

**Skeena Region**

# **MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT**

**March 2003**



**for Union Passage Marine  
Provincial Park**



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

**Ministry of Water, Land  
and Air Protection  
Environmental Stewardshi  
Division**

# Union Passage Marine Provincial Park Approvals Page

## Forward

This management direction statement for Union Passage Marine Provincial Park provides management direction for a 5-7 year period or until revised. Ongoing consultation between the Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may require changes to this management direction statement.

## Approvals:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Manager  
Skeena Region  
Environmental Stewardship Division

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Environmental Stewardship Division

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# Union Passage Marine Provincial Park Management Direction Statement

## Introduction

### Purpose of the MDS

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, direction statements from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of all these strategies is subject to funding and funding procedures. In addition, all development associated with these strategies within the protected area is subject to the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy.

### Context

The provincial government established Union Passage Marine Provincial Park (Class A) on June 14, 1993 by Order in Council 801/93 under the authority of the *Park Act*. The *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act* provided legislated status to the park boundaries on June 29, 2000. The park covers 978 hectares of upland and 395 hectares of foreshore for a total of 1,373 hectares. It is located in the passage between Pitt Island and Farrant Island at the south end of Grenville Channel 18 kilometres west of Hartley Bay, 98 kilometres southwest of Kitimat and 138 kilometres south of Prince Rupert. Union Passage Marine Provincial Park is within the asserted traditional territory of the Tsimshian First Nations.

Union Passage Marine Provincial Park provides a safe and scenic anchorage for boaters travelling along the Inside Passage. The entry to the passage involves passing through tricky tidal rapids at both ends of the passage; Hawkins Narrows at the northeast end and Peters Narrows on the southern end, which is outside the park. Grenville Channel, where the park is located, is by some accounts the most scenic part of the Inside Passage. The Inside Passage is a special feature of British Columbia's coast and is a scenic corridor that is used by many yachts and cruise ships.

Union Passage Marine Provincial Park is one of a group of marine parks along the Inside Passage and British Columbia's spectacular coast. The Inside Passage marine parks extend from Hakai Conservation Study Area (122,998 hectares) south of Bella Coola, north to Prince Rupert and include the following marine parks: 1) Oliver Cove Marine Provincial Park (74 hectares) on Don Peninsula; 2) Jackson Narrows Marine Provincial Park (71 hectares) on the southeast corner of Roderick Island; 3) Green Inlet Marine Provincial Park (36.5 hectares) on the north side of Green Inlet's terminus; 4) Union Passage Marine Provincial Park (1,373 hectares), 98 kilometres southwest of Kitimat and 138 kilometres south of Prince Rupert; 5) Lowe Inlet Marine Provincial Park (767 hectares), 118 kilometres south of Prince Rupert; and, 6) Klewnuggit Inlet Marine Provincial Park (1,733 hectares). See Figure 1 for the regional distribution of the marine parks. Other protected areas on the north and central coast that complement existing protected areas are recommended in the approved Kalum Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) and in the ongoing Central Coast LRMP. Further sites will be identified through the North Coast LRMP now underway.

## **Marine Provincial Park Attributes**

### **Conservation**

- Conserves a small portion of the moderately represented Hecate Lowlands Ecosection. Currently 4% of this ecosection is included in the protected areas system within 13 protected areas.
- Protects almost 1,000 hectares of the CWHvh2 (Coastal Western Hemlock very wet Hypermaritime subzone, Central variant) biogeoclimatic zone. This variant is well represented in the protected areas system (9.96%).
- Conserves 395 hectares of the poorly represented North Coast Fjords Marine Ecosection. Currently 3.11% of this ecosection is included in the protected areas system.
- Protects a regionally significant, scenic anchorage from development.
- Protects an important fish and wildlife habitat area in the Stewart Creek estuary.
- Protects marine areas of medium importance for waterfowl and of some importance for shorebirds and alcids such as marbled murrelets.
- Protects marine areas of high importance for harbour porpoises, and of medium importance for killer whales, humpback whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins and Dall's porpoises. Harbour seals also frequent these waters.

### **Recreation and Tourism**

- Provides a safe all-weather anchorage site for boaters travelling along the Inside Passage.
- Affords a viewpoint looking out over Grenville Channel from an undeveloped trail along the east side of Farrant Island to a low ridge.
- Offers kayaking, small boating, camping, fishing, SCUBA diving and scenic viewing opportunities.

