

# SALISH SEA MARINE TRAIL: COMMUNITY HUBS BOOST SUPPORT FOR GROWING PADDLESPORT MARKET



## PROJECT PROFILE SALISH SEA MARINE TRAIL



THE TRAIL INCLUDES A CLEAR MARINE ROUTE, INCLUDING NEW RECREATION SITES.



### TRAILS - BOTH HIKING TRAILS ON

land, and marine trails for paddlers – are significant and growing regional tourism assets.

And while some hiking trails have acquired significant notoriety, marine trails tend to be known more through ‘insider’ knowledge.

This gap in paddlesport marketing to the broader public is being addressed through projects like the Salish Sea Marine Trail (SSMT). As the only linkage between the mainland and Vancouver Island, the marine trail is a crucial link in the 24,000-km Trans Canada Trail and part of the BC Marine Trails Network.

The Salish Sea Marine Trail is a network of campsites, day use sites, launch points, and stops-of-interest, targeting a broad spectrum of paddlers and other self-propelled watercraft users.

The creation of the Salish Sea Marine Trail is underway, with completion and grand opening planned for fall 2017. It is a 257-km route that begins near Victoria, and works its way up the coast through communities like Ladysmith and Nanaimo, past more remote Islands such as Texada and Lasqueti, and ultimately terminating at Jericho Beach in Vancouver.

“Leveraging off the publicity of the Trans Canada Trail gives us a chance to reach a huge new segment of the population, bringing visitors and dollars to communities all along our coastal route.”

One of the key features of the SSMT is the use of ‘community hubs’ at strategic points along the route. Ladysmith is one of the more innovative stops. With a floating campsite purposefully-designed for paddlers on the Salish Sea Marine Trail, the community is expanding its welcome for marine tourists, whether they come in power boats, sailboats, or paddle-powered.

As a Salish Sea Marine Trail hub, Ladysmith is positioning itself to bring paddlers into town for provisions, information, guiding services, accommodations—even just a nice dinner in one of the local restaurants. Additionally, since paddlers often travel in groups, the community’s investments in its waterfront infrastructure can be leveraged to accommodate paddling groups.

The Ladysmith Community Marina Visitor Facilities Project was an ICET-funded effort completed in 2012 with a view to attracting the lucrative boater “rendez-vous” market. The key attraction is the floating Visitor Centre, a hospitality and special events area, which provides a welcoming and well-equipped stop for the groups of boaters travelling along the coast. This centre now serves a dual purpose as a key component of the ‘hub’ concept in the marketing of the Salish Sea Marine Trail.

The trail includes a clear marine route, including new recreation sites. The project will also connect the route’s access and destinations with related businesses such as accommodation providers, food and beverage, and outdoor equipment and supplies.

“Being able to market a completed, supported, trail with designated stops opens up the opportunity for paddling to a much bigger market than the traditional ‘hard core’ paddler,” said BC Marine Trails President, Paul Grey.

The Salish Sea Marine trail project is a great example of the type of high-impact ventures that can be funded through ICET’s Economic Development Readiness Program. Applicants can ‘find their fit’ within a range of different options in the ERDP: investment attraction tools; quick start; sectoral development; or in this case, regional collaboration and marketing.

