



MaPP Co-governance Indicator: Summary of Findings

September 2025

BACKGROUND:

The Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) is a partnership between 17 member First Nations and the Province of B.C. The partners have developed and are implementing sub-regional marine plans and a Regional Action Framework (RAF) that use an Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) approach to provide recommendations for coastal management in the Northern Shelf Bioregion.

EBM defines three equally important elements: ecological integrity, human well-being, and governance and collaborative management. The MaPP partners have identified indicators for monitoring these elements, including an indicator of collaborative (co-)governance¹, defined as:

“Nation-to-nation, government-to-government arrangements that support decision-making, authorities, responsibilities, laws and jurisdictions being exercised collaboratively, including working together on planning, decision-making, and decision implementation.”²

In 2023-2024 the MaPP partners worked with an external contractor, *The Eskina Collaboration*, to evaluate the status of collaborative governance using an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and MaPP reporting data. Data were collected on the following three metrics:

1. Perceived effectiveness of MaPP co-governance arrangements (qualitative measure).
2. Implementation status of sub-regional strategies and RAF actions that relate to creating, maintaining and/or strengthening co-governance arrangements (status tracking, quantitative measure).
3. Inventory of co-governance structures in use to advance MaPP objectives (categorical count, quantitative measure).

This document summarizes the findings of the full report prepared for MaPP by *The Eskina Collaboration*. The report will support the MaPP partners to improve collaborative governance and inform the development of other collaborative processes in the region (e.g., the Marine Protected Area Network).

¹ In MaPP’s EBM framework, public and stakeholder engagement are also considered under the umbrella of governance. A separate report evaluating stakeholder and local government engagement is forthcoming.

² Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection (2018, pg 2).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

Metric 1: Perceived effectiveness of MaPP co-governance arrangements

The evaluation of metric 1 combined the results of a survey and follow-up interviews. The survey garnered 30 responses: 13 from First Nations partners, 5 from the B.C. government, and 12 from First Nations organizations including Coastal First Nations, Nanwakolas Council, North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society, and the Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance. Results of the survey were expanded on through interviews with 16 key informants.

The survey and interviews evaluated 5 key themes: decision making, effectiveness, capacity, partnerships and overall quality of governance. Results are summarized here by theme.



Figure 1 - Governance themes evaluated (Metric 1)

Overall governance quality:

Perceptions of overall quality of MaPP governance varied between the four MaPP sub-regions (Haida Gwaii, North Coast, Central Coast, and North Vancouver Island), but interviewees unanimously agreed that MaPP is a good example of collaborative governance and has been foundational to creating new possibilities for collaborative marine management in the region. While MaPP's approach was cutting-edge 10 years ago, it has now become the status-quo in the context of other collaborative management initiatives now underway in the region. Interview participants suggested that MaPP needs to find the 'new edge' of advancing reconciliation through collaborative governance.



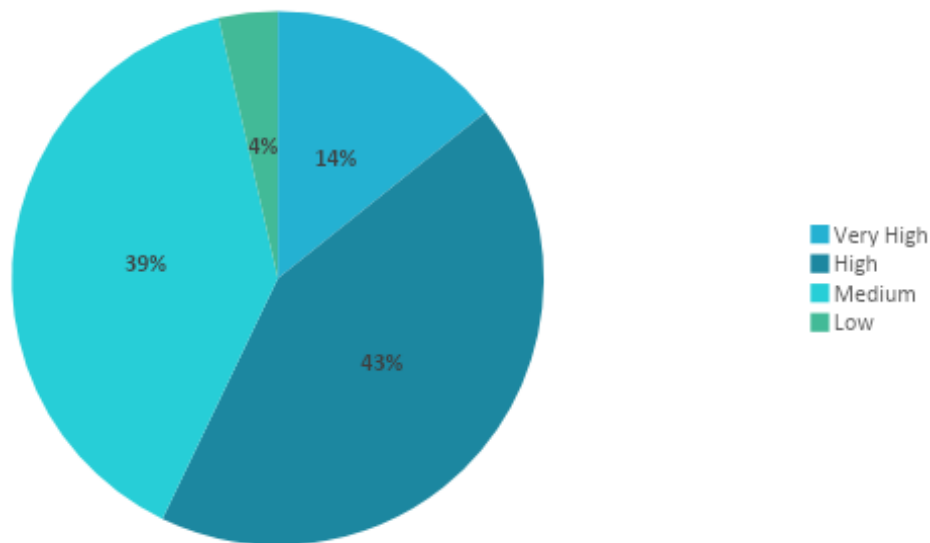


Figure 2: Perceived quality of co-governance within the MaPP partnership.

