

North Coast Cumulative Effects Program Backgrounder

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Prepared by:

North Coast Cumulative Effects Program



With program management, coordination, and technical support provided by:



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1. Introduction

The North Coast of British Columbia (BC) is facing increasing development pressure from numerous industrial activities. These include—but are not limited to—mining, oil and gas extraction and refinement (including liquefied natural gas), related pipeline and shipping activity, transportation and warehousing (including port development and expansion), utilities (power generation, distribution, and transmission), forestry, and renewable energy projects. Current, future, and past development projects and human activities, as well as climate change, may profoundly impact core values of Indigenous peoples on the North Coast through *cumulative effects*. Cumulative effects have been defined as “changes to environmental, social, economic, health, and cultural values caused by the combined effect of present, past, and reasonably foreseeable human actions or natural events” (MaPP 2020, 6).

Six First Nations on the North Coast and the Province of BC have been engaging on initiatives to address co-governance and stewardship priorities on the North Coast through government-to-government forums. Two such initiatives are the North Coast Marine Plan Partnership and the North Coast Environmental Stewardship Initiative. These ongoing initiatives involve collaborative governance at technical, management, and executive levels. Through these initiatives, a collaborative framework is emerging for the creation of trusted data and a foundation for developing and implementing collaborative resource management decisions that all parties can support.

This document provides an overview of the North Coast Cumulative Effects (NCCE) Program, which was initiated in 2019 through the integration of work by the Marine Plan Partnership and the Environmental Stewardship Initiative on the North Coast of BC. The NCCE Program is comprised of representatives from Gitga’at First Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kitsumkalum First Nation, Metlakatla First Nation (the “Partner Nations”), and the Province of BC (collectively, the “Program Partners”), with coordination and technical support from North Coast–Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society. The NCCE Program seeks to ensure that resource decision-making is tuned in and responsive to cumulative effects on core coastal and marine values of the Partner Nations.

2. Background and Context

The merging of the North Coast regions of the Marine Plan Partnership and the Environmental Stewardship Initiative arose from the two programs’ shared goal of developing and fully implementing a cumulative effects framework in order to continuously monitor, assess, and manage the impacts of industrial and non-industrial development in the North Coast on core coastal and marine values.

Marine Plan Partnership

The Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) is a collaboration among the Province of BC and 17 First Nations in coastal BC. Since its formalization in 2011, MaPP has developed and is implementing marine-use plans

with the goal of protecting the marine environment, helping to create opportunities for sustainable economic development, and supporting the well-being of coastal communities.¹

The MaPP region includes four sub-regions: Haida Gwaii, North Coast, Central Coast, and North Vancouver Island. As a result of MaPP’s work, each sub-region now has its own respective marine plan.

The North Coast sub-region of MaPP includes the area that stretches from Portland Inlet to the south end of Aristazabal Island. It spans the communities of Prince Rupert, Terrace, and Kitimat, as well as the land and marine territories of Gitga’at First Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kitsumkalum First Nation, and Metlakatla First Nation.

In 2015, the North Coast sub-region of MaPP completed the North Coast Marine Plan (MaPP 2015). This plan includes several objectives and strategies around cumulative effects monitoring, assessment, and management. It also specifies a key implementation priority in the North Coast: the collaborative development and implementation of the MaPP Cumulative Effects Framework (MaPP CEF), with the aim “to collaboratively limit and manage for the cumulative effects of industrial and non-industrial development” on core coastal and marine values of the Partner Nations (MaPP 2015, 22). The MaPP CEF is discussed below in **Section 3**.

Environmental Stewardship Initiative

The Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) was created in 2014 as part of the Province of BC’s strategy to advance liquefied natural gas development through collaborative work that would address First Nations environmental concerns that arose during the regulatory process for natural resource developments (Province of BC n.d.). The ESI’s area of interest includes four regions: Northeast, Omineca, Skeena, and North Coast. North Coast ESI involves the same six First Nations that are participating in MaPP’s North Coast sub-region.

