



PROJECT PROFILE

REMOTE REGIONS MARINE ATTRACTION



SMALL COMMUNITIES, BIG OPPORTUNITIES: *Marketing small harbours in remote communities is creating significant impacts for the broader region*

With thousands upon thousands of kilometers of coastline, deep fjords and inlets, islands of all sizes, and quaint communities dotting all of it, the waterways around Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast should be an easy, natural destination for marine tourists.

Marketing BC's coast as a boating destination with trip planning resources was an untapped opportunity to attract recreational boaters and create benefits in all parts of the region.

With early funding support from ICET, the BC Ocean Boating Tourism Association (BCOBTA) was formed as a regional Economic Destination Marketing Organization to address the gap in marine visitor attraction with AHOY BC – a tourism website that markets BC's coast to recreational boaters.

With early success in marketing the “easy to reach” marine destinations, focus has now shifted to showcase remote regions such as the Broughton Archipelago, the west coast of Vancouver Island and highlight the many remote and small harbour communities to draw visiting boaters.

Harbours, accommodators and other marine-service providers in those communities often struggle with the expense of marketing themselves out of area, so the push from the BCOBTA via the AhoyBC.com website is a key advantage.

“Remote regions are the best-positioned marine sectors for growth,” said Michael McLaughlin, Manager of the BCOBTA. “When boaters visit remote regions their trips are longer,

they replenish their supplies, they explore communities and are exposed to some of the best marine parks and Indigenous tourism attractions.”

Overcoming negative preconceptions about travelling to remote areas has been a key focus of the project. Enhanced profiles for remote communities like Zeballos, Sointula and Bamfield provide colour to the community while directly addressing common concerns.

“One of the biggest struggles in attracting boaters to remote regions is overcoming those false preconceptions about weather, safety and lack of harbours with available supplies,” said McLaughlin. “The website profiles help to address those concerns by providing clear information, maps, charts, recommendations and more.”

By addressing those perceptions and concerns head-on, McLaughlin is anticipating increased numbers of marine tourists in the remote sub-regions, with a corresponding lift in length of trips and daily spending.

Large yachts are also one of the key sectors being targeted, as they are best-suited for the longer journeys to the distant regions. Those larger boats also come with larger needs, and consequently, the economic impact is also larger.

Those service purchases - ranging from refits to accommodations to fuel, supplies and more - have a significant impact in those small, remote communities.

“Single large vessels can spend thousands of dollars per day,” said McLaughlin. With

a goal of an additional 100 large yachts per year by 2020, the impact could reach an additional \$5M.

But large yachts aren't the only target the BCOBTA looking at. Within a three-day drive of the south coast, there are more than 1 million trailered boats. Attracting just 0.1% of that market would yield a 7% increase in spending. And the total revenue anticipated by the BCOBTA is north of \$16M by 2021.

The AHOYBC.com website is a treasure trove of information, from maps to charter information, to detailed descriptions of the anchorages and sites that should be on the wish-list of any boater visiting the region.

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– MICHAEL MCLAUGHLIN
Manager, BCOBTA