Decision Making:

Overall, survey and interview respondents felt that the [MaPP co-governance structures](#) supported effective decision-making processes, consistent with the spirit of reconciliation. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that, in their role as a representative of a MaPP partner, they have an influence on decision making. Most respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that MaPP's current governance structures allow for decision-making that is responsive to the priorities of their organization, though some indicated room for improvement in this regard.

There was a strong sense that MaPP's effective decision-making has been facilitated by long-term personal relationships between staff at partner organizations. The MaPP partners therefore need to ensure that governance processes are clear and robust enough to survive institutional turn-over.

Some respondents also identified issues that they thought placed limitations on the effectiveness of MaPP's decision making, including:

- Beyond MaPP, there are inconsistent provincial government approaches to advancing reconciliation objectives (as outlined in DRIPA), which limits the ability to achieve effective collaborative governance across the region.
- Some First Nations who have territory within the MaPP region are not involved in MaPP's co-governance structures. Without these governance partners at the table, MaPP's ability to make decisions or recommendations is not consistent across all areas covered by the MaPP marine plans.
- First Nations collaborative structures differ between sub-regions, which has led to a lack of process clarity. While these subregional differences acknowledge and reflect the diversity of First Nations governance processes in the region, this adds complexity to the decision-making process.



Effectiveness:

Survey results indicated that MaPP's governance structures support each partner to exercise their responsibilities for marine stewardship. More than three quarters of respondents agreed that MaPP governance structures improve relationships between the partner governments and have strengthened linkages across marine planning and management outside of MaPP.

Interviews also revealed that the effectiveness of some governance processes may have decreased over time. Decision-making tables have grown in size, which has increased transparency and trust but slowed decision making.

Capacity:

The effectiveness of marine co-governance within and beyond MaPP remains limited by partner capacity. Responses suggested that consideration be given to finding ways of reducing the capacity demands on co-governance partners. This is particularly important for First Nations, described as *"the connector across all of the projects"* occurring within the MaPP region.

Some respondents indicated that co-governance processes are moving away from the use of First Nations aggregate organizations, but that their technical, administrative, and management capacity remains essential to ongoing partnerships. *Eskina* suggested that the MaPP partners could more clearly distinguish between tasks within MaPP that require First Nations' authority (e.g., key decision-making) from those that could be appropriately assigned to aggregate organizations (e.g., administrative and technical tasks). This would support First Nations to allocate capacity across tasks more effectively.

Additionally, the collective effectiveness of MaPP and other marine co-governance processes in the region (MPA Network, Oceans Protection Plan, etc.) might be increased if these processes were coordinated under one central umbrella. Including the federal partners under this umbrella via agreements such as the Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan might also increase overall effectiveness. The Haida 'Solutions table' was cited as an example of a unique but effective pathway for connecting multiple processes and partnerships.

Partnerships:

90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organization has good working relationships with the other MaPP partners that they regularly work with. Almost all (97%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are committed to working together with their MaPP partners to implement the MaPP plans. Respondents highlighted that these strong relationships are made possible by a level of trust that allows for candid conversations.

There is also room to improve the quality of MaPP's partnerships. Some respondents noted that it's a challenge when the strength of relationships within MaPP are not reflected outside of MaPP's processes, such as in relationships with other provincial ministries, or when participating in parallel marine planning forums. Additionally, decision-making processes are not completely transparent in all sub-regions. *"The line of sight between First Nations partners and MaPP can get lost. There is a communication gap, especially from the top back down."*



Metric 2: Implementation status of sub-regional strategies and RAF actions that relate to creating, maintaining and/or strengthening co-governance arrangements).