### **Cultural Heritage**

- Protects two known archaeological sites within the park.

### **Commercial Business Opportunities**

- Provides potential commercial business opportunities for guided interpretation and education boat tour groups based on the special features of this park. This type of business is best developed as part of a systems approach where several provincial parks, protected areas and Crown land areas along the Inside Passage are included to give clients a diverse and interesting program.
- Provides limited commercial business opportunities for guided angling and hunting. Any business proposals involving these consumptive opportunities must be reviewed under the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy to ensure their compatibility with park management objectives. (See Appendix 1 for activities allowed in this park).

### **Significance in the Protected Areas System**

- Conserves various sensitive aquatic habitats including estuaries and the lower reaches of coastal streams.
- Protects a scenic anchorage along the Inside Passage, an internationally significant scenic travel corridor.
- Contributes significantly to a system of marine parks along British Columbia's coast that provides small boaters with reliable anchorages.
- Protects part of the viewscape of a well protected anchorage.

[Click here for Figure 1: Regional Context Map - 1,853 kb pdf](#)

## **Land Uses, Tenures and Interests**

### **Access**

Access is gained by boat and aircraft to Union Passage Marine Provincial Park which is located between Farrant and Pitt islands along British Columbia's Inside Passage. The park is located 18 kilometres west from Hartley Bay, 98 kilometres southwest from Kitimat and 138 kilometres south from Prince Rupert. Nearby marine parks include Lowe Inlet Marine Park, 20 kilometres to the north, and Green Inlet Marine Park 100 kilometres to the south.

### **Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances**

- One Park Use Permit authorizes the use of the park for commercial tourism anchorage purposes.

### **Adjacent Patterns of Land Use**

- Forest harvesting has recently occurred in the area, mostly in western parts of the inlet outside the park. Some evidence exists of timber harvesting inside the park but predating park establishment.
- Commercial fisher operations harvest sea cucumbers in Grenville Channel and Hawkins Narrows at an intense level.

### **First Nations Interests**

Union Passage is within the asserted traditional territory of the Tsimshian First Nation, Kitkatla and Gitga'at (Hartley Bay) bands. The Tsimshian Tribal Council supported park establishment if the following could be accommodated:

- That establishment be non-prejudicial to existing or future land claims;
- That all traditional Tsimshian rights be maintained;
- That the presence of anchor buoys is acceptable;
- That there be no land-based developments at this time; and,
- That any land-based developments should require permission from the appropriate Hereditary Chief(s).

