

Ensuring Marine Protection For Our Coast: What's Next?

Information about a National Marine Conservation Area Reserve (NMCAR) on the Central Coast.

Our Nations have led on marine planning by developing our own Marine Use Plans, and collaborating on the Marine Plan Partnership and most recently endorsing the Marine Protected Area Network in February 2023. Our Nations have followed a clear roadmap to ensure ecological protection and a prosperous local economy—now and for future generations.

This roadmap has now led our Nations to decide how marine protection will be implemented in our territories.

Our Nations are considering a **NATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION AREA RESERVE (NMCAR)**. Looking at all types of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), an NMCAR best aligns with our Nations' stewardship objectives.

Nation Stewardship Departments are currently working to find out what an NMCAR may mean for our communities and ecosystems and if it best suits our interests.

Inside we share:

- What is an NMCAR?
- Features of an NMCAR
- Possible benefits for our Nations
- What the NMCAR zones include
- What's permitted in an NMCAR
- What happens next?



CCIRA

Heiltsuk, Kitasoo Xai'xais, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv Nations created The Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance (CCIRA) to uphold the laws of our ancestors and advance marine stewardship. ccira.ca



What is an NMCAR?

An NMCAR is a type of marine protected area that aims to conserve marine species and critical marine habitat. It works to balance ecological and cultural conservation with economic opportunity for coastal communities, with a specific focus on promoting Indigenous businesses and employment. Working alongside Parks Canada, our Central Coast Nations would co-govern its management, ensuring a Nation-led approach to sustaining our territories.

The closest NMCAR to us is Gwaii Haanas, which is also a Haida Heritage Site.

Scan the code to find out more about this NMCAR.



Some features of an NMCAR include:



Multiple use zoning, which would allow for commercial fishing to continue in areas that Nations deem appropriate, but protect critical fish habitat identified using our local and Indigenous knowledge.



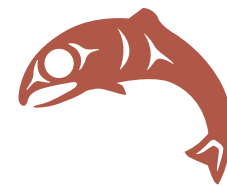
Not limiting traditional-use access in the NMCAR, empowering traditional fishing, and other food, social and ceremonial activities to grow.



Not affecting any rights or title processes for our Central Coast Nations.



Providing continual funding for Nations to grow their stewardship capacity and build local jobs.



Benefits of an NMCAR

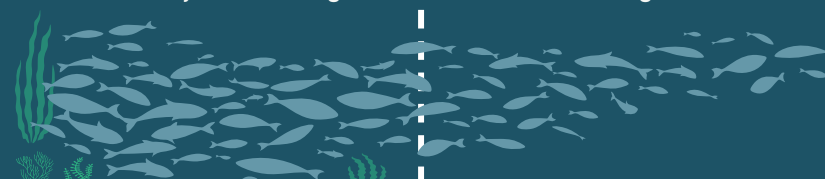
There are numerous possible benefits if our Nations decide to move ahead with an NMCAR, which would:

- **Rebuild our declining fishing stocks and coastal resources** to ensure future generations have the same opportunities our ancestors did.
- **Create jobs and maintain our current livelihoods including commercial fishing.** We'll do this with training opportunities, additional careers relating to tourism, cultural studies or ecological research, and maintaining commercial fishing within parts of the NMCAR.
- **Apply our traditional laws and authority in our territories** through collaborative decision making in the NMCAR, including but not limited to fisheries management, tourism, shipping and tenured operations.
- **Provide reliable funding and resources** for infrastructure projects, marine equipment and elevating our ability to access our territories.
- **Address collective issues like climate change and invasive species**, by increasing our Nations' capacity to monitor and address these challenges.
- **Use an approach to managing our resources held by our Nations for generations.**

NMCARs aim to balance conservation with economic opportunity.

Protected zone within the NMCAR such as a critical juvenile rearing area

Zone within the NMCAR that allows commercial fishing



When critical areas that Nations identify are protected, fish populations can rebound and spill into surrounding areas where commercial fishing is allowed, therefore helping fishing success overall.

What's Permitted?

Between 2015–2021, our Nations identified key areas that require protection to support healthy ecosystems for future generations.

