

LET'S TALK TRASH – JUNE 2021

In 2019, the BC provincial government began a comprehensive consultation with local governments and individuals about plastic pollution in the ocean and on the shorelines of coastal communities. Here on Lasqueti, Donald Gordon, Peter Johnston and The Styrophobe (aka Mark Bottomley) were contacted by Sheila Malcolmson and her team. They talked about abandoned vessels, derelict fishing gear, polystyrene foam, aquaculture debris, and single use plastics affecting marine life and food sources.

Out of this coastal wide consultation came the Clean Coast, Clean Waters (CCCW) Initiative, which is part of the BC Plastics Action Plan and the Provincial goal to address plastic pollution. It's also part of the \$10 billion Covid Response Plan, which includes the BC Economic Recovery Plan, to protect people's health and livelihoods while supporting businesses and communities. The CCCW Initiative is supposed to create meaningful employment opportunities from seasonal shoreline clean-up and community education to specialized positions in the logistics of waste management, transportation and tourism sectors. This summer, more than \$9.5 million from the Clean CCCW Initiative Fund will be used to tackle shoreline clean ups and/or derelict vessel removals from the North Coast down to Southern Vancouver Island. Lasqueti is part of the collaboration clean-ing up the Central Salish Sea, along with groups from Denman, Texada, the Comox Valley, Powell River, Thormanby, and the Sunshine Coast. They are all working to-gether under the umbrella of the non-profit, the Ocean Legacy Foundation (OLF).

The Central Salish Sea Clean Up focuses on creating job opportunities in rural and remote areas and fostering partnerships between First Nations. The goal is to catalyze action between non-profits, volunteer associations (LSD - Lasqueti Styrofoam Days - now renamed Lasqueti Shoreline Debris) and industry and local governments. Until now, these groups and other concerned citizens (The Styrophobe) have been volunteering their time and energy to clean the BC coastlines.

The CCCW Initiative funding (through the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy) provides paid opportunities for these groups to plan and engage in the removal of heavily accumulated debris from industry, tourism and derelict vessels, while helping to restore damaged aquatic eco-systems.

Mark Bottomley is the local Project Manager and has gathered an intrepid team of Field Technicians (debris pickers) to clean Lasqueti and the surrounding islands, including Sangster and Ballenas. You might see the high-vis vested crew heading out in boats and working the beaches, sorting what they find into mega-bags. If you've collected marine garbage let him know where to find it.

A key part of the project is sorting the debris to have it recycled rather than landfilled. Everything being collected is tagged and weighed in order to create a data set of what kind of marine debris is gathered. The Ocean Legacy Recycling Center in Vancouver is expected to receive 300 tonnes

of beach waste they'll be converting into re-cyclable plastic. The new Powell River depot for Marine Plastic will also be dealing with what is collected.

While this project is a good beginning in addressing ocean plastic pollution, there is a need to continue efforts to mitigate the input of future derelict gear and other sources of marine plastic into coastal waters.