

# BROKEN GROUP ISLANDS

## 2024 PADDLER'S PREPARATION GUIDE

Effective March 1, 2024



Backed by the Insular Mountain Range of Vancouver Island and facing the open Pacific Ocean, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (Pacific Rim NPR) represents and protects both the near shore waters and the coastal lowland forests of Canada's west coast. Pacific Rim NPR is made up of three distinct areas; Long Beach, the West Coast Trail (WCT), and the Broken Group Islands (BGI).

The BGI in Barkley Sound is an outstanding example of a marine archipelago comprising a stunning maze of channels, sheltered bays, shell beaches, densely forested islands, exposed reefs and bare, wind-swept rocks.

**The Broken Group Islands are only accessible by boat.**

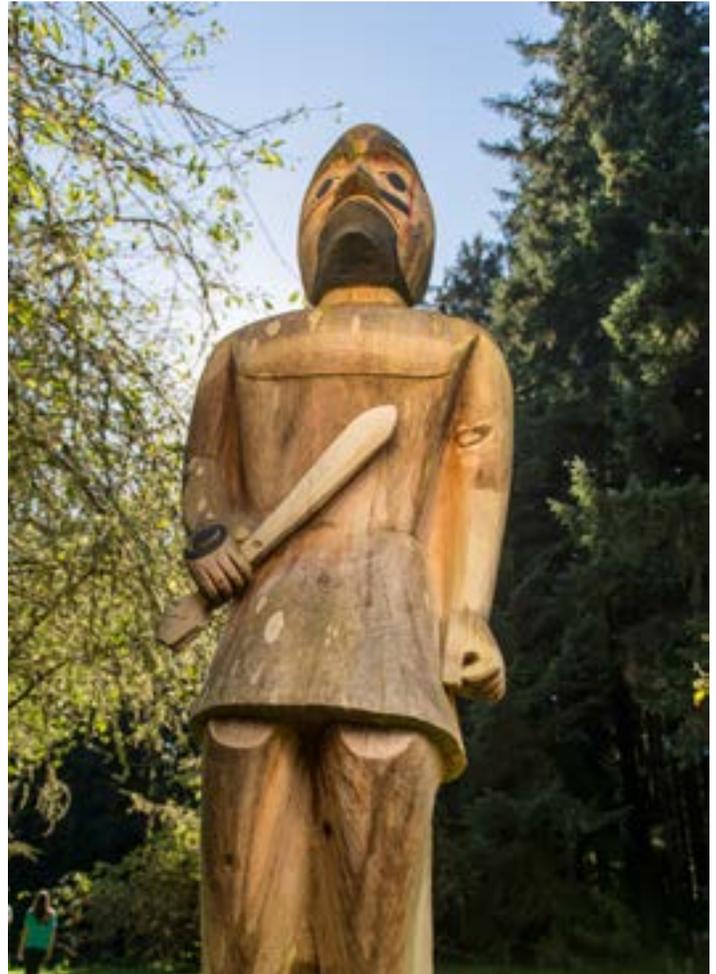
Balancing protection, education and recreational use of our national parks is a responsibility not only of Parks Canada and our partners, but also of national park reserve visitors.

This preparation guide is intended to help you prepare for a safe and enjoyable visit while supporting the sustainability of our special heritage places for future generations.

## FIRST NATIONS

The traditional territories of several Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations encompass the Broken Group Islands. The islands contain many sites of spiritual and cultural significance for the Tseshaht and Hupacasath First Nations. Disturbing, destroying or removing natural and cultural artifacts is strictly prohibited without prior written permission or licences.

There are first nation reserve lands on Effingham, Nettle, and Keith Islands. Day visitors are only welcome at the reserve lands on Keith Island. (Please note this may change in 2024. Please check with Tseshaht First Nation or Pacific Rim National Park Reserve before you go to Keith Island). For Effingham and Nettle Island reserve lands, written permission from the appropriate First Nation is required prior to landing. Boaters are asked to refrain from tying up to the wharfs on Nettle Island.



## CLIMATIC INFLUENCE

The BGI enjoys a moderate maritime climate of cool foggy summers and mild wet winters with an average annual precipitation of 330 centimetres (130 inches). This climate encourages an abundance of life both in the water and on the land. The mild climate also encourages the lush growth of temperate rainforest dominated by coniferous tree species such as Sitka spruce, western hemlock and western red cedar.