The goals of ESI are to establish positive environmental legacies across northern BC by investing in four key endeavours: ecosystem assessment and monitoring; ecosystem restoration and enhancement; ecosystem research and knowledge exchange; and stewardship education and training. North Coast ESI has prioritized work on two projects: ecosystem restoration and cumulative effects.

North Coast Cumulative Effects Program

ESI and MaPP have separate sub-regional governance and management arrangements on the North Coast, outlined in each initiative’s respective enabling agreement (*Letter of Understanding: LNG ESI North Coast Regional Stewardship Forum 2016; North Coast Coast Marine Plan Implementation*

¹ Read about MaPP at mappocean.org.

Agreement 2016). Regionally, ESI is overseen by a Governance Working Group Executive and MaPP is overseen by a Marine Working Group. Despite these separate arrangements, there are parallels that facilitate combining selected governance and management components of ESI and MaPP in support of implementation of cumulative effects management across North Coast ESI and North Coast MaPP.

Both North Coast ESI and the North Coast sub-region of MaPP rely on governance and management groups that function as the operational hub. To leverage efficiencies and similarities across these current and potential future initiatives, these governance groups were melded in 2019 into the North Coast Stewardship Forum. The cumulative effects projects under ESI and MaPP have since been rebranded under this newly integrated initiative, which is now known as the North Coast Cumulative Effects (NCCE) Program. The area of interest to the NCCE Program is shown in **Figure 1** on page 4.

The NCCE Program has a well-defined reporting structure, illustrated in **Figure 2** on page 5. The North Coast Stewardship Forum is now the management body of the NCCE Program, performing several key roles. These include reviewing and approving annual workplans and budgets, and overseeing the Project Team and subject-matter sub-groups, which are the hands-on technical groups that support the development of products and outputs for the NCCE Program. They also operate as a communication conduit between technical/operational levels and leadership.

Collaboration at the technical level for the NCCE Program occurs via the Project Team. Reporting to the North Coast Stewardship Forum, the Team is guided by an annual charter and work plan. The Project Team includes one or more representatives from each of the Program Partners. A subset of representatives from the Project Team make up subject-matter sub-groups. These groups focus on work that relates to core values, such as *Salmon, Estuaries, Food Security, and Access to Resources* (discussed in **Section 4** below), as well as on other activities, such as data management, data governance, field-program implementation, and communications and engagement.

Another key component of the NCCE Program is the First Nations Caucus. This is a Tier 1 (First Nation-to-First Nation) group that ensures strategic alignment among the NCCE Partner Nations.

The NCCE Program also includes the North Coast Integrated Advisory Committee. This Committee is a stakeholder body that provides advice and feedback on the NCCE Program—including North Coast Marine Plan implementation activities—using the individual and collective knowledge and skills of Committee members. Advisory Committee members are representatives from key marine sectors/interests in the North Coast Marine Plan area, and (preferably) reside and/or work on the North Coast. NCCE Program Partners delegate staff to represent the NCCE Program and liaise with the Advisory Committee. They adjust the Committee’s membership as required and seek Committee member contributions, as appropriate, to other related initiatives and activities in the North Coast Marine Plan area.

