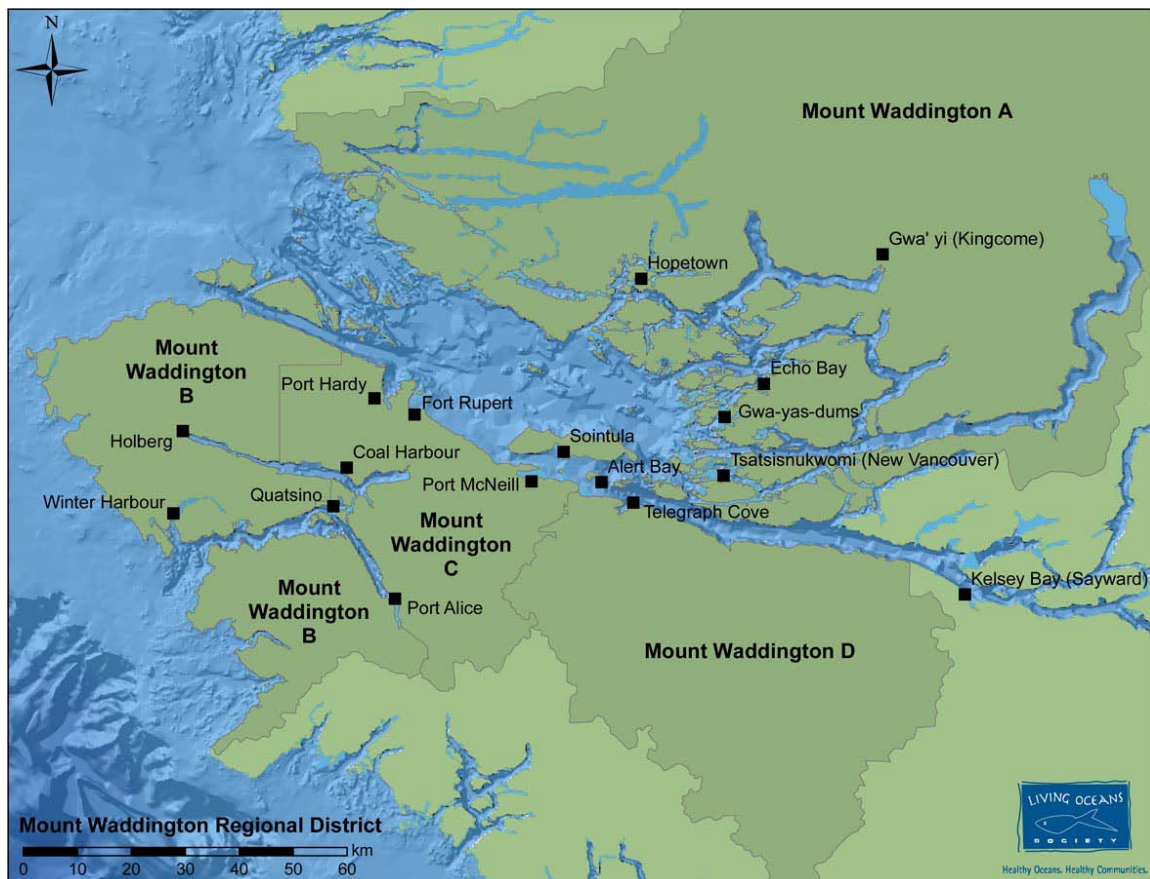




Healthy Oceans. Healthy Communities.

Introduction

In order to plan for our future use of the ocean, we need to fully understand the benefits which it currently provides us. Through a detailed review of our reliance on the marine environment, both in economic and social terms, we can better manage coastal resources (including the workforce) in a way that fosters new opportunities while protecting existing uses and values. The Living Oceans Society and the Regional District of Mount Waddington (RDMW) have been working together to address this need for the North Island region (Mount Waddington).



Map: Regional District of Mount Waddington

The RDMW jurisdiction occupies the northern third of Vancouver Island and a large area of the adjacent British Columbia mainland (see map above). Most communities are

coastal with many only accessible by boat. The population is approximately 12,000 people, with almost one quarter being First Nations. Many residents are reliant economically on natural resources, with the ocean figuring prominently in their livelihoods.

Living Oceans Society (LOS) is Canada's largest organization focused exclusively on marine conservation issues. Based in Sointula in the RDMW, LOS considers people to be part of the environment and works to protect the BC coastal ecosystem with the goal of building sustainable communities today and for the future. The Regional District of Mount Waddington is the regional tier of local government that serves both the incorporated and unincorporated communities of the area with a variety of regional and local services.

Marine Ecosystem Services

The first portion of the study was performed by Sarah Klain, who completed her master's degree at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Her results are presented in her thesis entitled *Navigating marine ecosystem services and values*¹. Based on 30 in-depth interviews with residents from a variety of marine-related occupations across the district, this research identifies residents' monetary and non monetary values associated with the ocean, as well as perceptions of environmental threats in the RDMW.

Those interviewed tended to attribute the highest relative monetary and non-monetary importance closest to their home communities. Local residents quantified certain values on a relative scale (e.g. relative economic importance, relative recreational importance), but certain values are not appropriately expressed on a relative scale, particularly those related to spiritual, ethical and emotional values. A recommendation of the thesis was that planning processes such as the Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area (PNCIMA) process use similar assessment techniques because these methods enable people to articulate a wide variety of values connected to the marine environment as well as map and quantify a subset of these values.

Marine Economy

In the second stage of the study, GS Gislason and Associates conducted an economic study entitled *The Marine Economy and the Regional District of Mt. Waddington in BC*². The study identifies the economic benefits of marine related activities to RDMW residents for the 2009 year, and reinforces the link between this economic contribution and a healthy marine environment.

Gislason reviewed existing data, contacted thirty-three individuals in local business, government and First Nations to verify details, and surveyed 54 local marine tourism

and sports fishing businesses to fill data gaps. The study found that the total direct and indirect contribution of the marine-based economy to local residents in 2009 was \$55.2 million in wages and the equivalent of 1,340 full-time jobs. This is 28% of the private sector employment in the regional district, or 2 in 7 private sector jobs. Due to a particularly poor salmon returns in 2009, these values would have been much higher for the following year, particularly for sectors dependant on these runs.

As the study considers only the wages and employment of RDMW residents, the values generated by the marine sector of this region are much higher than indicated in this report. When one considers the wages and jobs lost to the region, but generated by its local marine sectors, it becomes clear that the ocean space surrounding the RDMW has the potential to support significantly more local jobs, families and businesses at current economic production levels.

As the UBC research component of this study indicated, the influence of the ocean on the lives and livelihoods of RDMW residents is more pervasive than indicated by just market-based economic measures. The ocean is integral to the economy, the culture, way of life and collective identity of the region. It also provides significant benefits to both First Nation and non-indigenous people through seafood harvesting activities. Marine ecosystem services underpin many industries that employ RDMW residents and make coastal life as we know it possible.

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