

Marine Protected Areas

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RACE ROCKS

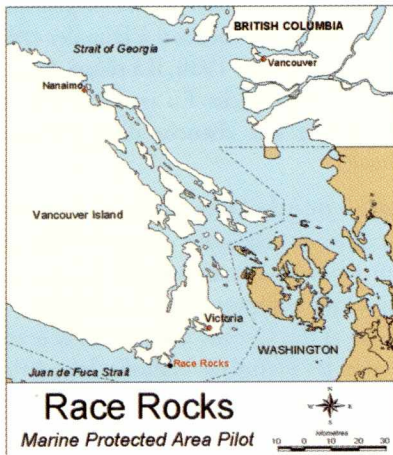
The Hudson's Bay Company named the area "Race Rocks" because of its combination of reefs and strong tidal currents. Race Rocks is located 17 km southwest of Victoria, approximately 1.5 kilometers off the extreme southern tip of Vancouver Island at the eastern end of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

It is almost entirely subtidal, but includes nine inlets, one of which is the site of a Coast Guard lightstation. The area was designated as an Ecological Reserve under British Columbia's *Ecological Reserve Act* in 1980.

The area consists of a rugged, rocky topography and experiences strong tidal currents (up to 7 knots) which provide a generous supply of nutrients for many complex groups of underwater organisms. This area has an abundant and diverse representation of marine life, including Northern and California sea lions, harbour, northern fur and elephant seals, river otters, Dall's and harbour porpoises, orcas and gray whales, octopi, sponges, corals, anemones and giant barnacles and sea grasses. The islands serve as nesting colonies for many sea birds, including pelagic and Brandt's cormorants, pigeon guillemots, black oystercatchers and glaucous-winged gulls, and provide an important stopover for some migratory birds. The concentrations and variety of marine species provide an unrivalled opportunity for study and observation.



Photo: Danny Kent



Local communities have long recognized the importance of the Race Rocks area. Lester B. Pearson College has provided tremendous support in preserving the area and, in 1980, was successful in facilitating the designation of Race Rocks as an Ecological Reserve. In April 1988, BC Parks produced a draft Management Plan for Race Rocks Ecological Reserve.

Race Rocks has been recommended as a pilot Marine Protected Area under *Canada's Oceans Act* for a number of reasons. As a transition zone between the Pacific Ocean and coastal waters, the area is renowned for its exceptional diversity of marine life, including marine mammals, birds and fish. Fisheries and Oceans Canada and BC Parks in collaboration with First Nations, stakeholders and the public, are aiming to develop cooperative management arrangements and strategies to assist in ensuring that the objectives of the area are met.

Some additional elements to be tested include :

- partnering and developing complementary management plans;
- developing and implementing a joint federal-provincial management plan for the area; and,
- ensuring co-ordination among agencies or governments involved in the development of the MPA Strategy for the Pacific coast of Canada.

For further information please contact:

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