

9 Glass Sponge Reefs in Howe Sound are now protected under 8 new marine refuges of approximately 3.5 square kilometres!



Announced on Tuesday, March 5th by Fisheries Minister Jonathan Wilkinson and MP Pamela Goldsmith Jones, this permanent protection for the fragile reefs are the result of diligent work by organizations, citizen scientists, the Squamish Nation and other stakeholder groups including fishers. Particular kudos go to Glen Dennison of the Marine Life Sanctuaries Society who discovered, mapped and advocated for the protection of these reefs. Thanks also to volunteer members of our SCCA Marine Committee, including Cindy Harlow, Marina Stjepovic, Angela Kroning and Dianne Sanford, who spend time educating about the importance of Glass Sponge Reefs as well as adding their voices as advocates for the protection of all the reefs within the Salish Sea.

These marine refuges represent formal fishery closures that will come into effect April 1, 2019, and include an area of 150 metres extending beyond the reefs edges. All commercial, recreational and First Nations Food, Social and Ceremonial bottom contact fishing activities, including prawn and crab traps, shrimp and groundfish by trawl, and groundfish by hook and line, will be prohibited within the refuges, as well as the use of downrigger gear in recreational salmon trolling.

An additional 9 reefs are under consideration now for future protection, requiring further ground-truthing to assess their ecological significance. These include 4 reefs close to us here on the Sunshine Coast, in the areas of Mariner's Rest, Camelo Point, Langdale, and Collingwood Channel.

Glass sponge reefs are a true wonder, thought to have been extinct for over 40 million years,

but discovered in 1987 to be living in Hecate Strait. Dr. Manfred Krautter, who studies fossilized reefs in Europe has likened the discovery of living reefs akin to finding a herd of dinosaurs living in modern times! They not only provide important deep-sea habitat for many species including rockfish, prawns and sharks, they also are tremendously efficient filter feeders. These 9 newly protected reefs will filter an estimated 17 billion litres of water a day - the equivalent of 6,800 Olympic size swimming pools.

Though we are very pleased that these first 9 reefs are now protected from damaging bottom contact fishing activities, we continue to advocate for the full protection of the 18 mapped reefs from all human activities (such as cable lines, freighter traffic and anchorages) as [Marine Protected Areas](#) under the Oceans Act.

You can read more about these precious reefs and the new marine refuges here:

[Fisheries and Oceans Canada News Release](#)

[Marine Life Sanctuaries Society post](#)

[Sea of Glass - Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society \(CPAWS\)](#)