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## **Marine Protected Area's Future Tied to the Treaty Table**

By Peter Rusland

Cowichan News Leader Pictorial

A massive marine reserve proposed off Cowichan could be discussed during future Hul'qumi'num treaty talks.

On Monday in Cobble Hill Hall, Kathleen Johnnie of the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, outlined the historical significance of the 1,000-square-kilometre National Marine Conservation Area among six Coast Salish bands involved.

"Hul'qumi'num people have defended these resources and lands against other Coast Salish people," she told about 60 during the reserve forum.



"We are a trading people and have not ceded or lost rights to our territories."

She reminded senior planner Bill Henwood of Parks Canada, and panel experts, the Crown must consult First Nations about constitutionally recognized protection of territories during treaty talks.

Johnnie stressed she doesn't represent the Cowichan Tribes who received her information about Monday's forum too late to attend.

"First Nations communities have made no decision yet on the reserve," said Johnnie who gives reserve data to tribal elders.

Geographic territory involved, including the seabed, is part of ongoing HTG talks, she said.

Reserve use also worries sport fisherman Kim Zak, plus commercial fishermen Greg Best, and Guy Johnston of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union.

They worry their livelihoods could sink if harvesting is hampered in the federal reserve between Gabriola Island to near Victoria to the Canada-U.S. border east of the Gulf Islands.

"Nowhere does it say the current level of fishery will continue," Best said. "A good society is about finding a balance between conflicting uses."

But public consultation is paramount to satisfying all users before potential reserve establishment by 2010, Henwood said.

The “semblance of a boundary” could be drawn by year’s end.

Not so fast, insisted Zak of the Sport Fishing Advisory Board.

“We’ve been against this reserve since day one. There’s been no process for consultation.”

Henwood urged everyone to voice concerns to him and his team.

Planning covers socio-economic benefits, mineral and energy rights, seabed tenures, fishing and recreational uses, zoning, tourism, shipping and ecological preservation.

Local governments would plan shore uses that could harm the sensitive, patrolled reserve. “Nothing is cast in stone yet,” said Henwood. Johnston’s glad.

“No-take areas would mean we’re out of work,” the crabber said. “If this job’s done poorly this area will become a rich man’s playground; done well, we spread the benefits.” Henwood said the reserve process cuts red tape to allow common goals. “We’re not looking to make communities stagnant.”

But growth can’t spell dire environmental expenses, explained Frances Pugh of the Saanich Inlet Protection Society and Deborah Conner of the Georgia Strait Alliance. “Without clean water nothing survives very well,” said Pugh.

Henwood can be called at (604) 666-0285, or visit [www.pc.gc.ca/straitofgeorgia](http://www.pc.gc.ca/straitofgeorgia).