

Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) Marine Traffic Risk Assessment (MTRA) Scoping Workshop

Jointly hosted by **Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative** and **Transport Canada**

September 15-16, 2026

BCIT Downtown Campus
555 Seymour St Vancouver

Two-Day In-Person Workshop
(No virtual or hybrid option)



PURPOSE

This collaborative workshop will bring together technical experts, marine planners, and First Nation representatives to scope a Marine Traffic Risk Assessment (MTRA) for the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB).



2-DAY PROGRAM

Day 1: Closed Session for NSB Government Partners – 9/15/26

Day 1 is an opportunity for technical and policy experts from First Nations, Canada, and BC to work together to frame their priorities and provide initial scoping input. The government-to-government session will culminate in a preliminary risk inventory that will feed into the Open Session Day 2.

Day 2: Open Session: Industry, Experts & Stakeholders - 9/16/26

Day 2 expands participation to include key stakeholders from industry, academia, and NSB coastal communities to build on the preliminary risk inventory from Day 1. Government and stakeholders will conduct additional risk screening and prioritization to support risk assessment design and methodology development.



LINKAGES

This workshop is part of the initial scoping phase for a multi-year marine traffic risk assessment collaboratively led by NSB First Nations, Canada, and BC under the Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection. The risk assessment will develop and apply a replicable process for risk evaluation and treatment based on international best practice.



PROJECT PARTNERS

Technical Team: TC, Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative (GBI), and NSB First Nations technical experts

Steering Committee: Technical Team + BC ENV, CCG, CWS, DFO, ECCC

Expert Panel: 6-8 member panel of experts from industry, academia, and NSB First Nations to provide expert review of interim and final work products throughout MTRA. The Expert Panel will be established following this workshop.

Workshop Background and Context



NORTHERN SHELF BIOREGION (NSB)

The Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) is an established planning area along the BC coast from northern Vancouver Island to Dixon Entrance, including Haida Gwaii. It consists of four sub-regions: North Vancouver Island, Central Coast, North Coast, and Haida Gwaii. NSB First Nations, Canada, and BC have a Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection that underlies the MTRA. (See map last page.)



SCOPING THE NSB MTRA

This workshop is to scope the NSB MTRA by defining research questions and study objectives, inventorying past and ongoing studies, evaluating available data, and assessing all evidence for confidence and uncertainty.

The MTRA differs from past risk assessments in several key ways:

- Evaluates risk across the entire system, rather than focusing in on a single policy, decision, or activity
- Blend of qualitative and quantitative analyses inclusive of all available knowledge and data streams
- Designed to be iterative and ongoing to support risk management prioritization



INTENDED OUTCOMES

The intended outcome of this work, which will conclude in 2028, is to develop a risk inventory for the NSB that will identify and communicate risk treatment priorities, inclusive of a broad range of perspectives (government, industry, academia, communities). The MTRA will inform a shared understanding of NSB First Nations priorities for assessing and managing marine traffic risks in the NSB. The inventory is a starting point for those conversations, not a substitute for them – applying its results to a particular decision, place, or activity still requires engagement with the relevant parties, so that risks and consequences are well understood and the results are applied appropriately. This will enable forward planning beyond the scope of existing RFA and Oceans Protection Plan initiatives and serve as a basis for ongoing monitoring and subsequent assessment.



MORE INFO

Use the QR code to access the project website, which contains a References Tab linking to additional background reading on marine traffic risks in the NSB. We will continue to add to and update the References Tab leading up to the workshop. The Technical Team will continue to update this site throughout the project with public sources that describe the agreements, frameworks, studies, and plans relating to marine shipping in the NSB.

Discussion Prompts



FRAMING THE RISKS

- How are we defining risk?
- What are the geographic and time boundaries of what we're assessing?
- Whose perspectives are we considering?
- Whose perspective might be missing?



SCANNING THE HAZARDS

During the workshop, we will use a hazard taxonomy adapted from the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) that establishes the following inter-related categories for evaluating vessel traffic risks:

- **Physical** (e.g., underwater noise, vessel strikes/collisions, anchor damage, wake erosion, light pollution)
- **Chemical** (e.g., fuel/oil spills, ballast water discharge, air emissions)
- **Biological** (e.g., invasive species introduction, disturbance to marine mammals foraging/calving, cumulative ecosystem stress)
- **Natural forces** (e.g., marine debris, sea state, weather conditions, other environmental factors)
- **Social/cultural** (e.g., disruption to traditional harvesting, loss of access to cultural sites, conflict over marine use)
- **Complex/cumulative** (e.g., overlapping and combined effects of vessel type, routes, etc. over time, interactions between hazards)



RISK EMERGENCE

Because the NSB MTRA is applying a systemic approach to understanding and assessing risks, we will not limit our hazard scan to the past or present; we will also consider how emerging risks may change or add to the marine traffic hazards in the NSB.

