

2009 CoastWatch Participant Survey



Introduction

Haida Gwaii Abalone Stewards (HGAbS) started an Abalone Watch program in 2004. It is one of several, mainly First Nations driven, CoastWatch programs on the coast; most of which receive funding through the Habitat Stewardship Program. CoastWatch members include vessel operators, business owners, Watchmen, and other volunteers who are active on the water. This group is committed looking for suspicious activities related to abalone when they are in abalone habitats and knowledgeable about how to report them. In 2005 approximately 50 participants registered for the program. To date there are over 70 members. These members receive regular newsletters, CoastWatch materials (reporting forms, decals etc.) and were invited to a training workshop in 2009. Surveys of CoastWatch participants have been conducted in 2005, 2007 and most recently in 2009. The purpose of the recent survey is to:

- Profile typical participants and estimate overall volunteer effort;
- Assess the incidence of unreported observations of suspicious activity; and
- Identify ways that the Abalone Watch program could be improved.

Methods

A list of survey questions was developed by Haida Fisheries Program with input from HGAbS partners in 2005 and was modified for this survey (Appendix 1).

Interview participants included: 1) volunteers who were mainly vessel operators or marine business owners; and 2) Gwaii Haanas and Haida Fisheries Program watchmen who operate at base-camps. Interviews were conducted between December 2009 and February 2010 in person or by telephone. Interviewers were Charmaine Collinson (Haida Fisheries Program), Pat Fairweather (DFO) and Jody Bisset (WWF).

Note: Gwaii Haanas Watchmen operate in base-camps at Skedans, Tanu, Windy Bay, Hotsprings Island or Sgaan Gwaii. They focus on reception of visitors and protection of Haida cultural sites. Gwaii Haanas Watchmen camps are generally staffed by three persons and operate from mid-June to early September. Camps have one skiff for general transportation although staff are not required to conduct regular patrols. Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen conduct creel surveys at Langara Island, Naden Harbour, Masset dock and Skidegate Inlet. HFP Watchmen conduct recreational creel surveys

from late May to early September. They travel by skiff daily from base-camps to docks where creel surveys are conducted.

Results

Approximately 50 CoastWatch members were phoned and a total of 21 interviews were completed; seventeen with vessel operators or marine business owners and four with Gwaii Haanas and Haida Fisheries Watchmen.

Following is a summary of results:

- Participation rate in the survey was approximately 40%. This is lower than participation rates of approximately 65% in 2005 and 46% in 2007. Overall, cooperation with the survey was excellent; none of the members who were reached refused to be interviewed. However, many members who were phoned did not respond (this could be due to the fact that a large number of participants were contacted over the Christmas holidays and in the off season when many operators are not on-island). Interviewers tried a maximum of three times to reach members for an interview
- The most common activities reported by those interviewed were fishing charters, research and environmental monitoring, Watchmen, and people working or living somewhere with a view of the water. Seven respondents reported a secondary activity (Figure 1). Most operations were based from a vessel (15). Other bases of operation were base-camps with skiffs (2), dockside office/residence (3) and aircraft (1)

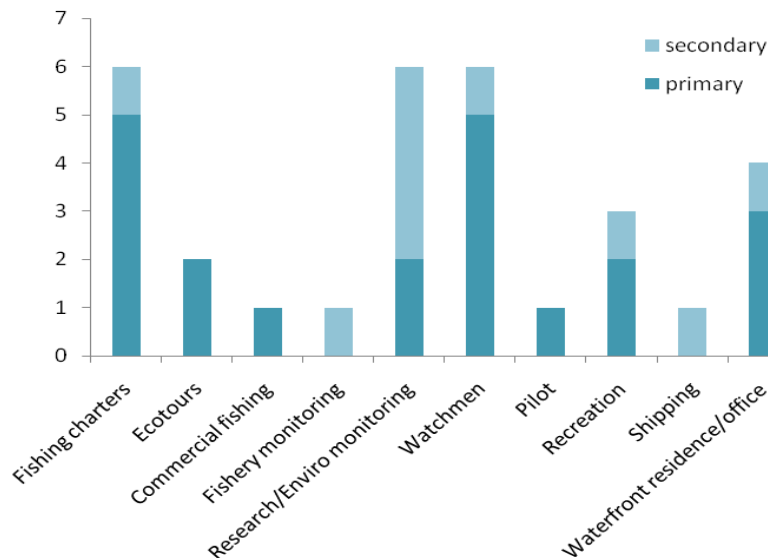


Figure 1: Primary and secondary activities of Abalone Watch vessel operators and businesses (n=21)

- The average number of days spent on the water in 2009 was 81.4 days per person (based on the members that we were able to contact). Haida Fisheries watchmen spent a minimum of 90 days at each camp in 2009, while Gwaii Hanaas watchmen spent an average of 100 days at each site. Based on these estimates, and the number of CoastWatch members and watchmen in our program it is estimated that 5,410 person days were spent on the water around Haida Gwaii in 2009 (Table 1)
- CoastWatch members were most active on the water from May through September. However, there were members on the water in every month of 2009 (Figure 2)

