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## Planning Canada's Pacific Coast: What Made it Work

In April 2015, the Marine Planning Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (MaPP) released plans for over 100,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the coastal waters of the Canadian province of British Columbia — making it the largest area in North America covered by ocean plans. The MaPP process was formally initiated in November 2011 and is co-led by the Province of British Columbia (hereafter BC) and 18 coastal First Nations (Canada's indigenous populations). The process has involved extensive participation and input from coastal communities, local governments, and other stakeholders including the forestry, fishing, conservation, and tourism sectors.

The MaPP plans provide a long-term vision for the area and recommendations for a variety of uses and activities (such as aquaculture, renewable energy generation, mining, recreation, log handling, and research) for identified zones throughout the planning area. The plans focus on uses and activities for which the BC provincial government has legal jurisdiction and regulatory authority. First Nations and the BC provincial government are now transitioning from planning to implementation by redeveloping administrative structures and establishing implementation agreements, work plans, and budgets.

As the MaPP focus now turns to implementation, MEAM spoke with four MaPP team members about the factors that enabled MaPP to successfully negotiate the complex planning process:

- **Steve Diggon** is Regional Marine Planning/Implementation Coordinator for the Coastal First Nations, an alliance of First Nations on the BC coast. He is a member of the Marine Coordination Team that led the process.
- **John Bones**, also a member of the Marine Coordination Team, is the Marine Planning Coordinator for the *Munwakolas* Council which represents the interests of seven First Nations along the BC coast.
- **Charlie Short**, also a member of the Marine Coordination Team, is the Manager of Marine Resources for BC's Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.
- **Joanna Smith** was the Science Coordinator for the MaPP process from 2011 to 2014 and is currently the Marine Spatial Planning Science Manager for TNC Canada, an affiliate of The Nature Conservancy.

Full copies of the four plans and plan overviews are available at [www.mappocean.org](http://www.mappocean.org). Many frequently asked questions about the MaPP process — including on MaPP's public-private funding model and how MaPP relates to a separate, federally led ocean planning process in the region — are addressed at [http://mappocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Things\\_To\\_Know\\_About\\_MaPP\\_20140613.pdf](http://mappocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Things_To_Know_About_MaPP_20140613.pdf). Descriptions of the most important planning tools used in the MaPP process are available in the EBM Toolbox column in this issue of MEAM at <https://meam.openchannels.org/node/10841>.

### MEAM: We're interested in learning about strategies, tools and resources, and realizations that you found useful for the MaPP MSP process. Which ones stand out for you?

**Bones:** As a representative of a First Nations partner organization in MaPP, I found the most useful strategy was having our member nations prepare in advance for the joint planning process. Specifically, our member nations developed their own plans to reflect their perspectives on existing and future marine uses and activities as well as how to better integrate their governance systems into current systems. These plans were then integrated to provide a common approach and common sets of recommendations and zones/planning units for the area. This enabled our nation groups to take a leadership role in joint planning and reduced the need to constantly go back to our leadership or technical groups for decisions on joint planning issues as they emerged.

**Diggon:** Having the First Nations develop their own community marine plans was really critical. It helped them bring clear values and issues to the process and ensured that First Nations' traditional knowledge played a key role in informing both the planning process and the plans themselves. Ultimately, these community marine plans were the foundation for developing the MaPP plans.

Some other critical strategies were:

- Making the MaPP process a full partnership and government-to-government relationship between First Nations and the provincial government of BC.
- Developing a coherent management structure for the process. This included an Executive Committee that provided political support; a senior-level Working Group that made key decisions and provided oversight; a Process Management Team that provided support to the Working Group, designed the process, coordinated the regional process, and worked on broader process-wide policies; and sub-regional Technical Teams co-led by First Nations and BC that collaboratively undertook stakeholder engagement and sub-regional plan development. In addition each First Nation had Planning Committees that reviewed, provided input, and negotiated final plan outcomes with BC.

**Smith:** Coordinating information for this large, dispersed team was critical for completing the MaPP outputs. There were weekly calls with the sub-regional planners and monthly calls with the Technical Teams, and the Technical Team met in person twice a year to discuss frameworks, zoning, and other topics.

**Short:** There were many important strategies — perhaps too many to list. But one of the key pieces was establishing the understanding and intent of the process between the partners — BC and participating First Nations — through formalized agreements early on to set the structures and scope of the project. This allowed us to focus and be more efficient in designing the MSP process and developing the products.

