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Geoduck Fishery Community Safe Plan for Haida Gwaii During the 2021/22 Season Presented to the Council Haida Nation by the UHA and AMR

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The Underwater Harvesters Association (UHA) and Archipelago Marine Research (AMR) are coordinating a fishery that is part of a sector designated as an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UHA values the relationship we have with Haida Fisheries, the Archipelago Management Board, Secretariat of the Haida Nation, and the Council of Haida Nation. Geoduck vessel crews, owners, exporters, packers, and geoduck fishery contractors are represented by the UHA. These contractors include biotoxin samplers that collect geoducks to be tested at the Canadian Food and Inspection Agency (CFIA) lab before and during geoduck openings implemented by Federal Fisheries (DFO). AMR helps coordinate the fishery and contracts the full-time on-grounds monitors that oversee every geoduck opening.

The UHA and AMR submit this **Geoduck Fishery Community Safe Plan for Haida Gwaii** along with the **Geoduck Safe Work Procedures** that have been developed to keep the fleet and communities safe. Contractors in the geoduck fishery and vessel operators and crew have participated in the development of these procedures and plans.

The following recommendations are based on best practices know at this time. This is a working document and is subject to change as new information and advice becomes available.

Background:

The geoduck fishery shut down early on in the pandemic due to the strong influence of the Chinese market on geoduck from Canada. On January 24th, 2020 BC exporters asked the fleet to stop fishing because COVID had completely halted their geoduck sales. The UHA and AMR worked together to develop procedures for safe operation during COVID and after the designation of fishing as an essential service ([Provincial BCCDC link](#), [Federal link](#)) and the fishery started up again in early April 2020. DFO worked with the UHA and granted extensions to the 2019/20 season which ended May 14th, 2020 instead of February 29th, 2020. The current 2020/21 season is scheduled to finish on April 30th, 2021 with the Haida Gwaii 2021/22 season starting on May 1st, 2021 and running through to April 30th, 2022.

The draft 2021/22 Geoduck Integrated Fisheries Management Plan has been released by DFO ([current season's IFMP available here](#)). Highlights of the 2021/22 IFMP are a reduction in overall quota and revised GMA boundaries that factor in Gwaii Haanas closures. The reduction in quota per block is a result of the Gwaii Haanas closures and impacts of sea otters on the Central Coast.

Geoduck vessels hope to start fishing Haida Gwaii on May 1st, 2021. It is important to start as soon as the season opens to take advantage of spring weather and fish exposed areas on West Haida Gwaii and South Moresby. A biotoxin sampler vessel and crew will need to start sampling in Haida Gwaii in late March / early April for this May 1st fishing start date. CFIA and DFO require three weeks of clean geoduck samples before a commercial geoduck opening. The fishery in Haida Gwaii will likely shut down in the summer towards the end of June and then restart in late August / early September. During this time the Vancouver Island fishery supplies the summer market. A biotoxin contractor would continue to sample Haida Gwaii throughout the summer shutdown so areas are ready to open for the fishery restart.

To summarize geoduck contractor and fleet timing:

- Biotoxin sampler vessels and crews will be working in Haida Gwaii from April 1st, 2021 to April 30th, 2022.
- An on-grounds monitor vessel and crew will be monitoring the fleet for every commercial geoduck opening from May 1st, 2021 to April 30th, 2022.
- Geoduck dive vessels and crews, and the packing vessels and crews that deliver the product to market will be fishing between May 1st, 2021 and April 30th, 2022.

UHA and AMR **Geoduck Work Safe Procedures** focus on rules and guidelines such as education, increased cleaning, disinfecting, hygiene, and limiting contact between dive vessels, packer

crews, the on-grounds monitor, and communities. These guidelines also rely on proper use of PPE when practical.

This **Geoduck Fishery Community Safe Plan for Haida Gwaii** focusses on keeping Haida Gwaii communities safe and minimizing the risk of transmission from geoduck fishery participants.

Geoduck Fleet Recommendations for the Community Safe Plan:

The following procedures are based on best practices known at this time. This is a working document and is subject to change as new information and advice becomes available.

1. Pre-Trip Departure:

- Complete the Geoduck Vessel Crew Pre-Trip Questionnaire or your own companies pre-trip paperwork.
- Review and educate your crew on the UHA and AMR **Geoduck Work Safe Procedures**
- Provision grub and supplies for multiple days. Vessels should have protocols in place to minimize interaction with shoreside suppliers.