## PREPARATION INFORMATION

Is your group ready for a trip to the BGI? Long known as the “Graveyard of the Pacific”, this area abounds with potential hazards. Though marine navigation techniques and tools have improved since the title was bestowed, the area’s hazards remain. Trip preparation is a crucial element of any visit to the BGI. Your ability to recognize and evaluate hazards is key to determining the risk you and your group are taking. To have a safe experience, your party’s knowledge, skills and equipment must meet or exceed the challenges of this environment.

### You and your group must be able to:

- plot a course by chart and compass;
- pilot your vessel(s) safely in fog;
- read weather patterns and signs, obtain and interpret up-to-date marine weather forecast;
- assess water hazards that vary with tide, sea state and weather;
- interpret tide tables;
- competently handle your boat if caught in adverse conditions (some crossings may take 3 or more hours and weather conditions can change in a matter of minutes);
- perform a group rescue and self-rescue;
- camp in prolonged windy and rainy conditions;
- call for help; and
- administer first aid.

## CUSTODIAL GROUPS

Groups that are affiliated with an institution, and have at least one person below the age of majority who is not accompanied by his/her parent or guardian, have special considerations when kayaking and/or canoeing in Pacific Rim NPR’s marine waters. These groups are required to

obtain in advance, and carry with them, a restricted activity permit issued by Pacific Rim NPR.

Please contact the national park reserve staff at least 4-6 weeks prior to arrival for information and appropriate permits.

## BEACHKEEPERS

The BGI is patrolled by the Tseshahht Beachkeepers throughout the summer months.

The Tseshahht Beachkeepers monitor their traditional territory, maintain camping areas, provide information and cultural interpretation services, check permits, and assist Parks Canada staff.



## ACCESS

**The Broken Group Islands are only accessible by boat.**

### **Road Access to launch points:**

Paddlers can park and launch kayaks from the Toquaht Nation's Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch. For more information regarding fees and directions please refer to the Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch contact information on page 13.

### **Drop off by marine transport:**

Transport companies with valid Pacific Rim NPR business licenses are permitted to drop clients off in certain areas of the BGI (Drop offs are not allowed at designated islands/camping areas).

With permission from the Tseshaht First Nation Beachkeepers, Keith Island has a dock, outhouse and sheltered area to facilitate drop offs and pick ups. (Please note that this may not be available in 2024 due to COVID-19 protocols.)

See pages 13-14 for Beachkeeper and marine transport companies' contact information.

Broken Islands Lodge carries paddlers and their boats on a scheduled basis to the protected waters just north of the BGI. See page 13 for their contact details.

**Kayak rentals** for experienced paddlers may be available from operators based in Bamfield or Ucluelet but **paddling from these communities is not recommended** due to the exposed passages of Imperial Eagle and Loudon Channels.

**Commercial companies** must have a valid Pacific Rim NPR business licence if operating in the BGI. Carefully select a company that meets the needs of your group. Visit our website or contact Parks Canada for a list of commercial operators that hold valid Parks Canada business licences. See pages 13-14 for contact details.



## NATIONAL PARK ENTRY PASS

All visitors to Pacific Rim NPR are required to have a valid National Park Entry Pass at all times while they are visiting the national park reserve. Youth (17 years of age and younger) receive free entry into all of Parks Canada's places but still require a National Park Entry Pass. This means that in addition to requiring a valid Broken Group Islands Backcountry Camping Permit, all visitors 18 years of age and older are also required to purchase a valid National Park Entry Pass. While in the BGI, all visitors must have their National Park Entry Pass on their person at all times. **Do not leave the pass in your vehicle.**

The revenue from national park entry fees remains within the Coastal BC Field Unit to support the services and facilities that all visitors enjoy (including campsite facilities and amenities, the Beachkeeper program, visitor safety, signs, programs, etc.). The Broken Group Islands Backcountry Camping Permits do not include the national park entry fees, so you need to have a valid camping permit **and** a valid National Park Entry Pass at all times.

Pacific Rim NPR daily entry passes can be purchased at any Pacific Rim NPR facility or from Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch, Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Ucluelet, Tourism Tofino or the Wickanninish Inn.

