

# SATELLITE CHANNEL ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

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Approved by:



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Date: Sept. 6/03



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## SATELLITE CHANNEL ECOLOGICAL RESERVE Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. Research and educational activities may be carried out but only under permit.

### Primary Role

The **primary** role of Satellite Channel Ecological Reserve is to conserve rich benthic communities typical of fine-grained, level-bottom environments in the southern Gulf of Georgia. This 343-hectare ecological reserve is located 200 metres south of Saltspring Island and 200 metres north of Saanich Peninsula. It is the only wholly subtidal marine protected area in British Columbia as it consists only of seafloor habitat. Established in 1975, it was designated to research the effectiveness of protected marine areas as a model for future marine conservation areas. The benthic infauna is diverse in species and high in biomass, with at least 67 species present, of which bivalve and gastropod molluscs, errant and sedentary polychaetes, amphipods and echinoderms are particularly diverse. Nine species have been found to be ecologically significant, and studies over time have shown the benthic communities to be stable. The ecological reserve is also important for migrating marine animals that move through the channel such as octopus, dogfish, salmon, lingcod, wolf eels, killer whales, harbour porpoise and harbour seal.

### Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Methodology of surveying the health of the benthic species populations	➤ Encourage researchers to survey and monitor site comparing to baseline data reaching back to 1965.
Impacts from dragging and trawling on ecological reserve values	➤ Work with the Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensure fisheries closures over the ecological reserve.
Impact of the Georgia Strait Pipeline crossing (GSX) proposal, should it proceed	➤ Review options to minimize disturbance. These options include amending the ecological reserve boundary to encompass even more biologically significant areas.

### Conservation

- Representation  
- ecosection  Satellite Channel Ecological Reserve contributes 4.6% to the representation of the Strait of Georgia *Marine* Ecosection of which only 0.94% is protected provincially. Satellite Channel's contribution ranks 4<sup>th</sup> out of 37 protected areas representing this ecosection. Helliwell Provincial Park is the largest contributor with 37.5%.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant  No terrestrial contribution
- Special Features  Only completely subtidal protected area in BC. Very high diversity and production of benthic infauna, nine species of which are considered to be ecologically significant.
- Rare/Endangered Values  Benthic habitats are under-represented in the provincial protected areas system
- Scientific/Research Opportunities  Research on faunal stability, diversity and biomass has been undertaken by University of Victoria biologists since 1965

### Recreation

- Representation  
backcountry  Not Applicable  
destination  Not Applicable  
travel corridor  Not Applicable  
local recreation  Not Applicable
- Special Opportunities  None known at this time
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities  Offsite interpretation

### Cultural Heritage

- Representation  Values unknown
- Special Feature  None known at this time

### Other Management Considerations

- Other Designations  Not Applicable

Relationship to other PAs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	One of 21 marine protected areas in the southern Vancouver Island area, and is adjacent to the Southern Gulf Islands National Park Reserve.
Co-operative Management Arrangements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commercial fishery closures that are specific to Satellite Channel Ecological Reserve include shrimp and prawn – by trap or trawl prohibited
Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable
Vulnerability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commercial deep sea fishing (dragging and bottom trawling), marine contamination (dumping), area of high marine traffic, water quality degradation, Georgia Strait Crossing (GSX) pipeline crossing proposal, inability to assess marine values
Relationship to other Strategies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marine Protected Area Strategy

**Area:** 343 hectares (all subtidal)

**Date of establishment:** October 24, 1975