2. Geoduck Fleet Fishing Operations:

- Treat your crew and vessel as a separate unit and limit contact outside your vessel.
- While the CHN continues to minimize off island contacts, the fleet will receive fuel and grub from the geoduck packers while on the grounds in Haida Gwaii.
- Follow the protocols in the **Geoduck Work Safe Procedures** to maintain physical distance from the packer crew and on-grounds monitor
- Vessels will avoid landfall in Haida Gwaii unless there is an emergency or protocols in place to provision from local suppliers. Such protocols could include vessel crews staying on-board and local suppliers delivering goods. Suppliers and crew to maintain physical distancing at all times.
- Pauses in fishing: while flights are limited geoduck vessels will travel to and from Haida Gwaii on-board their vessels and will not moor vessels in Haida Gwaii communities.

3. Geoduck Fleet / Community Interaction:

- Geoduck dive vessels and packers to avoid landfall in Haida Gwaii while the CHN wishes to minimize off island contact
- Vessels will avoid mooring in Haida Gwaii ports during pauses in the fishing season. There are no commercial flights available out of Haida Gwaii at this point.

- If a vessel requires shoreside supplies or contractors from Haida Gwaii communities crew will always maintain physical distance from shoreside personnel. Crew will remain on vessel and arrange for delivery of goods. Sanitize goods transferred between vessel and shoreside (i.e. parts, supplies).
- Fueling vessels in Haida Gwaii: Dive vessels will receive fuel from the geoduck packers, which arrive and depart from the grounds daily. If the packer is delayed and vessels require fuel from Charlotte the crew will remain on their vessel, sanitize fuel nozzle before and after use. Crew will wear disposable gloves for fueling, wear masks and maintain physical distance whenever interacting with shoreside staff and personnel.

4. **Biotoxin Sampler / Community Interaction:**

- PSP sampler vessels to avoid landfall in Haida Gwaii while the CHN wishes to minimize off island contact. UHA will contract a larger, self sufficient vessel and crew for spring sampler time. The sampler will fuel up from the packer on the mainland side before crossing the Hecate so that the sampler crew has fuel until the fleet starts to fish in May at which time they can fuel up from the packer again.
- Geoduck samples to be packed in a tote or cooler addressed and sealed with paperwork inside tote.
- Ship samples via the packer whenever possible. Maintain physical distancing with the packer crew. The Sampler can place tote on deck of the packer. Sampler to sanitize tote with appropriate disinfectant before packer crew handles and stows tote.
- Packer crew maintain physical distance with geoduck truck and/or courier. Geoduck truck / courier to follow their protocol for package shipping during COVID-19.
- If shipping sample via shoreside or on-water courier/transport other than the geoduck packer, crew will wear mask and maintain physical distance, sanitize tote as per method with packer, and follow protocol of courier/transport company.
- If shipping sample via flight from Sandspit or Masset samplers will contract local Haida Gwaii assistance to deliver a sealed tote and avoid the sampler crew having to leave vessel.
- If shipping via float plane direct from sampler vessel, sampler will ensure float plane company obtains required permits to pick up in Haida Gwaii.

5. **On-Grounds Monitor / Community Interaction:**

- OGM vessels and crew to avoid landfall in Haida Gwaii while the CHN wishes to minimize off island contact.

- Vessels will receive fuel and provisions from geoduck packer whenever possible.
- If a vessel requires shoreside supplies or contractors from Haida Gwaii communities crew will always maintain physical distance from shoreside personnel. Stay on vessel and arrange for delivery of goods. Sanitize goods transferred between vessel and shoreside (i.e. parts, supplies).
- Fueling vessels in Haida Gwaii: OGM will receive fuel from the geoduck packers, which arrive and depart from the grounds daily. If the packer is delayed and the OGM requires fuel from Charlotte, the crew will sanitize fuel nozzle before and after use. Crew will wear disposable gloves for fueling, wear masks and maintain physical distance whenever interacting with shoreside staff and personnel.

Contact Information:

Haida Gwaii Contacts:

Council Haida Nation website: haidanation.ca

Council of Haida Nation Essential Work Permit Applications:

essentialworkpermits@haidanation.com

CHN COVID-19 State of Emergency Incident Command: 250-559-4468

Queen Charlotte Fast Fuels: 250-559-4611 – call ahead for service

Sandspit Harbour: 250-637-5700 (Kelly cell: 250-637-1084) – open 9-12 daily. Call ahead to arrange with Kelly

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