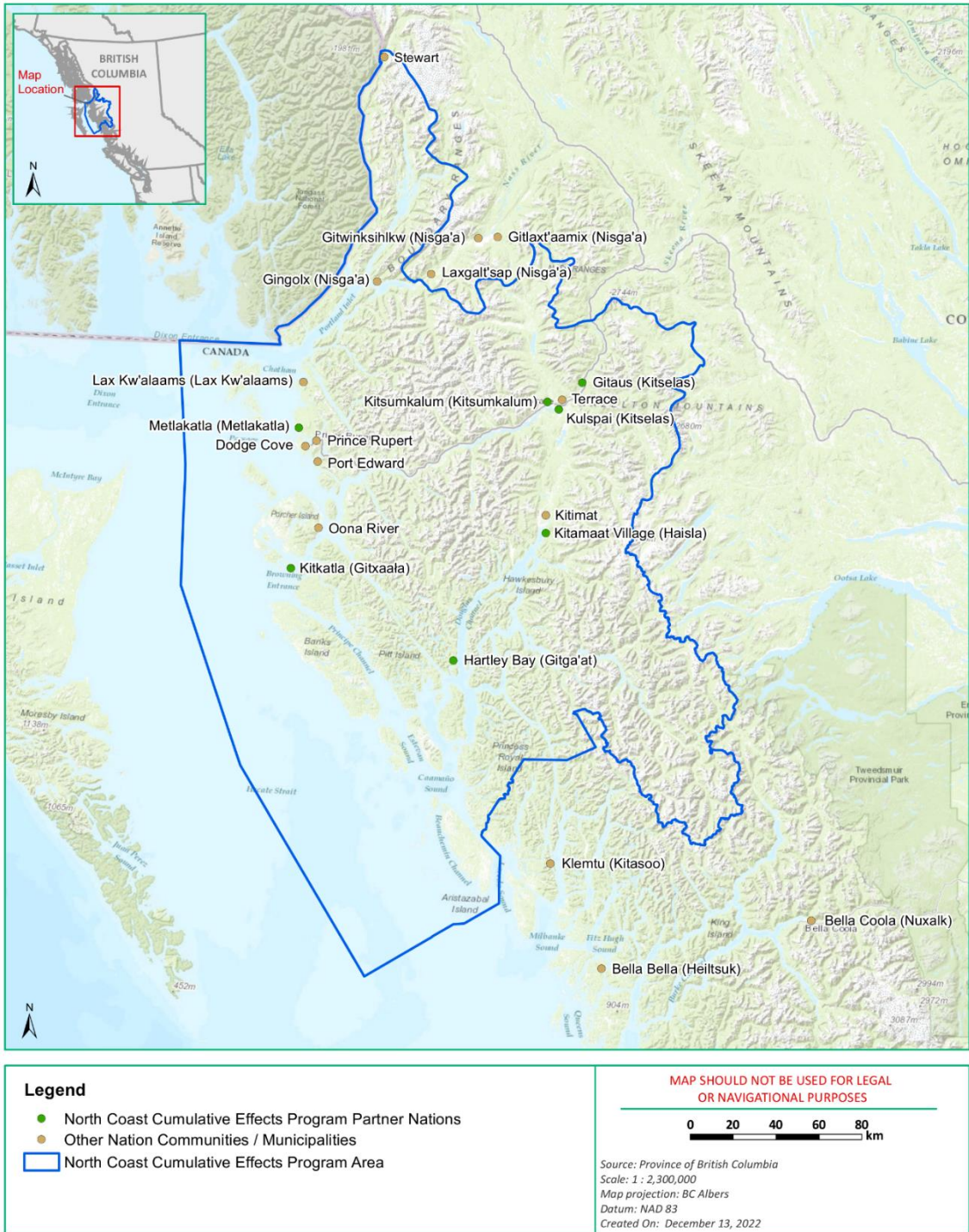


Figure 1. North Coast Cumulative Effects Program area

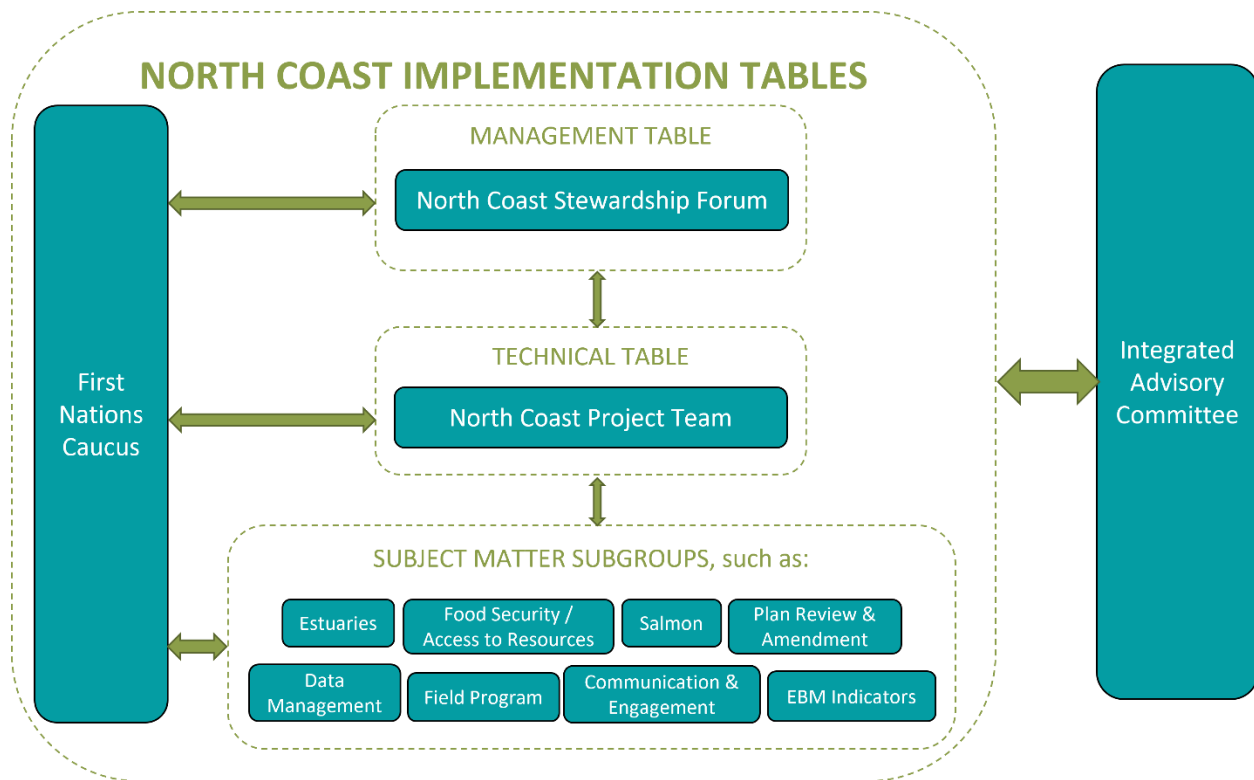


Figure 2. NCCE Program governance and reporting structure

3. Cumulative Effects Framework

In October 2016, the Province released the *Cumulative Effects Framework Interim Policy for the Natural Resource Sector* (the “BC CEF Interim Policy”; see Province of BC 2016) as the first step in providing a consistent, transparent, and predictable set of policies, procedures, and tools to support all levels of decision-making.

First Nations across the four MaPP sub-regions undertook a review of the BC CEF Interim Policy and in collaboration with the Province, developed the MaPP Cumulative Effects Framework (MaPP CEF; see MaPP 2020) to help address gaps regarding coastal and marine values. The MaPP CEF was originally developed during the MaPP planning phase, and was later updated through region-wide engagement and consultation with Partner Nations in each of the four MaPP sub-regions and with the Province of BC.

As shown in **Figure 3**, below, the MaPP CEF identifies nine components, organized in four phases (Foundation, Assessment, Management, and Monitoring). These constitute a comprehensive cumulative effects assessment and management program for the marine and coastal environment (MaPP 2020).

