

Introduction to Ruxton Anchorage Watch (RAW)

RUXTON ISLAND COMMUNITY GROUP
CONCERNED ABOUT SOUTHERN GULF ISLAND FREIGHTER ANCHORAGES

Ruxton is one of the De Courcy Group of Islands in the Southern Gulf Islands and is located south-east of Nanaimo between Pylades and Stuart Channels. The boat-access-only island has a mix of year-round and seasonal residents and is a popular destination for recreational boaters. Ruxton is classified as “off-the-grid” due to having no services.

Ruxton residents have reacted with alarm as both the number of freighters and days at anchor have dramatically increased at anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI). They share concerns with other Southern Gulf Island residents about the increasing use of all 33 SGI anchorages, and the resulting negative environmental and social impacts caused by their heavy and continued use. Ruxton residents are specifically impacted by two anchorages close to the island, Trincomali #7 and Trincomali #8, which lie in a very narrow part of Pylades Channel—0.9 nautical miles wide—between Ruxton and Valdes Island [see image below]. It is for these reasons that Ruxton Anchorage Watch (RAW) was formed.

RAW is pleased to join with the South Coast Ship Watch Alliance (SCSWA)

RAW members have kept a close watch on the advocacy work done by SCSWA and agree with the positions it has put forward. Concerns raised by Ruxton residents and RAW's involvement with SCSWA will provide further support for, and evidence of, the urgent need to address the negative impacts of the SGI anchorages.

Further concerns specific to anchorages Trincomali #7 and #8 include:

- the Trincomali #7 anchorage is adjacent to high sandstone cliffs on Valdes Island, causing the excessive freighter noise to be amplified as it is reflected off the cliffs. Decibel levels far exceed most BC community noise bylaws
- vessels' onboard diesel generators continuously produce gases harmful to the environment while at anchor
- the existing Islands Trust Marine Zoning designation, established in 2014, is intended to protect the unique sandstone and marine features surrounding Ruxton; the placement of Trincomali #7 and #8 is inconsistent with this zoning
- use of Trincomali #7 and #8 anchorages conflicts with the federal government conservation objectives—there is a Fisheries and Oceans Canada Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) surrounding Ruxton Island [see map below] encroached upon by freighters in Trincomali #7 and #8 as they swing at anchor

Parks Canada has recognized the area of the Southern Gulf Islands as a sensitive ecosystem needing protection in the form of a National Marine Conservation Area. In its words:

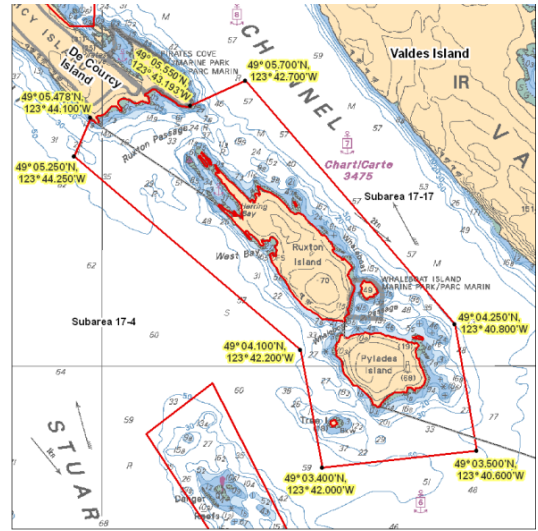
“Estuarine areas like the Strait of Georgia are among the most productive marine ecosystems in the world due to fresh water and ocean water mixing and upwelling to create a nutrient-rich marine environment. The southern Strait of Georgia is an important part of the Strait and it is characteristic of the marine region as a whole. It is also among the finest areas globally for scuba diving, whale watching, sea kayaking and coastal cruising.”

pc.gc.ca/en/amnc-nmca/cnamnc-cnmca/dgs-ssg/region-area

This recognition is in direct conflict with Transport Canada's use of the Southern Gulf Islands as an industrial overflow parking lot for large bulk freighters.



Two freighters passing at Trincomali #7 just off the east side of Ruxton. Valdes in background.



Rockfish Conservation Area boundaries around Ruxton and Pylades.

We strongly believe that the SCSWA has formed a very good framework for providing a collective voice to advocate for the elimination of anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands as part of ongoing efforts to preserve the area's fragile environment and the health of both marine animals and coastal residents. Members of RAW are committed to working with SCSWA in this initiative.

We will:

- support SCSWA's proposed solutions put forward to Transport Canada
- lobby elected officials to ensure the successful implementation of an initiative under the Government of Canada Oceans Protection Plan to have the RCAs transitioned into Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to meet the Government of Canada Marine Conservation Targets (MCTs) of 30% of the Oceans protected by 2030
- participate as a stakeholder voice within the Ocean Protection Plan framework that is tasked with reviewing freighter anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands
- provide critical feedback to Transport Canada regarding the shortcomings of the Interim Protocols for the Use of Southern BC Anchorages introduced in February 2018.
- actively lobby the federal government and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to deliver on their announcement to design a new collaborative system to manage marine vessel traffic and optimize the supply chain flow by March 2022, aimed at reducing ships at anchorage and wait times
- work with SCSWA to develop further strategies that lead to the elimination of all SGI anchorages

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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