Elements to risk emergence include:

Scientific unknowns	Loss of safety margins	Positive feedback
Technological advances	Conflicts of interest, values, and science	Temporal complications
Varying susceptibilities	Social dynamics	Communication
Information asymmetry	Perverse incentives	Malicious acts

Discussion Prompts



MAPPING RISK DOMAINS

The NSB MTRA is focused on systemic risks, which are inherently complex. One way to explore these complexities is by situating identified risks across four domains:

- Environment & ecology
- Culture & food security
- Safety & navigation
- Economy & infrastructure

Once risks are situated by domain, we can explore the connections between risks and across domains. This reinforces a system-wide approach to explore how risks connect across domains, how one risk might trigger or exacerbate another, and how marine traffic risks are rarely confined to a single domain.



SCANNING THE DATA LANDSCAPE

One of the key drivers for this scoping workshop is to scan the current status of data and knowledge regarding marine traffic risks in the NSB. This important step will also consider data confidence and uncertainty as we try to understand and describe systemic risks. Risk assessments are often criticized for not incorporating data confidence and uncertainty when applying analytic tools and outputs to examine research questions. The NSB MTRA is being designed to explicitly incorporate data confidence and uncertainty and to present results inclusive of these considerations.

A key focus of this workshop is on centering Indigenous Knowledge alongside other metrics that describe shipping risks. NSB First Nations communities have long records of observation, oral history, and knowledge collected through long-term monitoring and stewardship of the waterways that support shipping along the coast.

When we bring in Indigenous Knowledge alongside other data streams, it is important to understand and acknowledge the legitimacy of this knowledge, and to defer to Indigenous Knowledge-holders when discussing data confidence.

Discussion Prompts



WEIGHTING AND PRIORITIZING RISKS

There are many ways to weight and prioritize risks. In this workshop, we will work together to develop a regional risk register using a consistent, deliberate process. In our weighting exercise on Day 2, we will deliberately separate the size of a risk (likelihood x severity scoring, which is where many risk assessments end) from how well it is understood (data confidence, see previous page). This ensures that thinly documented risks are flagged for attention rather than dropping down the list because of information or knowledge gaps.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Here are some discussion prompts to consider ahead of the workshop. You might return to these periodically during discussions:

- What has to be true – in terms of exposure and vulnerability – for a hazard to become a risk to something we care about?
- If a risk got worse, how might it impact other domains (e.g., environment, culture, safety, economy) and how would we know or understand these impacts?
- Whose experience can provide further context to data about risk severity?
- In cases where we cannot establish consensus, consider whether we are questioning the data itself or our interpretation of what the data means. Also consider how/whether additional data would actually resolve the disagreement.
- Who is missing from the room that could or should contribute to our understanding of marine traffic risk in the NSB?



QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, FEEDBACK?

If you need additional information or would like to provide information ahead of the workshop, please reach out to our facilitation team:

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Elise DeCola, Nuka Research (facilitator) – elise@nukaresearch.com

Agenda – Day 1

8:30 am	Breakfast and networking
9:00 am	Opening remarks and introductions
9:30 am	Context setting and workshop overview
10:00 am	Framing marine traffic risks in the NSB
10:30 am	BREAK
10:45 am	Structured hazard scan
11:15 am	Risk domain mapping
12:00 pm	LUNCH
1:00 pm	Risk screening and characterization
2:15 pm	BREAK
2:30 pm	Synthesize and prioritize risk identification for Day 2
3:30 pm	Closing government-to-government caucus to review and confirm key messaging and questions for expert stakeholders
4:30 pm	ADJOURN DAY 1

Agenda – Day 2

8:30 am	Breakfast and networking
9:00 am	Opening remarks & icebreaker
9:30 am	Context setting and review of workshop structure/purpose
10:15 am	Roundtable discussion
10:30 am	BREAK
10:45 am	Structured risk identification (part 1)
12:00 pm	LUNCH
1:00 pm	Structured risk identification (part 2)
2:00 pm	Group discussion & synthesis of risk identification
2:30 pm	BREAK
2:45 pm	Progressing from risk inventory to risk assessment design
3:30 pm	Closing caucus – key outcomes and next steps
4:30 pm	ADJOURN WORKSHOP

Northern Shelf Bioregion Participants in the MTRA



The following NSB First Nations are participating in the MTRA:

Council of the Haida Nation

Gitxaala Nation

Metlakatla First Nation

Gitga'at First Nation

Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nation

Heiltsuk Nation

Nuxalk First Nation

Wuikinuxv First Nation

Mamalilikulla Nation

Tlowitsis Nation

Kwiah First Nation

Wei Wai Kum First Nation

We Wai Kai Nation

K'ómoks First Nation

The following organizations are also participating in the MTRA:

Nanwakolas Council

Central Coast Indigenous Alliance