### MEAM: Were there some important tools and resources?

**Bones:** A number of valuable tools and resources were used to develop zones and zone provisions in the MaPP process:

- The SeaSketch mapping tool ([www.seasketch.org](http://www.seasketch.org)) enabled partners to quickly overlay, assess, and generate statistics related to zone boundaries, resource values, and uses in zones. Stakeholders could also use SeaSketch to assess the background data and generate alternatives to proposed zones and zone boundaries.
- The Marxan analytical tool ([www.uq.edu.au/marxan](http://www.uq.edu.au/marxan)) was also useful to the process for locating areas of high conservation value for potential protection.
- And MaPP created a general Zoning System that ensured all sub-areas being planned would have a common approach to identifying zones, zone nomenclature, and uses and activities to be addressed in the zones. This proved very useful for comparison and for implementation purposes.

In addition, without detracting from the technical tools, the identification and documentation of specific issues (whether perceived or real) with resource management and activities in the plans was a significant tool for developing the plans, as was the local knowledge of community members and First Nations traditional knowledge. The documentation of First Nation and coastal community interests and issues definitely assisted in formulating strategies and provisions/conditions for potential uses in the plan (e.g., a use must avoid impact on a critical migrating species). And access to local and traditional knowledge and expertise greatly assisted in making outcomes more reliable. A lot of spatial information initially brought to the process proved to be inaccurate or incomplete, and local and traditional knowledge gave us the ability to vet this information.

**Diggon:** In terms of tools and resources, the MaPP process also benefitted from incorporating the marine EBM framework developed through the PNCIMA (Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area) initiative ([www.pncima.org/site/how/ecosystem-based-approach.html](http://www.pncima.org/site/how/ecosystem-based-approach.html)). This framework provided us with balanced set of principles, goals, and objectives for MaPP. [Editor's note: The PNCIMA process is a tripartite (First Nation, federal, and provincial) initiative to produce an integrated management plan for the region at a Large Ocean Management Area scale. The MaPP process focused on producing more operational and localized advice for marine uses in the nearshore and foreshore areas of the region.]

And we were very fortunate to enter into a public-private partnership that provided financial resources for the planning cycle [Editor's note: The details of MaPP's public-private funding model are spelled out in a Memorandum of Understanding available at [http://mappocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/MaPP\\_MOU\\_nosigs.pdf](http://mappocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/MaPP_MOU_nosigs.pdf).]

**Smith:** MaPP had quite a lot of capacity and resources for developing planning tools. I provide descriptions of the most important ones that we used, including some of the ones mentioned already, in the EBM Toolbox column in this issue of MEAM at <https://meam.openchannels.org/node/10841>.

**Short:** Overall, I'd say the MaPP process had it all – political will, adequate funding, strong partnerships and relationships, expertise and capacity, a robust local government, stakeholder and public engagement, and a pressing need to actually do MSP. There was a lot of public interest in this given the increasing use of the marine space in BC.

This combined with the many technical tools, data, and sophisticated analyses allowed us to develop four integrated marine plans for one-third of the coast in BC in only three years or so.

## MEAM: What lessons did you learn from the process?

**Bones:** An important realization in the process from my perspective was that the marine planning could be accomplished in a complex multi-jurisdictional environment without all sectors and relevant authorities participating. This reinforced the partners' dedication to creatively resolving many issues associated with planning a multi-jurisdictional space.

**Diggon:** Some of my realizations were:

- Things tended to take longer than we initially thought they would.
- Building and maintaining good relationships is critical to success.
- In working with multiple sub-regional processes and seeking a level of consistency, we found that we needed to be flexible and willing to adapt the process. We had a saying 'consistent but flexible' though we found it necessary to be consistently flexible in addressing the variation among communities and sub-regions.

**Smith:** I'd emphasize that patience and adaptability are critical traits for marine planners. Marine planning is about anticipating change. Creating a transparent process for this change is important, and you need to be able to adapt the process as the planning progresses to match the needs of the planning authority and stakeholders.

Some of my other realizations were:

- Time and capacity are always very difficult to manage, and you never have enough of either.
- Understanding and managing expectations is extremely important, ongoing, and needs more time than most people probably realize.

## MEAM: Were there any surprises?

**Bones:** The level and extent of collaborative work was a major surprise, given the process involved many stakeholder groups, eighteen First Nations represented by four organizations, several provincial government agencies, and senior leadership levels associated with all major partners. Despite the divergent objectives of the partners, all were able to work extremely collaboratively to develop four sub-regional spatial plans and a broad regional actions document.