Pacific Rim NPR annual entry passes can be purchased at any Pacific Rim NPR facility, they can be purchased online at <https://www.commandesparcs-parksorders.ca/en/destination-unique-single-location/pacific-rim> or from Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch, Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Ucluelet, or Tourism Tofino.

Parks Canada annual discovery passes can be purchased at any Pacific Rim NPR facility or they can be purchased online at <https://www.commandesparcs-parksorders.ca/en>.

Commercial Groups/Tours must purchase their national park entry passes through the Parks Canada Commercial Sales Office (see your business licence application for more details).

## BOAT MOORING

Anyone mooring overnight in the BGI (in Pacific Rim NPR waters) requires a valid National Park Entry Pass.

Boating day users also require a valid National Park Entry Pass when in the marine waters of Pacific Rim NPR.



## CAMPING

Overnight camping in the BGI is only allowed annually from May 1 to September 30.

### Camping in the High Season

Peak visitation occurs in the BGI from July through August. Campers arriving in this period can expect to share camping areas with many other visitors. To avoid peak season crowds, try camping between May and June, or in September.

### Camping Regulations

- Camping in the BGI must be within the seven designated camping areas on Hand, Turret, Gibraltar, Willis, Dodd, Clarke, and Gilbert Islands. Check your chart for their exact locations.
- Maximum stay in the BGI is 14 days.
- Maximum stay at any one camping area is 4 nights.
- Maximum group size is 12. Groups larger than 12 people must split into smaller groups and occupy designated campsites on different islands. This applies to private, commercial, and non-profit groups.
- Dogs are not permitted in the Broken Group Islands, unless they are service pets. Pets can disturb wildlife, interfere with other visitors' enjoyment of the area and can introduce disease to island wildlife.
- All National Park regulations are enforced.

### Backcountry Camping Permits and Fees

Anyone camping in the BGI must have a backcountry camping permit. Backcountry camping permits are \$13.50 per person per night. Overnight camping is only allowed from May 1 to September 30.

Backcountry camping permits are only available through the Parks Canada Reservation System.

**No spaces will be available for stand-by (first come first serve).**

To reserve call 1-877-RESERVE or visit [www.reservation.pc.gc.ca](http://www.reservation.pc.gc.ca)

Reservations are available beginning on January 19, 2024 at 8 am PST. Payment can be made by VISA, MasterCard, or American Express.

**When making a reservation, have the following ready:**

- Preferred camping dates – first choice and alternate date
- Preferred camping locations – preferred and alternate islands
- Point of access location; where you will begin paddling from
- Number of campers in your group (maximum group size is 12)
- Email address to send confirmation and information to
- Means of payment: Visa, MasterCard or American Express

### Cancellation Policy:

**Reservation Fee:** is non-refundable.

### BGI Backcountry Camping Permit:

If you cancel a backcountry reservation at least 3 days prior to your scheduled day of arrival: you will receive a full refund less the original non-refundable reservation fee and the cancellation fee.

If you cancel a reservation less than 3 days prior to your scheduled day of arrival, but before 2:00 p.m. on your scheduled day of arrival: you will receive a full refund less the original non-refundable reservation fee, the cancellation fee, plus the fees for the first night of backcountry camping.

## Consider the Needs of other Campers

- This is a wilderness setting: loud noise, generators, stereos or air compressors are not allowed.
- Leave space between you and your neighbour.
- Cook away from neighbouring tents.
- **Tent Pads:** For fairness to all guests, when making your reservation please select the exact number of “Tent Pads” on your booking for the exact number of tents that you will be bringing. Technically, there are no “tent pads” in the BGI but this terminology is used to determine how many tents you will be using at each campsite.

## Your Impacts on the Environment

Parks Canada strives to manage activities within the national park reserve to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Your appropriate, respectful behaviour (low impact camping) will not only lead to a safe and rewarding experience but will also contribute to a healthy, functioning ecosystem. Parks Canada, First Nations and visitors’ collective actions will

ultimately ensure that future generations can appreciate and enjoy this special place. When you leave a camping area, ensure the area is in at least as pristine a condition, or better, as when you found it.

## Potential Fire Bans

It is vital that all visitors check on the status of fire bans before your trip, and adhere to any prohibitions or restrictions. When permitted, fires must be kept small, located below the high tide line and never in the forest. Burn only driftwood and do not burn wood any thicker than your wrist. Ensure the fire has burned out completely before you leave the area. Never abandon a fire: smouldering fires have ignited, burning the ancient rainforest.