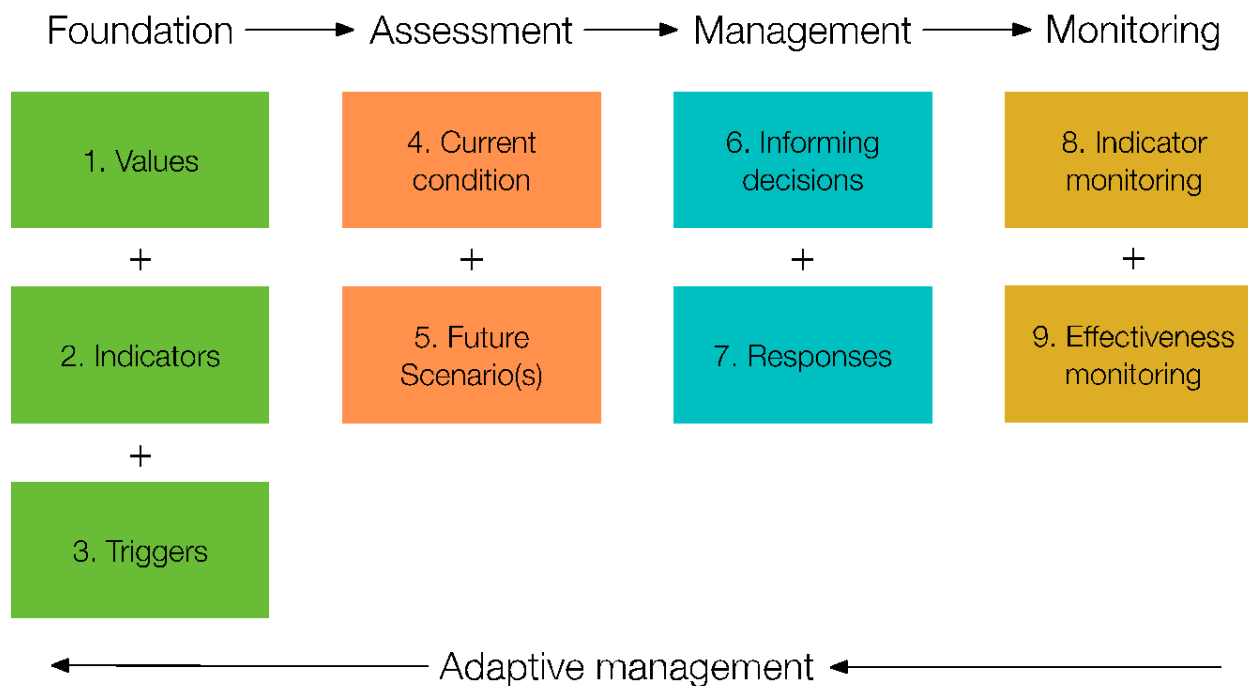


Figure 3. Marine Plan Partnership Cumulative Effects Framework (MaPP 2020)

The NCCE Program initiated implementation of the MaPP CEF; the Program Partners are collaboratively working to monitor, assess, and manage cumulative effects on coastal and marine values on the North Coast.

4. Values Identification

As shown by **Figure 3**, the process of assessing, managing, and monitoring cumulative effects requires the foundational work of identifying core values that are vulnerable to cumulative effects. On the North Coast in 2015, the process began to identify a common set of values potentially impacted by cumulative effects and to develop a monitoring proposal for the region. That initial work involved Environment and Climate Change Canada on the Cumulative Effects Monitoring Initiative (CEMI). The values-identification process involved six North Coast First Nations: Gitga’at First Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kitsumkalum First Nation, Lax Kw’alaams Band, and Metlakatla First Nation. Coordination support was provided by MaPP and the North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society.

During this phase, each First Nation worked individually to review community background documents and engaged their technical staff to compile an initial suite of ecological and socio-economic values potentially affected by cumulative effects. Their combined list included over 200 values, and in

recognition of the mandate of Environment and Climate Change Canada, these values focused primarily on ecological values. The First Nations then listed the interests/rationale for value selections, stressors/impacts on the values, potential indicators of the states of these values, and current research/monitoring efforts that relate to them. For each identified value, they also identified management triggers (where possible) and potential management actions. This was completed at a high level given time constraints and the large list of values identified. To help focus work-planning for CEMI, the list of values was then scoped based on the following criteria: sensitivity to future development, comprehensiveness, and relevance to community. These criteria emerged from cumulative effects work by Metlakatla First Nation and are based on the BC Environment Assessment Office’s *Guidelines for the Selection of Valued Components and Assessment of Potential Effects* (Province of BC–EAO 2013).