**Short:** I agree. I was really surprised by how efficiently the partners, local governments, and stakeholders worked together. This was like one of those big group projects you had to do in university (the kind you sort of dreaded), except that it was real and on a massive scale with multiple partners, diverging interests, politics and many, many moving parts. Nonetheless, we were able to navigate, plan work, and compromise to reach a successful conclusion.

**Diggon:** The level of dedication that both our partners and participants showed throughout the process was really amazing. There were lots of challenges and changes in the timelines, but people stayed focused and got the work done.

**Smith:** In terms of the scientific aspects of MaPP, I have to say I was surprised at how difficult it was to find enough skilled capacity to support marine planning in BC, especially for the social and economic aspects of the planning. We were able to build a strong technical team to support the regional and sub-regional planning, but it took us a while.

## MEAM: Do you have some advice for others getting started with an MSP process?

**Short:** This may be common sense, but it's worth repeating: Ensure you have a need to do MSP. What's the driver? What are the issues, pressures, concerns, and interests? What is the future you are planning for? Figuring this out early on will set the stage for determining what you actually need to do. And it will set you up for obtaining other key MSP 'ingredients': political will (with relevant legislation and legal tools), adequate funding and expertise, and capacity.

**Smith:** I'd second that. It is essential to identify the reason(s) to plan. Having a clear reason to plan is essential for communicating internally and externally and identifying the future conditions that you are planning for. A clear articulation of why and what you are planning for is also important for defining scale and scope and helping the planning process stay on course and meet its objectives.

My other advice is:

- Build a strong team. Ensure you have the staff capacity to deliver a comprehensive, multi-objective marine plan and that there is strong leadership to make transparent, inclusive decisions. From my seven years of marine planning experience, I have in my mind what an essential core team is. At minimum capacity, it should be a Government Authority Lead; an Administrative Lead; an MSP Project Manager and Process Lead or Coordinator; a Science and Technical Lead; a GIS Lead; a Communications Lead; a Community Relations Lead; and a Fundraising Lead. This minimum capacity does not necessarily need to be full-time for the duration of the

planning process, and for processes with more objectives, more capacity would be needed under some of these roles. Other members of the team would include staff for mid-term and final evaluations, legal review, media relations, and policy.

- Be prepared to make lots of decisions. Identify early on who is going to make decisions and how they will be made. There will be hundreds (thousands?) of small and large decisions to make throughout the process, and it is essential to get those decisions made as efficiently as possible. Most MSP processes need to move pretty quickly, so identify the trusted staff to make the day-to-day decisions and give them this authority.
- Limit the number of work plan objectives or outputs. During the MaPP process, we had 39 regional and sub-regional objectives for a three-year planning process, and it was very difficult to complete all of these. When people look to the MaPP process for lessons learned, it is important to realize that coastal and marine planning has been underway in the BC and Pacific region of Canada for over 10 years. Thus, some of the resources we needed (e.g., a spatial data atlas) had already been created and could support or inform the MaPP outputs. In new geographies where I support or facilitate MSP processes, I am careful to match the outputs or objectives with both the time frame and resources available and the level of planning that has already been done.
- Identify available data sets and priorities for data creation. Creating a data inventory with available data and developing a data-viewing tool so that the planning team and stakeholders can view these data is important at the beginning of a process. We were fortunate with MaPP because PNCIMA and the BC Marine Conservation Analysis had already compiled hundreds of data layers. An MSP process will usually need to also outline the analytical methods to create new data, such as stakeholder preferences layers or high priority use areas. A planning process will never have all the data that it needs to answer all the questions that are posed. So in addition to identifying new data sets, one needs to figure out how to work with what is available to make decisions. With each plan review in future years, the plan can be revised and adapted based on new data or information.

**Bones:** In my experience, resource planning processes that rely on stakeholder direction and consensus take a long time to complete, and the resulting plans lack clarity when implemented. My first advice to others would be to ensure that the plan process utilizes stakeholder groups in an advisory capacity. Some more detailed advice would be to hold meetings specifically to review and solicit advice on draft product and minimize debate over advice given by documenting the advice and the response actions in an 'advice log.'

Management structures are also critical, and my advice would be to set up a small coordinating team responsible for keeping the process on track, set a work plan with specific target dates for key meetings and products, and maintain flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, whether political or technical. Some processes want to determine every conceivable outcome and element before the planning begins, but planning is complex and can't be driven by formulae. It requires constant willingness to adapt ideas, plans, and processes.

**Diggon:** I have three key pieces of advice. Build and maintain political support for the process and the process products. Be wary of the tendency to allow planning products to devolve to the lowest common denominator as it can become chronic. And hire good consultants. It may cost more, but it's worth it.

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