exercised stewardship over the land and resources of this unique and sensitive ecosystem, a place referred to as "SQELATSES". The word SQELATSES translates in Coast Salish Halkomelem and Sencoten as "Home", a watershed characterized by an abundance and diversity of life within the ecosystem.

To preserve and protect the region, we will continue to work co-operatively and in partnership with First Nations people in an atmosphere of mutual respect so that their special knowledge and unique perspective can contribute to our common efforts.



## ...WE SHARE COMMON PRINCIPLES

The partners share common principles that will direct and guide our actions under this agreement:

**Accountability.** Each partner will focus on achieving results within its core mandate, consistent with the Georgia Basin Action Plan, while linking these results with the relevant activities of other partners. In pursuing specific actions outlined in the Georgia Basin Action Plan, partners will identify functions that lie within their mandates and expertise and undertake to lead or participate in the conduct of collaborative activities. Partners will regularly report within the GBAP governance framework and annually to the public on progress in relation to the achievement of these commitments.

**Ecosystem Approach.** Partners will undertake research, policy and management decisions, within an ecosystem framework that takes account of the interdependence of land, air, water and living organisms including humans, over time and space. Such an approach recognizes the need to make decisions that will take account of direct and indirect impacts on the sustainability of the ecosystem of the Georgia Basin–Puget Sound and its components.

**Pollution Prevention.** It is desirable to anticipate and prevent the generation and dispersion of pollutants as well as actions that have, or could be expected to have, deleterious impacts on the integrity of the ecosystem, as opposed to undertaking remedial actions later. Such preventive measures may include:

eco-efficient product and process design; elimination of deleterious substances and products, processes and locations; recycling and reuse; and training/education to encourage environmentally sound behaviour.

**Science-Based Decision Making.** Decisions affecting the Georgia Basin ecosystem should be science-based, derived from knowledge of the processes involved and their expected impacts, including ecological and social and health sciences. We recognize that our understanding of validity in science is evolving, and now includes consideration of the nature of science, uncertainty, and the roles of scientific paradigms other than conventional cause-effect

methodology, including tribal/First Nations traditional knowledge, other local place-based knowledge, civic science and emerging paradigms such as precautionary and ecosystem approaches.

**Sustainability.** Consistent with the broader policies of the signatories, actions should be developed wherever possible within a Sustainability Framework, that is, the integration of the consideration of environmental, social and economic goals and outcomes, together with the required institutional mechanisms, with respect to both long term (including inter-generational) and short term time frames. This means the need for inter-jurisdictional partnerships and inter-disciplinary teams, as well as collaboration among conventionally isolated decision-making structures.



## ...WE SHARE COMMON GOALS

The Georgia Basin Action Plan commits us to work collaboratively towards the achievement of the following goals:

- Collaborative stewardship actions support the sustainability of the Georgia Basin;
- Sustainable land, aquatic and resource use planning and management support the conservation, protection and restoration of the environment,
- enhance human and social and social well-being and contribute to a strengthened economy;
- Scientific and indigenous knowledge supports improved decision-making by advancing the understanding of key ecosystem stresses;
- Targeted ecosystems are protected and restored



## ...GOALS THAT WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO ACTIONS

Just as we share a common vision of a sustainable future for the Basin, we will capitalize on opportunities to be both catalysts and leaders that integrate these goals along with actions and decisions that protect and restore environmental health, provide sustainable economic opportunities, and enhance human and social well-being.

### *Using strategies that:*

- integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations,
- generate new knowledge and develop relevant tools for decision makers and influencers,
- target knowledge transfer to support and influence decisions at all levels
- optimize outreach and stewardship actions,
- optimize government programs and collaboration to take direct action,
- strengthen partnerships and strategic alliances,
- promote best practices.

### *...We will undertake actions that:*

- Support the development of and access to stewardship tools, and integrated resource and land-use data and information for the Georgia Basin and Puget Sound;

- Influence decisions and actions that support the sustainability of the Georgia Basin Ecosystem through the development of ecosystem health and community progress indicators;
- Promote and support shared leadership roles in stewardship, sustainable best practices and eco-efficiency amongst governments, non-government organizations, First Nations, the private sector, communities and individuals;
- Provide tools to implement ecosystem, airshed and watershed-based approaches in aquatic, land and resource use plans;
- Advance our understanding of socio-economic and health impacts of poor air, water, or habitat quality;
- Support the sustainable use of the ecosystem by aquatic and terrestrial resource-based industries;
- Improve scientific understanding and share indigenous knowledge of ecosystem stresses resulting from human activity;
- Improve understanding of climate change impacts and adaptation;
- Further identify links between human health and environmental conditions;
- Reduce loadings and emissions of toxics and contaminants in air and water;
- Protect drinking water sources; and
- Conserve, protect and restore important aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats.



...MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION STRUCTURES WILL  
BE COLLABORATIVE AND FLEXIBLE

The Georgia Basin Action Plan will include a coordination and management structure that allows for collaborative planning and stakeholder involvement within and across individual mandates by a number of departments and ministries, as well as partnering with other organizations on specific projects. The management structure will be flexible and allow representation from other partners at all levels as commitments are developed.

***Steering Committee.*** The signatory agencies of the Statement of Cooperation will form a Steering Committee, at the senior executive or equivalent levels. The Steering Committee will be chaired by Environment Canada.

The Steering Committee will provide oversight and general direction to the programs and actions undertaken through the Georgia Basin Action Plan. It will be responsible for the overall implementation of the Action Plan, including annual reporting on results.

***Coast Salish - First Nations Advisory Forum.***

The GBAP Partners will host an annual meeting with First Nation leaders in the Georgia Basin to receive input and advice on priorities and actions.

***Management Committee.*** A Management Committee will be formed comprising senior staff representatives of the signatory organizations and other departments, agencies and ministries that participate in the delivery of the Action Plan. The role of the Management Committee will be to foster cooperation and integration of actions, promote the integration of environmental, social and economic goals and outcomes through an ecosystem approach, ensure implementation of the Action Plan's principles, strategies and goals, identify opportunities for collaborative undertakings, and seek commitments

under their respective governmental processes for the implementation of identified actions.

***Planning and Implementation Teams.*** Issue-specific Planning and Implementation Teams may be formed as appropriate and necessary to undertake cooperative work planning. The role of the Planning and Implementation Teams will be to develop collaborative projects that support the achievement of the Action Plan's goals and outcomes. Membership of Planning and Implementation teams will be flexible and will represent a range of organizations and interests that are contributing programs and expertise to the achievement of the Action Plan goals.

***Coordination Office.*** Environment Canada will staff a Coordination Office to support the Steering Committee and Management Committee, foster information exchange, and facilitate program integration amongst and between the Planning and Implementation Teams, and complementary Georgia Basin – Puget Sound transboundary initiatives.

***Stakeholder engagement.*** In addition to stakeholder mechanisms and processes that individual GBAP partners undertake as part of their engagement strategies, Georgia Basin stakeholders and Puget Sound partners will be invited to participate in two processes under the Action Plan:

- **Annual Partner's Workshop.** This workshop will engage the full range of GBAP delivery partners to provide guidance, advice, and support in the development of annual work plans.
- **Annual Stakeholder Meeting.** This meeting will provide an opportunity for the GBAP Steering Committee to report out on progress, profile best practices, and receive stakeholder input.



## ...WE WILL BUILD ON THE PROGRESS AND COOPERATION TO DATE

Between 1998 and 2002, significant progress was made through the *Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative* on key environmental issues (achieving clean air, achieving clean water, protecting and conserving habitats and species) and supporting sustainable communities. Over the next five years, the *Georgia Basin Action Plan* will build on this progress, and strengthen our collective capacity to protect and restore ecosystem health while working cooperatively to provide economic opportunities and enhance human well-being.

In addition to our own programs, we intend to continue linking with other excellent cooperative initiatives and working relationships that have been established across the region. These include, to name only a few, the Fraser Basin Council, the Washington-British Columbia Environmental Cooperation Council, the Environment Canada-U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Joint Statement of Cooperation on the Georgia Basin and Puget Sound Ecosystem, Coast Salish First Nations, the Pacific Coast Joint Venture, the emerging Greater Vancouver Regional District Sustainable Region Initiative, as well as a range of existing federal-provincial agreements and multi-party initiatives led by governments, First Nations, universities and community-based organizations.

## ...PARTNERSHIPS WILL YIELD RESULTS

We recognize that working together on common goals makes sense and that truly effective partnerships involve open communication, a commitment to cooperation and flexibility, and the use of individual strengths and capabilities. As partners working towards the sustainability of the Georgia Basin, we are prepared to respond to these challenges. We welcome partnership of other departments, ministries and organizations that, through their programs, contribute to the sustainability of the Georgia Basin.

Don Fast  
Regional Director General  
*Environment Canada, Pacific & Yukon*

Gordon Macatee  
Deputy Minister  
*Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection*

John Davis  
Regional Director General  
*Fisheries & Oceans Canada, Pacific & Yukon*

Jon O'Riordan  
Deputy Minister  
*Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management*

Gaby Fortin  
Director General  
*Parks Canada  
Western and Northern Canada*



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FOR THE  
GEORGIA BASIN



email: [georgiabasin@ec.gc.ca](mailto:georgiabasin@ec.gc.ca) • [www.pyr.ec.gc.ca/GeorgiaBasin](http://www.pyr.ec.gc.ca/GeorgiaBasin)