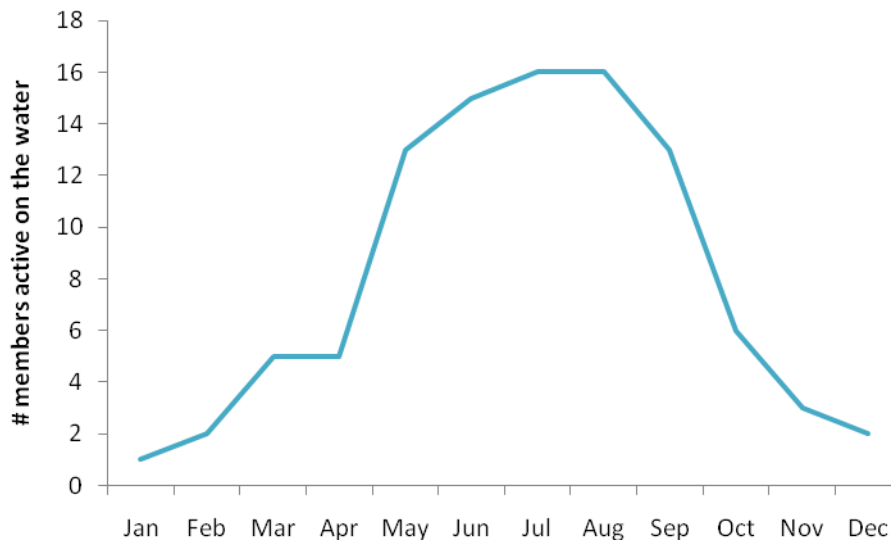


Figure 2: Number of members active on (or near) the water who reported that they were likely to detect suspicious behavior in each month of 2009

- Members reported that they were actively looking for suspicious behavior and felt that they were likely to detect poaching an average of 90% of the time they were on the water. Many members reported that they were “nosy” or “curious” and often investigated unusual boats
- Of the 21 members that were interviewed 2 had reported suspicious behavior to the 1-800 number in 2009. A further two members had seen what they thought could have been suspicious behavior but did not report it. Reasons for not reporting included not being 100% sure and not wanting to cause trouble

- 33% of the people interviewed said they identified their vessel or residence with the Haida Gwaii coastwatch decal and many of those who did not stated that they would if they were provided with them (more decals will be mailed out shortly)
- CoastWatch members reported being active on the water in all areas on the coast of Haida Gwaii in 2009. Areas with the greatest amount of coverage were the east side of Moresby; mostly within Gwaii Haanas (14 members), followed by the west coast of Moresby (9 members), and finally the north end of Graham Island (4 members)(Figure 3).
- In 2009 the Haida Gwaii Abalone Stewards group offered a workshop to CoastWatch members. The purpose of the workshop was to learn about marine mammal species at risk in Haida Gwaii; update members on current research findings on abalone in BC; and to provide a forum to discussing ways to improve the CoastWatch network. In this survey members were asked if they would be interested in attending a similar workshop in 2010: 10 participants said that they would like to attend this year's workshop, 8 did not provide a response to the question, and only 2 said they would not be interested in attending. Overall, interest in a 2010 workshop was judged to be high and a second annual workshop is planned.

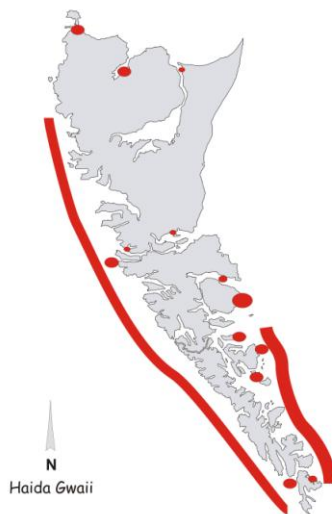


Figure 3: Areas where CoastWatch members reported being active in 2009. Circles indicate a fixed location and lines represent general areas where boats were active. Relative size or thickness indicates the relative number of members who reported working in the area

- In the 2007 survey a regular newsletter was identified as a way to improve communication between the stewardship group and CoastWatch members. Newsletters have been mailed regularly since that survey. When asked in the interview if members had received a newsletter in the past year 8 reported that they had received the newsletters and wished to continue getting them. Eleven respondents reported that they did not receive newsletters, or did not know if they received newsletters. Of these eleven, six would like to start receiving them and provided their address.

Table 1. Estimate of 2009 CoastWatch Surveillance Effort

Group	# Sites/Operators	Average Period of Operation (days)	Total Coverage (participant-days)
Haida Gwaii Watchmen	10	100	1000
Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen	4	90	360
Vessel and Business Operators	50	81	4050

Total 5,410

Summary and Recommendations

The 2009 survey is the third time CoastWatch members have been surveyed since the program began in 2005. Seventeen interviews were conducted with vessel operators and four were completed with Watchmen in 2009. The estimated number of days that members spent on the water looking for suspicious behavior in 2009 was 5,410 (1360 of these days were from Haida Fisheries and Gwaii Hanaas watchmen at the 7 base camps, and 4050 were from vessel operators and business owners registered in the CoastWatch program).