### **Other Agency Interests**

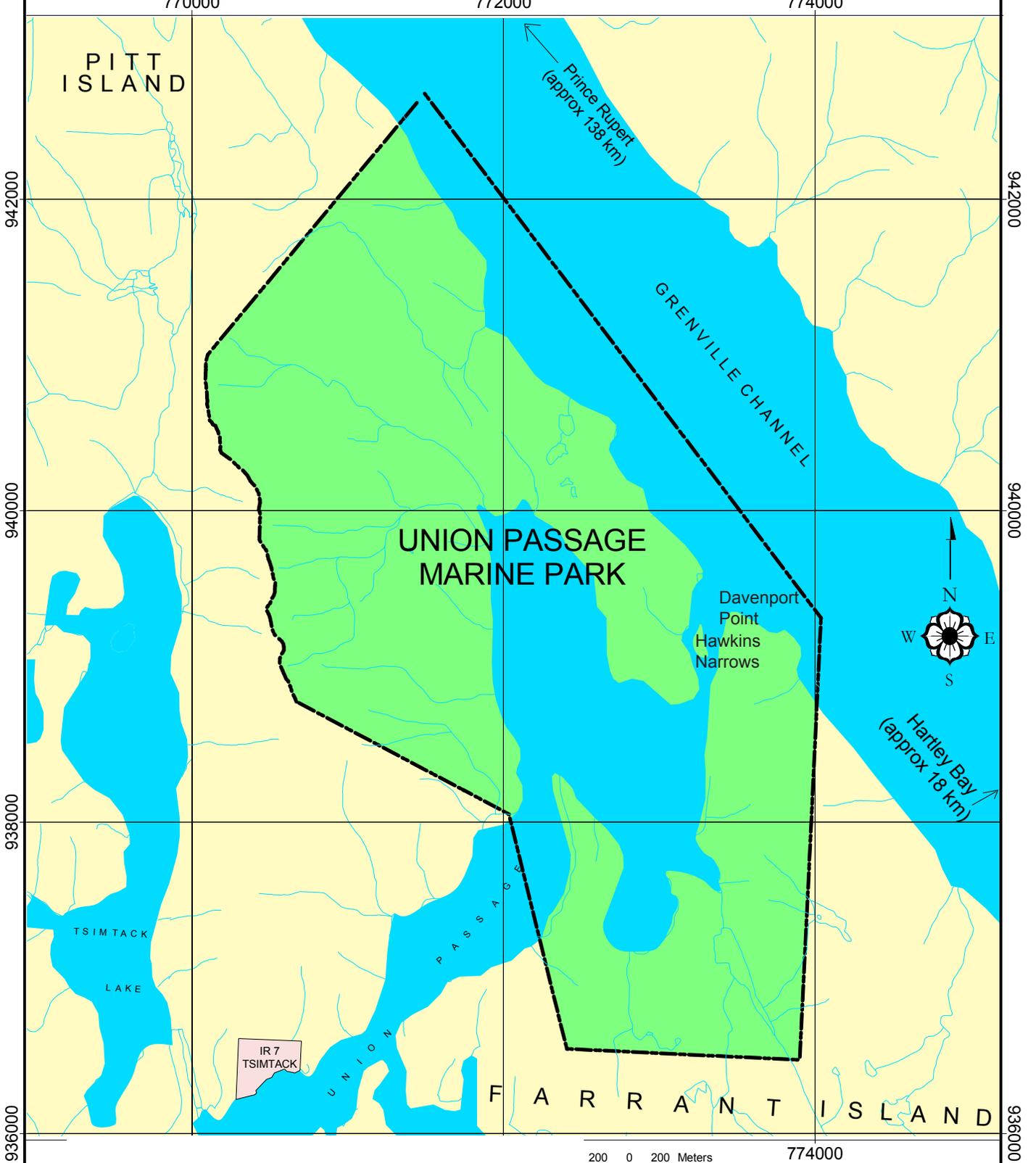
- The Biodiversity Branch and Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection have an interest in the wildlife in the park. The park lies within Wildlife Management Unit 6-11.
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans has an interest in the management of the park's marine areas and the salmon using Stewart Creek.
- The Biodiversity Branch and Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection have an interest in the fishery resource within the estuary on Stewart Creek.
- The Archaeological Planning and Assessment, Registries Department, Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management has an interest in the archaeological values in the park under the auspices of the *Heritage Conservation Act*.
- The park lies within Department of Fisheries and Oceans statistical area sub area 5-24.

### **Private and Public Stakeholder Interests**

- Council of B.C. Yacht Clubs has an interest in the park because of its safe and scenic anchorages.

Figure 2: Tenures and Land Use

Union Passage Marine Park



- |             |                                    |                 |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Minor Roads | Union Passage Marine Park Boundary | Indian Reserve  |
| Major Roads | Cadastral Data/Tenures             | Protected Areas |
| Rail        |                                    |                 |



- Sea Kayaking Association of British Columbia has an interest in the park as a major destination for kayak users.
- Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District is interested in the park because of its tourism benefits.
- Northern British Columbia Tourism Association has an interest in the park because of its value to the tourism industry and the boating public.
- Residents of the north and central coast look to this park as an important boating and outdoor recreation destination.
- Commercial seafood harvesters are interested in Grenville Channel and Hawkins Narrows as a source of fish and other seafood.

## Marine Park Role Statement

Union Passage Marine Provincial Park’s primary role focuses on conserving aquatic habitats associated with the Grenville Pass portion of the North Coast Fjords Marine Ecoregion. To this end, Union Passage Marine Provincial Park is among several marine parks and protected areas along the Inside Passage (e.g. Lowe Inlet, Klewnuggit Inlet and Green Inlet parks are others nearby), that contribute to a system of protected estuarine, intertidal and marine environments. The park also serves a conservation role of protecting upland forested areas and a number of significant archaeological sites. Union Passage Marine Provincial Park fulfills a secondary but highly significant role of protecting a scenic, safe anchorage for small boaters navigating the Inside Passage of British Columbia’s coast. In addition, the park provides opportunities for outdoor recreation activities such as kayaking, hiking, wilderness camping and wildlife viewing.

