

**REPORT TO PARKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019**

SUBJECT Mapping Sunken Vessels

ISSUE

To present background information on the financial implications, potential partnerships and feasibility of mapping sunken vessels in selected areas.

BACKGROUND

At the July 24, 2019 meeting, the Parks & Environment Committee brought forward a Notice of Motion that the committee recommend to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board:

- That staff report back on the financial implications and feasibility of mapping sunken vessels in selected areas of the region, including the following suggested locations: Sooke Basin, Esquimalt Harbour, Victoria Harbour, Gorge Waterway, Oak Bay, Cadboro Bay, Brentwood Bay, Fulford Harbour and Burgoyne Bay.

Over the past three years, the CRD has provided support for the abandoned boat initiative through receiving the boats and waiving disposal fees at Hartland Landfill. Staff have worked with regional stakeholders on the program, which has been funded by Transport Canada's national Abandoned Boats program. Regionally, the Dead Boats Disposal Society, a non-profit organization, has now taken the lead for the inventory, assessment and removal of abandoned boats, including final transport to the landfill. The CRD also secured federal funding to develop and deliver education and awareness across the region around this initiative.

Efforts to date have focused on floating or partially submerged abandoned boats in Sooke Basin; Victoria Harbour and Gorge Waterway; Oak Bay/Cadboro Bay; Brentwood Bay; Tsehum Harbour; Fulford and Ganges Harbours and Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring Island; Montague Harbour on Galiano Island; and Port Browning and Bedwell Harbour on Pender Island. Funding has been applied for or received for the removal of 70 boats; to date, 44 abandoned vessels have been removed and the remainder should be removed this fall. Once completed, the CRD will have contributed approximately \$430,000 to support the 25% funding required by the Transport Canada grant process for the removal and disposal of these abandoned boats.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL/PARTNERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

Jurisdictional responsibility for abandoned, derelict and wrecked boats, including sunken vessels, falls to the federal government, primarily Transport Canada, though the Navigable Protection Program, Receiver of Wrecks and Canadian Coast Guard (CCG).

Hydrographic Services Canada (HSC) regularly conducts multi-beam and side scan sonar surveys throughout coastal BC to update marine navigation charts. HSC survey instructions for field staff require that sunken vessels identified in their underwater surveys are reported to

Navigable Protection Program and Receiver of Wrecks, who then determine if sunken vessels posing environmental or navigational hazards require removal. CCG has created a Marine Pollution and Vessels of Concern unit that is responsible for the clean-up and removal of derelict vessels.

HSC provided available data on known sunken vessels and obstructions for the Capital Region that identified more than 100 known sunken vessels/obstruction within the waters of the Capital Region, 41 of which are located in key bays and harbours around the region (Appendix A). Much of this data was collected over a decade ago; it is likely that other vessels have since sunk, so the actual number of sunken vessels is likely higher.

HSC intends to survey portions of Esquimalt and Victoria Harbours this fall and will identify their 2020 survey area priorities over the next three to four months. HSC staff indicated there are opportunities to identify priority areas for underwater survey work and also expressed interest in partnership opportunities. Furthermore, they requested that if any sunken vessels are removed, the information be shared to ensure navigation charts can be updated.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Sunken vessels may pose additional environmental hazards. Many of the sunken boats identified by HSC have been in place for many decades and were reported to the Receiver of Wrecks. CCG would likely have removed any sunken vessels posing environmental threats and removed or marked any sunken boats posing a threat to navigation. Vessels that have been underwater for a significant period of time have become habitat and may have to stay in place.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on informal conversations with local companies to conduct underwater surveys, staff estimate that potential costs to conduct side scan or multi-beam sonar surveys are in the range of \$180,000-\$270,000. It is estimated that it could take 20-30 days to complete the required work to survey Sooke Basin, Esquimalt Harbour, Victoria Harbour, Gorge Waterway, Oak Bay, Cadboro Bay, Brentwood Bay, Tsehum Harbour, Bazan Bay, Fulford Harbour and Burgoyne Bay.

CONCLUSION

The CRD has worked with regional stakeholders over the past three years to implement the abandoned boat program across the region. Many of the sunken vessels identified by Hydrographic Services Canada have already been reported to Receiver of Wrecks and Navigation Protection Program, particularly those posing a threat to the environment or safe navigation. Jurisdictional authority and responsibility for these submerged vessels lies with the federal government; federal programs are in place to identify sunken vessels across the region. Information received by CRD staff regarding the reporting of abandoned and/or sunken boats within the region will continue to be shared with the appropriate agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks & Environment Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That this report is received for information.

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Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, MCIP, RPP

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Attachment: Appendix A – Selected Areas for Potential Underwater Mapping and Number of Known Sunken Vessels/Obstructions by Area