

# "Big Eddy"

## The Juan de Fuca Eddy Ecosystem

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From <http://cpawsbc.org/campaigns/big-eddy>

### Executive Summary

"Big Eddy" needs protection and needs it fast. As a unique and vital area of the ocean ecosystem, it is critical to a wide variety of marine species and therefore it is in turn critical that we do something to protect it.

### Key Points

- **Protection of unique and productive areas is essential**
- **Canada needs to follow through on its commitments**
- **Action is needed NOW!**

### Introduction

"Big Eddy" is the nickname given to the Juan de Fuca Eddy ecosystem located off the west coast of Vancouver Island, BC and the northwest coast of the Olympic Peninsula of Washington in the U.S.A. This ecosystem is partially protected both in Canada and in the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

This region is one of the most productive and nutrient rich ecosystems in North America<sup>2</sup> and supports orcas, sea otters, seabirds, rockfish, salmon and cold water coral.<sup>1</sup> Northern and southern species meet here and it is very important to humpback and grey whales as it is a migration corridor for them. As such, it is an area of high priority with regards to requiring protection.

## Approaches and Results

“Big Eddy” straddles the Canada – U.S. border and already has protection on the U.S. side. It is time for Canada to match this to properly and fully protect this precious ecosystem. It is also a show of good faith and cooperation for Canada to jointly protect the region in conjunction with the U.S. In 1992 the United Nations held the Conference on Environment and Development, commonly known as the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro<sup>3</sup>. At that time Canada agreed to achieve, by 2010, many goals which were set regarding environmental protection and biodiversity. These goals were not met and so, in 2010 Canada signed the Convention on Biological Diversity. A new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 was agreed upon and includes 20 targets (referred to as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets). In a report by Canada’s Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Scott Vaughan, earlier this year, it has been determined that Canada is yet again falling short of its commitments in this area as only 1% of marine ecosystems have been protected to date with the 2020 goal being 10%.<sup>4</sup>

## Conclusions

There is much work to be done to protect our natural assets and unique ecosystems both marine and terrestrial. The time for talking is done. We must move forward, and as a nation, follow through on our commitments and meet our goals. Now is the time for action and protecting our beautiful, natural and unique habitats and the organisms that occupy them. This protection cannot be put on the backburner any longer. Cooperating with the relevant departments of the U.S. government to ensure seamless protection and management of this precious ecosystem will set a great example of international and interjurisdictional coordination.



## Implications and Recommendations

Canada should ideally declare “Big Eddy” a Marine Protected Area and a “no take” zone. At a bare minimum Canada needs to carry out its obligation from 2010 which would make this ecosystem a National Marine Conservation Area. Some protection is certainly better than none. We as a nation have made the commitment and need to back up our promises with actions. Alterations and refinements can be made in the future but not if the ecosystem is already compromised. The U.S. is currently making amendments to the regulations they initially put in place.

## References

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