## Tips:

- Use biodegradable soap.
- Use ropes (not nails) to hang tarps etc.
- Remove all ropes. Disassemble primitive furniture, firepits and structures before departing.



- Leave all vegetation as you find it. A rare lichen, the seaside centipede lichen, has been found in the BGI. Breaking lower branches from trees could have a devastating impact on the species.
- Store food and garbage securely, either inside kayak hatches or in rodent and crow-proof containers. Secure kayak hatches. Hung items should be a minimum of 4 metres (12 feet) off the ground, 3 metres (9 feet) from the trunk of the tree and 3 metres (9 feet) down from the limb. You are living with wildlife in the islands.
- Pack out all garbage. There is no garbage pick-up in the BGI.
- Use composting outhouses for bodily waste and toilet paper only. They are not compost piles for food scraps, garbage, feminine hygiene products or disposable wipes.
- Do not dig trenches around tents and when leaving, replace rocks that have been used to secure tent pegs.
- Use a camp stove rather than a fire for cooking.
- Assess the area for dangerous trees before setting up camp.

### **Campground Hardening and Rehabilitation**

Parks Canada performs restoration work to protect exposed shell middens, bare roots and mineral soils on the campground islands. Please respect any fencing or signage you may encounter.

## **HAZARDS AND REGULATIONS**

To help you maximise the enjoyment and safety of your trip below are some hazards and responsibilities your entire party should be aware of before setting out:

**Weather:** Strong winds can funnel through channels. Winds tend to rise in the late morning and drop in the evening. Travel through Loudon and Imperial Eagle Channel by kayak, canoe and small craft is not recommended. During fair weather, winds blow predictably from the west and northwest. Winds are from the southeast just before and during adverse weather. However, there are always exceptions to wind and weather patterns. Wind-generated waves, especially those influenced by currents, can make for extremely rough or hazardous paddling and small craft handling. Boaters should plan on moderate to severe chop in Coaster Channel during the middle of the day, particularly when it is hot and sunny. It is recommended to travel through Coaster Channel when winds are light (generally early morning). Heavy wind, rain, fog, and tidal currents here can be extremely dangerous. Knowledge of navigation, boat handling, wilderness survival, weather patterns

and signs, is essential for travel and camping in the area.

If you experience rough seas or poor weather conditions, please modify your itinerary and stay at the safest camping location. Safety is the number one priority.

**Sea State:** Barkley Sound can be subject to extreme ocean conditions. Large swells are affected by local tides, winds and currents; this can cause conditions to change rapidly. Be mindful of unexpected big waves when you are paddling around the islands.

**Seascape:** A maze of islands, islets, reefs, submerged rocks, and surge channels can be difficult to navigate at any time, but are particularly dangerous in ocean swell or limited visibility.

**Marine Traffic:** Kayaks, sailboats and motorboats all use the BGI. Motorized vessels often cannot see paddlers nor are they visible on radar. Know your responsibilities. All marine traffic is subject to marine collision regulation. Contact The Boating Safety Info Line for details.

See Other Services for their contact information.

**Hypothermia:** Hypothermia is the lowering of the core body temperature below a safe level causing the body to lose the ability to generate heat and is a major killer of outdoor recreationists. Boaters beware; body heat is lost 25 times faster in water than in air. The maximum survival time in 10°C water is 2-3 hours. The water temperature in Barkley Sound ranges from 7-15°C. Know how to prevent, identify and treat hypothermia.

**Stinging plants and insects** are present on the islands.

**Group Travel:** The following represent best practices for group travel:

- Stay together and travel as a group to facilitate rescue and emergency response. Self-rescue may be the difference between life and death.
- Be prepared for a capsized or damaged boat; more importantly, avoid situations that may be hazardous.
- Stay within normal talking distance of one another and follow shorelines where possible.

- Know the abilities (mental and physical) of each member of your group and plan accordingly.
- Travel at the speed of the slowest group member.
- Regularly assess the condition of group members.
- Alcohol, wilderness settings, and water transport do not mix.
- Personal hygiene while camping can be challenging; wash hands frequently.