Two reports of suspicious behavior were made by the 21 members that were interviewed while 2 other members reported seeing suspicious behavior but did not report it. This is

an improvement from the 2005 and 2007 surveys when none of the members interviewed had made any reports despite having observed what they felt was suspicious behavior.

Many of the members that were interviewed reported that they used, or had read, at least one of the HGAbS promotional materials (window decal, tide tables, abalone brochure, newsletters etc). Of those that had not, many requested materials such as decals and tide tables. This is also an improvement from the 2007 survey) when most respondents were not aware of the promotional materials and only two of the ten reported that they identified their vessel with a CoastWatch decal.

Following are recommendations that were made for the 2008 program and a summary of progress made:

- 1) Efforts should be made to improve communications between HGAbS and vessel and business operators. This could include an annual meeting, distribution of information regularly by eMail and bi-annual newsletters that include information more related to Coastwatch. An annual mailout of materials to Coastwatch participants should be provided. All operators should be contacted at least once per year in person or by telephone to ensure that they want to continue in the program. The lack of reporting of suspicious incidents is a concern and could be addressed by better communication between HGAbS and Coastwatch participants: [Completed- a CoastWatch workshop was organized for members in 2009 which had 20 participants; 2 newsletters were mailed to members in 2009 one of which included CoastWatch materials.](#)
- 2) Continue with distribution of brochures and tide tables that summarize the Observe, Record, Report guidelines. HGAbS may want to look at revamping other materials such as abalone fact sheets to make them more memorable: [Brochures and tide tables were mailed out in 2009, however, the abalone fact sheets have not been improved](#)
- 3) Many of the vessel operators were not aware of the Coastwatch decals. These should be redistributed to all participants: [Coastwatch decals were mailed to members in the spring of 2009, the use of decals by members has improved since the 2007 survey](#)
- 1) 4) Continue with a goal of producing newsletters at least twice per year (spring and fall); in 2007 only one newsletter was produced in the spring and two newsletters were produced in spring 2008: [Complete- 2-3 newsletters have been mailed out to members for the past two years](#)
- 5) Conduct a follow-up survey of Coastwatch participants in the fall of 2009 to estimate effort and maintain contact with volunteers: [Complete](#)
- 6) Contact the two new individuals recommended for participating in Coastwatch.

Recommendations for the 2010 season include:

- 1) Maintain communication with CoastWatch members to keep them informed of any new abalone related news and encourage them to keep looking for and reporting suspicious behavior

- 2) Organize a workshop for CoastWatch members in spring of 2010. The workshop should include an update on abalone status, a forum to listen to suggestions by members, and incorporate as many topics suggested in the interviews as possible

- 3) Redistribute CoastWatch materials to members (especially the window decals) and continue distributing a newsletter 2-3 times a year

Appendix 1: CoastWatch Participant Survey Questions

1. Details of operations
 - a. Primary activity (commercial tourism, commercial fishing, recreational, air charter, other – please describe)
 - b. Secondary activity
 - c. Type of platform (vessel, aircraft, base-camp, other – please describe)
 - If your platform is a vessel, please also ask the following:
 - d. Number of vessels
 - e. Vessel name(s) or number)
 - f. Vessel length
 - g. Average # of passengers
2. Estimated # of days in Haida Gwaii waters in 2009 (by vessel, aircraft, camp, other)
3. What are your usual months of operation?
4. Area of operation in Haida Gwaii
 - a. Primary area
 - b. Secondary area
 - c. Other
5. Did you observe any suspicious activity in Haida Gwaii waters in the past two seasons that could be related to abalone poaching? If so, how many incidents did you observe?
6. Did you report any suspicious activity in Haida Gwaii waters in the past two seasons? If so how many incidents were reported.
7. How actively were you watching for suspicious behaviour? Estimated # of days (or % of time) where you would have been likely to detect suspicious behaviour.
8. If you did not report suspicious activity what were the reasons?
9. If you did report suspicious activity were you satisfied with the response by either DFO or Haida Fisheries Program? If not please explain and provide information including agency and date of complaint. Do you mind if we provide this information to DFO?
10. Do you use a Coastwatch decal to identify your vessel as participating in Coast Watch?
11. Do you use the following information materials provided by HGAbS (yes, no, record comments)? Can you suggest any improvements or additional materials that would be useful?
 - a. Glossy brochure

b. Tide tables

12. Were you informed about the CoastWatch workshop in April 2009? If so, did you attend it? If so, did you find it useful? Would you like to attend another one in spring 2010? If so, are there any months that you are not available? Do you have any suggestions about presentations or topics for discussion?

13. Do you receive any newsletters this year? If so, do you find them interesting and/or useful?

If not, would you like to receive them in the future? IF yes please provide an updated mailing address, and email address. Confirm contact info.

14. Do you have any suggestions on how community surveillance programs might be improved?

15. Has your vessel or operation been checked by DFO in the past year?

16. Are you aware of anyone else who might be interested