



COASTAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

COASTAL FIRST NATIONS

GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE

Coastal First Nations Regional Monitoring System

First Nations taking care of their lands and waters

Through the Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative, First Nations are working together to improve ecological and human well-being and re-establish their authority to manage and protect their territories on the North and Central Coast of British Columbia and Haida Gwaii. The territories of Coastal First Nations have been impacted by past resource use and continue to be threatened by ongoing activities and planned development. Federal and provincial government agencies have not committed sufficient staff or funding to effectively monitor and patrol these remote regions. Agencies need to address this shortfall, but Coastal First Nations are also carrying out their inherent responsibilities to address these issues. Guardian Watchmen—resource technicians who work for First Nations' resource stewardship offices—play a critical role in monitoring and protecting cultural sites and important ecosystems. They are the eyes and ears in each Coastal First Nation territory. The Coastal Stewardship Network, a program of Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative, provides support to build stronger local resource stewardship offices through activities such as the Regional Monitoring System.

What is the Regional Monitoring System?

The Regional Monitoring System was developed because Coastal First Nation communities have a strong desire to know more about what is going on in their territories and the region and work toward common goals. The Regional Monitoring System supports this by providing:

- a standardized approach to monitoring priority issues at the regional scale;
- tools for communities to collect, store, and retrieve their data;
- coast-wide data to compile and compare for use by communities; and
- support to communities to use the information in planning and decision-making.

The issues currently being monitored reflect priority concerns expressed by communities regarding damage to cultural sites, over-use and over-fishing, declining populations of fish and wildlife, and the inadequate presence and response of enforcement agencies. Coordinated monitoring efforts mean that First Nations have stronger relationships with resource users, an enforcement presence in the region, a solid baseline of data for planning, management, and decision-making, and a clear case for conservation.

What is being monitored?

Guardian Watchmen collect data on some or all of the following indicators through the Regional Monitoring System.

Wildlife sightings: Specific marine and terrestrial wildlife species are monitored, including species at risk, to improve knowledge of habitat use and range.

Boat sightings: Number and location of sport fishing, tourist, and other types of boats are monitored to understand how territories are being used.

Activities of tourists: Tourists on land or anchored boats are surveyed to find out about their activities, develop relationships, and engage in education and outreach.

Impacts to cultural and ecological sites: Assessments are conducted at cultural, ecological, high tourism, and community use sites to ensure these areas are being used appropriately.

Suspicious activities: Suspicious activities are recorded and reported to enforcement agencies. Outcomes of reports are tracked to improve enforcement, ensure accountability of enforcement agencies, and work towards establishing First Nations' authority to engage in compliance and enforcement.

Bear hunting: Bear hunting activities on the coast are monitored and recorded to determine if there is hunting in contravention of the declared trophy hunting ban and to develop a strategic and coordinated response.

Sport fishing lodges: Information is gathered at regular visits to sport fishing lodges to develop relationships with sport fishers and operators.

Crab and prawn trap sightings: Sightings of commercial, recreational, and food fish crab and prawn traps are recorded to determine location and proportion of fishing effort.

Stream surveys: Water quality data are collected, habitat assessments are conducted, and returning salmon are surveyed at priority streams within territories to improve knowledge of habitat and fish stocks.

Tsunami debris: Sightings of tsunami debris from Japan are recorded to assess the extent and impacts of the debris and, as necessary, build a case for resources to address impacts and debris removal.

Crab surveys: Research is being conducted on the impact of fishing on Dungeness crab populations in closure areas identified in community marine use plans.

How are data collected and used?

The Regional Monitoring System provides First Nations with standardized methods for collecting and recording data. Resource stewardship office staff use field cards or a mobile device called a CoastTracker to collect data, and a secure online data management system to store and access information. Each First Nation controls access to its information and authorized users can download raw data or generate reports and maps. Data collected through the Regional Monitoring System inform First Nations' land and marine use plan implementation, fisheries and wildlife management, and tourism and economic development.

What happens next?

The Regional Monitoring System has been in use for six field seasons, with new indicators and methods added each year. A third party evaluation was conducted in the spring of 2014 and since then, the Coastal Stewardship Network has been implementing the recommendations. In 2015/2016, the Network is coordinating a re-design process with First Nation stewardship staff to develop the second iteration of the Regional Monitoring System. We are reassessing the questions that the system is designed to address, identifying current First Nations' information needs, improving the data management system, and integrating with other community information systems and external data sources. The RMS is being redeveloped to meet the monitoring needs identified in the marine plans and adaptive land management agreements of First Nations on the North and Central Coasts of British Columbia.

For more information:

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