MaPP's four Subregional plans and the Regional Action Framework (RAF) all include strategies related to establishing effective co-governance structures and strengthening collaborative relationships. For Metric 2, the implementation status of each strategy was evaluated as being "complete", "on track", "in development", "not started", or "at risk". Co-governance-related strategies vary meaningfully between sub-regional plans and the RAF, but approximately half were determined to be either "in development" or "complete." A pattern emerged that MaPP is not always the only or even the main driver behind achieving key outcomes related to co-governance, however. Achieving MaPP strategies often requires support from other marine planning processes and initiatives (e.g., geographic response planning with Transport Canada, or the MPA Network Planning process). Co-governance strategies categorized as "not started" often either fell outside of the MaPP mandate or did not have a clear leadership role for the MaPP partners.

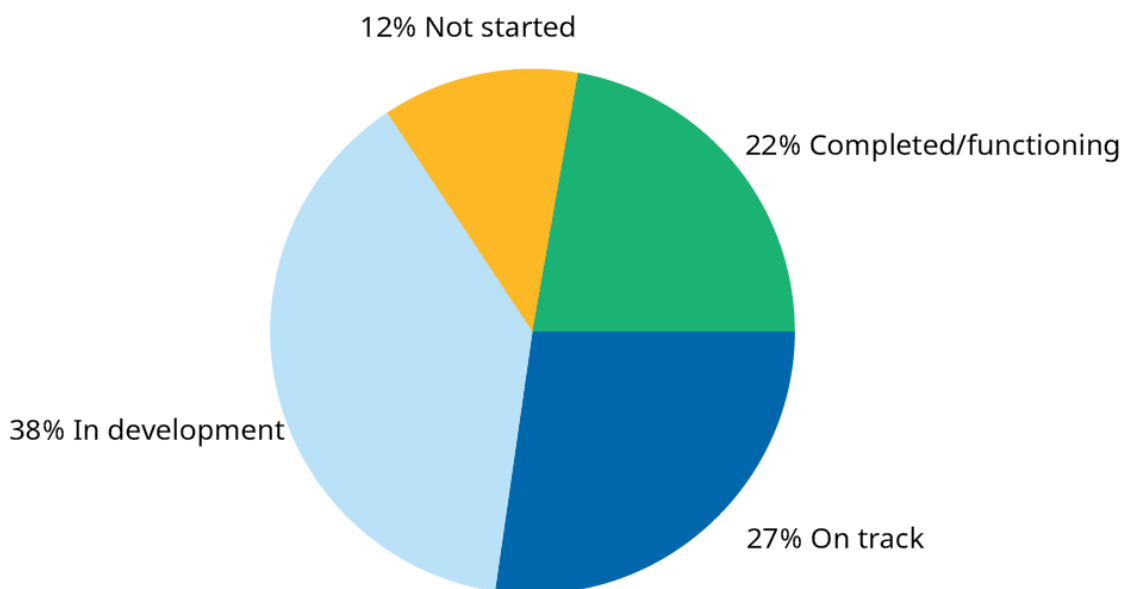


Figure 3: Implementation status of co-governance-related strategies in the sub-regional plans, and actions in the RAF.

There are four co-governance related actions in the RAF. Two relate to facilitating coordination across sub-regions and are considered fully functioning. The other two have less specific outcomes: improvements to a collaborative environmental assessment process, and increased First Nations involvement in compliance and enforcement. These were evaluated as "in development."

Metric 3: Inventory of co-governance structures in use to advance MaPP objectives

During the first 7 years of MaPP implementation the partners used 87 different co-governance structures to advance the goals and strategies in the MaPP plans. These exist across four levels:

- **Executive** decision making and leadership resolving disputes and providing overall leadership (e.g., MaPP Executive Committee).
- **Operational** decision making providing oversight and strategic decision making (e.g., MaPP Marine Working Group).
- **Technical** coordination and collaboration advancing specific work items (e.g., MaPP Implementation Technical Team and sub-committees).
- **Advisory** bodies providing input to technical and decision-making bodies (e.g., MaPP Regional Marine Advisory Committee).

