



Nisga'a Abalone Coast Watch

Community Action Plan

For Protecting and Restoring Northern Abalone

October 2007

Partner groups:



**Nisga'a Fisheries
Program**



**Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Environment Canada**



INTRODUCTION

The Nisga'a Abalone Community Action Plan (NACAP) was developed by the Nisga'a Fisheries Program with help from community members in Prince Rupert, Kincolith, Greenville, Gitwinksilkw, and New Aiyansh, and our partners Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada, and Oceanlink (Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre). Funding was provided by the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, and the Environment Canada Aboriginal Habitat Protection Program for Species at Risk. This plan complements the Recovery Strategy for Northern Abalone developed by DFO.

The population of Northern abalone in BC declined dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s due to overharvest. The fishery was closed to all harvesting in 1990. In 1999 abalone was listed as a "Threatened" species, and in 2003 it was legally protected under the Species At Risk Act (SARA) which prohibits taking, buying, selling or trading of abalone.

objectives

The long-term goal of the Community Action Plan is to restore the abalone population to a level that supports a community food fishery.

Stewardship

- Promote stewardship of abalone in north coast communities by raising awareness and encouraging Coast Watch participation.

Education

- Transfer traditional and scientific knowledge of abalone, and conservation recovery principles to Nisga'a youth.

Patrolling

- Initiate marine patrols to monitor and report signs of illegal harvest proximate to Outer and Inner Wales Island area, Pearse Island, Dundas Island, and Portland Canal, and provide feedback to the community and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

community workshops

In November, 2006, two community workshops were held in New Aiyansh, and Prince Rupert. The purpose of the workshops was to provide information, encourage "Coast Watch", and gather ideas for this Community Action Plan. Workshops included presentations on abalone biology, status, conservation and protection, abalone stewardship projects in BC, and open discussion. Presenters and participants identified key issues:

KEY ISSUES

Despite a 16-year ban on all harvesting of abalone, the population has not recovered. In fact, scientific surveys indicate that the abalone population on the north coast is declining. Experts believe there are two main reasons why the population has not rebuilt:

illegal harvest

Poaching is thought to be the #1 threat to the recovery of abalone in BC. There has been a steady stream of occurrences involving illegal abalone sales in Prince Rupert, including the largest bust in BC history in February 2006: 2470 lbs of abalone. Even small harvests of abalone

for “a feed” can add up, impacting abalone’s ability to reproduce.

reproduction

If there are not enough male and female abalone close together during spawning, their sperm and eggs can’t meet, and no young are produced. Even with a healthy “patch” of abalone, spawning success is unpredictable. But when depleted too much, reproduction is unsuccessful. Also, abalone are very slow to reach reproductive age.

GOALS

The goal of the Community Action Plan is to rebuild the abalone population on the north coast to a level that will support food fisheries. The past 16 years of fisheries closures alone have not succeeded in rebuilding northern abalone. To be successful, we must use innovative ways to address illegal harvesting..

APPROACH

The Community Action Plan proposes to address these issues through communication and education, a community Coast Watch program, and patrolling local abalone areas. These key elements of the plan are detailed below.

**Communication/
Education**

Communication strategies to raise awareness and engage the community in abalone Stewardship include the following:

Details:

- Abalone presentations and educational activities in schools and youth forums;
- Abalone newsletters and questionnaires, to assess awareness and solicit **feedback from the community**;
- Dialogue with local groups such as Metlakatla Fisheries Program, environmental groups, boat charters, and commercial fishers to inform them of the program and build cooperation in monitoring and reporting illegal harvest.

**Coast Watch
Program**

Strengthening our Coast Watch program to increase community-based abalone monitoring and protection is a key component to our Plan.

Details:

- Encourage voluntary monitoring by people who are on the water (food and commercial fishers, tour and charter operators);
- Actively involve First Nations youth, Fisheries staff, councillors, ferry and seaplane operators, and fishers;
- Through outreach and communication, increase the number of people signed up for Coast Watch.

Patrolling

Monitoring waters in Portland Canal for illegal abalone activities

Details:

- Initiate patrols in outer Portland Canal in known abalone areas and report illegal activities to Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



Logo design: **Clint Adams**, Prince Rupert

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North Coast Abalone Watch

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