**Tsunamis:** If the ground shakes under your feet, or you see the waterline quickly recede from the shore, a tsunami may be coming. **Move to higher ground and/or follow tsunami evacuation routes. Attempt to gain 20 metres in elevation in 20 minutes.**

**Freshwater:** Freshwater sources are unreliable in Barkley Sound; bring all the potable water your group requires. We recommend 4-6 litres per person, per day.

## LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Viewing wildlife while in the BGI is exciting. Please remember that you have responsibilities as well as opportunities when you encounter wildlife.

**Bare Campsite Program: leave no food items or other attractants, such as food packaging, toothpaste, soap, dish rags/scrubbers and pots/pans unattended.** Scavenging animals such as crows, deer, rodents, raccoons and even wolves are efficient and creative scavengers. **Secure food and other attractants in when not in immediate use.**

**Black bears, wolves and cougars are in the BGI.** To avoid a dangerous encounter with wildlife **stay alert and watch for signs of recent activity.**

### Keep these points in mind:

- Keep children close to you.
- If you encounter a predator:
  - Group together, face the animal and retreat slowly, giving them an avenue of escape.
  - Do not run or play dead.
  - If the animal does not leave or approaches, try to scare it away by appearing big and aggressive: shout, wave a stick/paddle or throw rocks.
  - In the unlikely event of an attack fight back and report to Parks Canada.



**Southern Resident killer whales** are critically endangered. By adopting good practices when you navigate through the national park reserve, you contribute to protection efforts. Your compliance with regulations is vital!

- Vessel operators are required to remain a minimum of 400 metres from all killer whales in B.C. and the Pacific Ocean.
- Vessel operators are also asked to reduce their speed to less than 7 knots when they are within 1000 metres of a killer whale, and turn off their echo sounders and turn engines to neutral idle, if safe to do so, when within 400 metres of a killer whale.

**Vessels include boats, kayaks, paddleboards and any other pleasure craft. All vessel operators need to be aware when boating around killer whales.**

**Please stay informed on updated rules.**

More information about protecting Canada's endangered whales can be found here:

[Department of Fisheries and Oceans](#)

[Transport Canada](#)

**Sea lions, seals and whales are frequently sighted.** There are established guidelines for viewing marine wildlife, these guidelines require boaters, including kayakers, to keep a minimum distance from all marine wildlife. For federal guidelines referring to marine mammal viewing, contact the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) (see contact section).

*Note: sea lions are known to carry a disease called leptospirosis that can be transferred to humans. Accordingly, never touch a marine mammal, dead or alive.*

Boating near caves and cliffs impacts nesting seabirds and is hazardous. Stay well away from these features. Regulations prohibit entry into caves.

## MARINE HARVESTING IN PACIFIC RIM NPR

Are you thinking of catching or harvesting finfish, shellfish or other marine creatures? **Please note that the national park reserve is a voluntary no-harvest zone.** The national park reserve was established to protect the diversity of life in this area for present and future generations. With your help, Parks Canada can protect both the marine and the terrestrial environment.

Harvest limits are reduced within Pacific Rim NPR. If you are harvesting you must carry the appropriate licenses (BC Tidal Waters Sports Fishing Licence) and follow the DFO regulations and closures.

As of August 14th, 2002, DFO permanently closed a large section of the BGI to fin-fishing. This area is now a Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA). Consult DFO for details of this closure.

**Naturally occurring toxins** such as Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) - or “red tide” - have been found in the shellfish in Barkley Sound (e.g. clams, oysters and scallops). When humans consume contaminated shellfish, symptoms can vary from a mild tingling of the lips and tongue, to paralysis and death. Shellfish harvest openings and closures are based on rigorous monitoring procedures by DFO (see contact section).

## TRIP PLAN

File a trip plan before you leave for the BGI backcountry, with a reliable person and upon completion of your trip, inform your contact that you are out of the backcountry.

A trip plan should be in writing and include:

- The number and names of people in your group, including their emergency contacts;
- Trip length in days;
- Arrival and departure times and dates;
- Specific route plans;
- Camping plans;
- Tent: number, make/model/colour of tent;
- If applicable, vehicle licence #, make/model/colour and parking location;
- If applicable, the make and colour of each vessel.

## EQUIPMENT

### Regulated equipment:

See Canada Coast Guard Safe Boating Guide or contact Office of Boating Safety for equipment that must be carried on board your vessel.