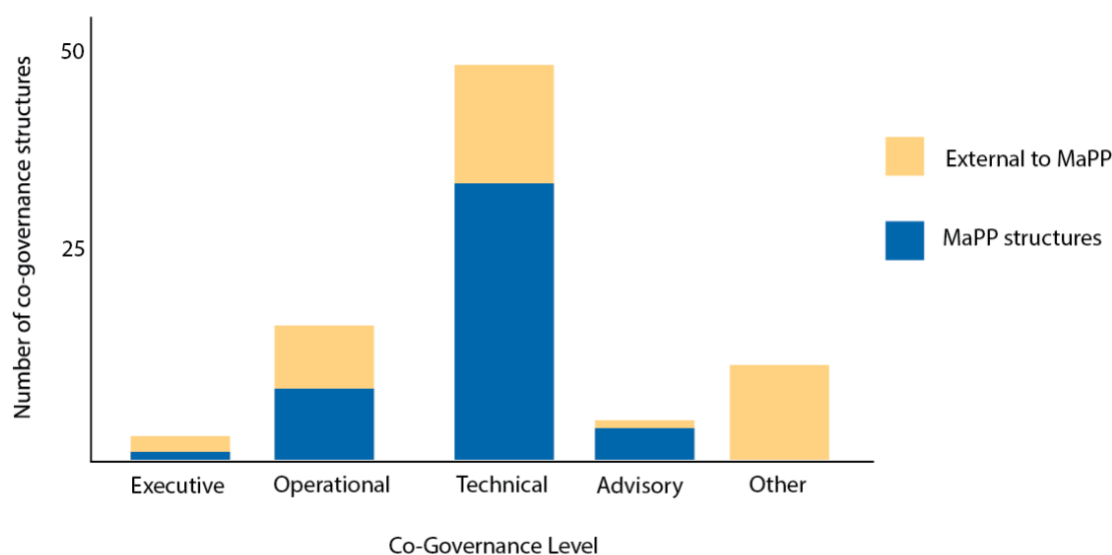


Figure 4: The distribution of co-governance structures that support MaPP implementation across four levels: executive, operational, technical, and advisory.

The MaPP partners often look outside of the partnership to achieve marine plan objectives, reflecting the jurisdictional complexity of marine management in the region. 45% of the co-governance structures identified in this inventory are external to MaPP, often involving federal partners (e.g., through the MPA Network). These external structures contribute to advancing the co-governance-related strategies in the MaPP plans.

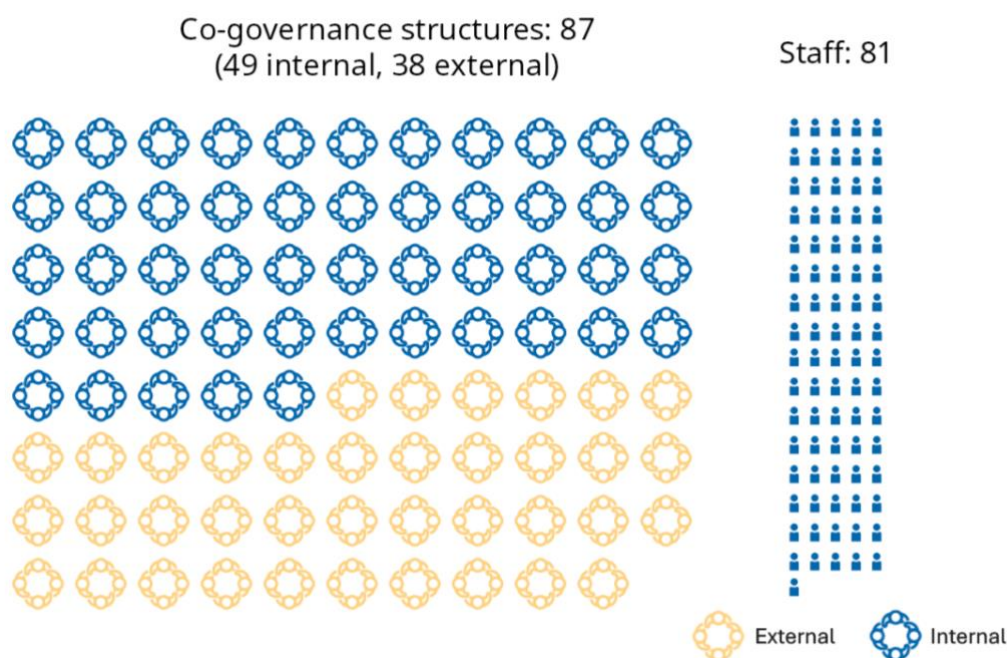


Figure 3: Comparing MaPP co-governance capacity to the number of co-governance structures. The capacity of the 81 staff indicated above is not dedicated solely to advancing the objectives of the MaPP plans—their time is shared across other marine management and governance initiatives in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Eskina Collaboration evaluated the effectiveness of MaPP co-governance structures as perceived by the MaPP partners. Survey respondents and interviewees often referenced potential future opportunities for MaPP co-governance. This section summarizes emergent and common themes shared by MaPP partners and suggestions for how MaPP could take action on these pieces using the tools and resources within the partnership.