With the intention of identifying initial values to implement the MaPP CEF on the North Coast, MaPP hosted a Tier 1 (First Nation-to-First Nation) workshop on December 7, 2016. The Partner Nations collectively reviewed and updated the original list of 200 values identified through CEMI. This list was also reviewed against the extensive list of ecosystem-based management indicators, developed under a MaPP contract through focused expert surveys and workshops that included marine and coastal stakeholders. This work helped the Partner Nations to identify and fill gaps so as to ensure the broader ecological, social, cultural, health, and governance aspects of ecosystem-based management had been captured. The outcome was a list of 33 values, confirmed in January 2017 by the six Partner Nations. These are shown below in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Values identified December 7, 2016

No.	Value
1	Herring—including eggs, spawn on kelp
2	Salmon (all species)
3	Halibut (and other groundfish)
4	Bivalves—including butter clams, cockles, mussels
5	Eelgrass
6	Marine vegetation (seaweed and kelp)
7	Dungeness crabs
8	Eulachon
9	Abalone
10	Terrestrial mammals (moose, deer, bear)
11	Seabirds
12	Marine mammals
13	Marine and freshwater quality

No.	Value
14	Air quality
15	Aquatic habitat—intertidal, subtidal, pelagic, benthic, estuarine, freshwater, wetland and riparian areas, coastal and inland old growth forests, glass sponge reefs
16	Marine safety and navigability—wake, access
17	Marine sediments
18	Qualitative experience
19	Acoustics (underwater noise, noise pollution)
20	Human health and health services (including crime)
21	Access to resources
22	Food security (preferred places/time/means)—where/what you want and quality and amount
23	Commercial fisheries and marine-based economy
24	Indigenous trade
25	Cultural identity (including cultural recognition)
26	Knowledge transmission
27	Resource-management authority
28	Community infrastructure/services
29	Employment and training (including education)
30	Economic access
30	Integrated knowledge (including cultural recognition)
32	Housing
33	Traditional governance systems (including relationships)

During a February 2017 workshop hosted by ESI (and with technical and coordination support provided under MaPP), this values list was reviewed by the Partner Nations and provincial and federal representatives to identify an initial suite of four values to address through the NCCE Program. Initial values identified were *Aquatic Habitat—Estuaries, Salmon, Food Security, and Access to Resources*. For each of these values, objectives—that is, statements about future desired conditions—were identified as follows:

- **Aquatic Habitat—Estuaries:** Protect and restore habitats and ecosystem function for species that are highly valued for their ecological and cultural significance.

- **Salmon:** Protect, restore, and/or increase healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats to support healthy ecosystems, cultural values, and sustainable harvest, and to meet the needs of First Nations and local communities, now and in the future.
- **Food Security:** In accordance with Section 35(1) of *The Constitution Act, 1982*, protect and enhance First Nations use of territories and resources for community well-being.²
- **Access to Resources:** Protect and enhance First Nations access to marine and coastal resources to support local First Nations.³

Work on these four initial values is being advanced as per the MaPP CEF, and is detailed in value-specific assessment protocols, current-condition reports, and cumulative effects assessments. Key accomplishments of the program to date include the development of a North Coast Data Management System and data governance structures and processes; an annual Skeena estuary monitoring field program, initiated in 2017; and integration with other related projects to more effectively advance the work on these initial values.

5. Conclusion

As the North Coast continues to face increasing pressures from industrial development, cumulative effects on core values are an ongoing concern. The NCCE Program is a collaborative initiative at both technical and governance levels. It is enabling the Partners to identify, assess, and monitor cumulative effects on shared interests in order to establish a foundation of knowledge to support trusted management decisions. To reach the goal of ensuring that resource decision-making is tuned in and responsive to cumulative effects on core coastal and marine values, continued work is needed—both to strengthen the relationships across the responsible jurisdictions (First Nations, the Province of BC, and the Government of Canada) and to build the infrastructure and capacity needed to support long-range implementation.

² This was derived from objectives within the *North Coast Marine Plan* (MaPP 2015), including First Nations Resource Use and Management Objective 1 and Objective 4.

³ This was derived from objectives within the *North Coast Marine Plan* (MaPP 2015), including Marine Fisheries Economy Objective 6.

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