### Recommended equipment:

- Hydrographic (nautical) charts #3670 and #3671 and a waterproof chart bag
- Canadian Tide and Current Tables (refer to Tofino tables)
- GPS with chart plotter and tide table
- Watch
- VHF Marine Radio
- Compass
- Cellular phone (check with your carrier for coverage) and portable battery charging pack
- First aid kit
- Survival kit (e.g. waterproof matches, knife, emergency food, flares and blanket)
- Equipment repair kit
- Personal Flotation Device (PFD) and whistle
- Self-rescue aids, paddle floats, towlines
- Paddling gloves, hat
- Wetsuit/ Drysuit/ or suitable immersion equipment
- Potable water (4-6L per person, per day)
- Stove, fuel and cooking kit
- Food
- Knife
- Rope, shock cords
- Tent with waterproof fly and floor
- Sleeping bag and insulation pad
- Waterproof bags
- Flashlight
- Toiletries (hand sanitizer, sun- and lip-screens)
- Sunglasses
- Airtight container for garbage
- Toilet paper
- Camera
- Spare paddle
- Air horn (for scaring wildlife away)
- Bear spray
- Clothing; choose materials that maintains warmth when wet, dry quickly, can be layered (wool or polypropylene)
- Durable rain gear (test it beforehand)
- Warm hat and gloves
- Footwear
- Towels



## PACIFIC RIM NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

<b>Parks Canada Emergency Dispatch (24 hours)</b>	1-877-852-3100 (toll-free) or 1-250-726-3604  *Please note that the toll-free number only works in North America and is not available on satellite phones
Pacific Rim National Park Reserve Administration Office	2040 Pacific Rim Highway P.O. Box 280, Ucluelet, BC V0R 3A0 250-726-3500 (year-round)
Parks Canada Information Pacific Rim Visitor Centre	2791 Pacific Rim Highway 250-726-4212 Open daily May to September
Parks Canada Email:	pacrim.info@pc.gc.ca
Parks Canada Website:	<a href="https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/bc/pacificrim">https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/bc/pacificrim</a>
Pacific Rim National Park Reserve - Licensed Operators List for BGI:	<a href="https://parks.canada.ca/en/pn-np/bc/pacificrim/activ/activ13#bgi">https://parks.canada.ca/en/pn-np/bc/pacificrim/activ/activ13#bgi</a>

## TRANSPORTATION (subject to change)

Broken Islands Lodge (Passenger Ferry)	250-720-7358 <a href="http://www.brokenislandslodge.com">www.brokenislandslodge.com</a>
BC Ferries	1-888-223-3779 or 250-386-3431 (international) *BCF on cell <a href="http://www.bcferries.com">www.bcferries.com</a> (Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo)

## ACCOMMODATION (subject to change)

Secret Beach Campground and Kayak Launch - Toquaht Nation	250-726-8349 <a href="http://www.secretbeachcampground.com">www.secretbeachcampground.com</a> secretbeach@toquaht.ca
Bamfield Chamber of Commerce Bamfield Centennial Park & Campground and Information Center	1-800-790-5325 info@bamfieldchamber.com <a href="http://www.bamfieldchamber.com">www.bamfieldchamber.com</a>

## OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES (subject to change)

Beachkeepers, Tseshaht First Nation	1-250-266-0620
Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce	2533 Port Alberni Hwy. Port Alberni, BC V9Y 8P2 250-724-6535 <a href="http://www.albernichamber.ca">www.albernichamber.ca</a>
Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations Tribal Council	1-877-677-1131 or 250-724-5757 <a href="http://www.nuuchahnulth.org">www.nuuchahnulth.org</a>
Bamfield Chamber of Commerce	250-728-3006 info@bamfieldchamber.com <a href="http://www.bamfieldchamber.com">www.bamfieldchamber.com</a>
Fisheries and Oceans Canada Pacific Region Port Alberni Office	Port Alberni Office - 250-720-4440 Fishing and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Information 24 hour line [sub area 23 (8)] 604-666-2828 or 1-866-431-3474 <a href="http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca">www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca</a>
Transport Canada Office of Boating Safety	1-866-995-9737 <a href="http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-menu-1362.htm">www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-menu-1362.htm</a>
CoastSmart	<a href="http://www.coastsmart.ca/">www.coastsmart.ca/</a>
Adventure Smart	<a href="http://www.adventuresmart.ca/">www.adventuresmart.ca/</a>