Undertake a comprehensive scoping exercise across scales and tables. At its inception, MaPP was used as an implementation tool for First Nation, sub-regional, and regional Marine Plans. It was also described as a process that filled a ‘void’ where no other processes were underway. Some of this void has since been filled by processes such as the Marine Protected Area Network and the Oceans Protections Plan, but MaPP remains essential for providing governance capacity within Partner First Nations governments and organizations, strengthening relationships between governance partners, and as a visionary process with a fundamental commitment to reconciliation. The potential to revisit MaPP’s reach, and to consider scaling back, or scoping to more actionable priorities does not lessen MaPP’s effectiveness; rather, it could serve as a useful exercise to revitalize the partners’ commitments, re-energize the process, and focus



capacity towards projects with the most potential for advancement under MaPP. In this process it will be critical to ensure that sub-regions can learn from one another's successes and challenges.

Choose a near-term concrete step to advance the reconciliation agenda in MaPP. Identifying and actioning small steps towards the goal of reconciliation can make MaPP progress tangible for partners. For the Government of B.C., MaPP presents an opportunity to take incremental steps to align marine management policy and practices with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA). Ensuring coordinated implementation across ministries is one possible step towards reconciliation within and outside of the MaPP structure. Currently, B.C.'s Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is the active partner in MaPP implementation. The MaPP partners could support more coordinated implementation of the plans by identifying strategies that could be implemented by, or in partnership with, other agencies and ministries across the B.C. government.

Solidify MaPP's longevity through the development of policies and procedures that can outlast individual champions. The partners recognize that part of MaPP's success is due to the flexibility and commitments across technical and political tables. There is a risk in relying too heavily on the institutional knowledge of a few long-term members for MaPP activities to move forward. This reliance can make it difficult for new staff to get a good hold on the landscape and inner workings of MaPP. MaPP needs to consider the longevity of the partnership and develop clear, creative, adaptable, and committed policies and procedures that can provide the lasting pillars for MaPP into the next decades.

Increase opportunities for MaPP partners to be allies and advocates in other processes and with other agencies. Many respondents noted that it can be difficult to effect meaningful regulatory, policy, and legislative change outside of MaPP's established co-governance processes. Additionally, fulsome implementation of the marine plans requires collaboration with agencies that are not directly involved in MaPP's co-governance processes. Many participants mentioned a need for the MaPP partners to work together more effectively *outside* of MaPP's co-governance processes in order to support MaPP implementation. For example, some First Nations partners choose to work with the provincial ministries outside of MaPP's processes to advance objectives outside of the mandate of B.C. WLRS. It was suggested that, instead, the partners make use of the relationships built through MaPP to advance those projects more effectively, to the benefit of all MaPP partners. Presenting a unified team strengthens MaPP's position and ideally will help advance policy and program change across jurisdictions. MaPP partners may need to have more direct and strategic discussions around how to support each other in processes that are not directly associated with MaPP.

Explore opportunities for establishing an 'umbrella' or overarching agreement to coordinate the breadth of marine initiatives in the Northern Shelf Bioregion. Since MaPP's inception, the complexity of marine planning initiatives has increased substantially. Many of these initiatives share overlapping membership, requiring staff to attend multiple meetings in different forums on the same topic. Many respondents indicated that the effectiveness of all initiatives would be increased if coordinated in concert instead of each in their own silo. In addition, including federal partners under this umbrella might offer



more ‘teeth’ for the implementation of specific objectives around marine management currently under federal jurisdiction.

CONCLUSION:

The MaPP partners remain committed to collaborative governance. Moving into their second decade of operations, the partners will build on their foundation of successful relationships, structures, and processes, using information from this evaluation to strengthen reconciliation and continue effecting positive change on the marine territories, resources, and communities in the Northern Shelf Bioregion.