An NMCAR would include up to four zones of activity. Any areas closed to fishing will include important juvenile rearing and species areas, the protection of which will lead to ecological recovery and increased fish populations over time.

An NMCAR's four zone types are described below. All of the previous work our Nations led on, like Marine Use Plans, will inform future NMCAR zoning. Every 10 years the NMCAR management plan is reviewed, allowing zones to shift. Activities within zones can be amended if supported by our Nations.

If implemented:



- ✓ A significant number of areas currently being fished on the Central Coast would remain accessible to commercial fisheries.
- ✓ All traditional use including harvesting, cultural and social use, will continue in an NMCAR.
- ✓ Restrictions within zones would only be made if supported by our Nations, informed by our Nations' stewardship objectives.
- ✓ Guardian Watchmen would continue to play a key role in monitoring by being the eyes and ears of our Nations in the NMCAR.
- ✗ The only activities that would never be allowed in an NMCAR are oil and gas extraction, bottom trawling, seabed mining and ocean dumping.

First Nations' food, social and ceremonial activities will continue in ALL NMCAR Zones.

The NMCAR Zones:

Zone 1

(Restricted Access)

- Generally smallest portion of an NMCAR
- Offers the strongest protection for specific habitats or species
- Only First Nation Traditional Use and scientific activities allowed
- Does not allow tourism activities

Zone 2

(General Protection)

- Offers second strongest protection
- Non-extractive uses (like recreational boating, scuba) and all Zone 1 activities are allowed

Zone 3

(Multiple Use with Habitat Protection)

- Allows commercial and recreational fishing and hunting activities that align with a zone's protection objectives
- Also allows all Zone 1 + 2 activities

Zone 4

(Multiple Use)

- Offers protection against seabed mining, oil + gas exploitation, bottom trawling and ocean dumping
- Allows all Zone 1 + 2 + 3 activities & more

The Central Coast Nations would look towards a significant portion of the NMCAR being Zones 3 and 4.

What Happens Next?

We are now seeing if an NMCAR fits with our stewardship objectives.

No commitments have been made to designate an NMCAR, and it is up to each Nation to make that decision.

Step 1. NMCAR Feasibility Assessment

The Nations' Stewardship Departments, the Province of BC and Parks Canada will develop a report recommending to either advance or halt NMCAR discussions. This report will be submitted to our leadership to review and decide how they would like to proceed. This includes meeting with hereditary and elected leadership, marine use committees and more community members to inform the recommendations.

This report is due March 2024.

>>> DECISION POINT FOR NATIONS >>>

**If our Nations agree to continue, we will begin the next step.
No zoning decisions will be made in Step 1.**

Step 2. NMCAR Establishment Agreement Negotiations

This process looks to set the 'rules-of-the-road' about how management of the NMCAR would work between Central Coast Nations, the Province of BC and Parks Canada. This would clarify key considerations such as funding, decision-making and management planning processes.

If our Nations agree to the terms negotiated, we would be committing to an NMCAR being designated.

This would happen after March 2024, and at a pace our Nations are comfortable with.

How might an NMCAR work?

The Nations can remove themselves from Establishment Agreement negotiations at any time.

>>> DECISION POINT FOR NATIONS >>>

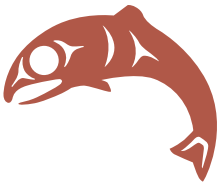
**If our Nations agree to continue, we will begin the next step.
No zoning decisions will be made in Step 2.**

Step 3. NMCAR Set Up and Management

Discussions about zoning will occur at this stage. Community members will be consulted on where activities happen in our territories.

We will work with community members and leadership to develop a management plan that applies our knowledge and expertise.

We will also then discuss where our Nations wish to have certain marine activities happen and what areas should have more protection.



If our Nations decide to establish an NMCAR, there is still a lot of work to do!



Find out more:



Get regular updates about the NMCAR process:



Community feedback is an essential part of this process. We encourage community members to attend meetings and get in touch with questions or comments.

We want to hear from you! Contact:

Taking care of what
takes care of us.



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