## Management Commitments and Issues

### Management Direction from Previous Planning

A fisheries information summary and management strategy for the park has indicated that the current information about aquatic life in the park is adequate and that there are presently no concerns or issues that needs attention. There is a fire pre-attack plan in place for Union Passage Marine Provincial Park.

### Management Issues

Theme	Issue
Protecting the park’s ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The park’s flora and fauna are relatively unknown because inventory of these values is incomplete, especially those of Stewart Creek estuary</li> <li>• The park’s ecological integrity may be at risk because of industrial land use activities, such as forest harvesting, on lands adjacent to the park.</li> <li>• The park’s ecological values may be at risk because of a lack of coordination between federal and provincial agencies and within provincial agencies in sharing resource information and in permitting potential incompatible resource use activities (e.g. timing of commercial fisheries).</li> <li>• The park’s coastal location places intertidal and shoreline areas and wildlife dependent on these habitats at risk because of potential pollution from an oil spill.</li> </ul>
Protecting recreational values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The park’s viewscape may be threatened because of potential forest harvesting outside the park’s boundaries</li> <li>• A trail along the east side of Farrant Island leading to a small ridge and viewpoint is unmaintained and may possess safety concerns.</li> </ul>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boaters entering Union Passage may be vulnerable to accidents because of tricky currents, and shallow and narrow channels .</li> <li>Boaters may miss the park and the entrance to Hawkins Narrows because it is narrow and can be difficult to locate.</li> <li>A trail along the east side of Farrant Island leading to a small ridge and viewpoint may possess safety concerns because it is not maintained.</li> </ul>
Protecting cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The park's cultural heritage sites may be at risk because no complete inventory exists of these values .</li> </ul>
Park Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The public often does not know the park exists because the park boundary is not signed and no boundary markers have been deployed.</li> </ul>

## Management Direction

### Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
To protect the park's ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an inventory of flora and fauna with priority focused on Stewart Creek estuary.</li> <li>Ensure that park boundary is marked with signs.</li> <li>Work with other agencies such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) (fisheries issues), the Biodiversity Branch and Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (wildlife and fisheries issues), Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (archaeology issues) and Ministry of Forests (forestry issues) to ensure co-ordination between management agencies and that management activities do not affect the ecological integrity of the park.</li> <li>Ensure Environmental Stewardship Division staff (regional in particular) are aware of their role in the BC Marine Oil Spill Response Plan and the sensitivity ratings of the park's coastline in the Coastal Resources and Oil Spill Response Atlas when the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management completes this mapping for the North Coast.</li> </ul>
To protect the park's recreational values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the review of forest operations plans through the appropriate planning processes to ensure scenic values on lands next to the park are recognized when forest harvesting is proposed.</li> <li>Conduct an assessment of the trail along the east side of Farrant Ridge and consult with local First Nations and other stakeholders to determine if the trail should be upgraded and designated as a formal trail.</li> <li>Evaluate the need for a mooring buoy that will serve to reduce environmental damage to aquatic life and water quality and allow safe boat anchoring.</li> </ul>
To ensure the park is safe for public use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a Northern Inside Passage brochure that provides accurate information to the public on the tidal currents, and the shallow and narrow channels that allow boat access to the park.</li> <li>Install an information sign at the entrance to Hawkins Narrows advising the public about Union Passage Marine Provincial Park.</li> </ul>
To protect the park's cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and collect information on cultural heritage values</li> </ul>
To protect First Nations values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with the Gitga'at and Kitkatla First Nations and the Tsimshian Tribal Council as issues require .</li> </ul>

Objective	Strategy
To provide information to park visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform visitors to the area of Union Passage Marine Provincial Park by placing appropriate signs in the park.</li> <li>• Update the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection’s official website with current information about the park.</li> <li>• Develop an Environmental Stewardship Division electronic and paper brochure highlighting the British Columbia marine provincial park system for the Inside Passage. Emphasize the conservation role as well as the recreation role in this document.</li> </ul>

## Consultation and Future Planning

The Environmental Stewardship Division will consult with Tsimshian First Nations and local stakeholders regarding management of this park. The Environmental Stewardship Division will provide this management direction statement to the Ministry of Forests for their consideration when forest harvesting is proposed on lands next to the park. The priority for preparing a full management plan for Union Passage Marine Provincial Park is ranked as low. This management direction statement will be reviewed and revised, if necessary, in five to seven years time.

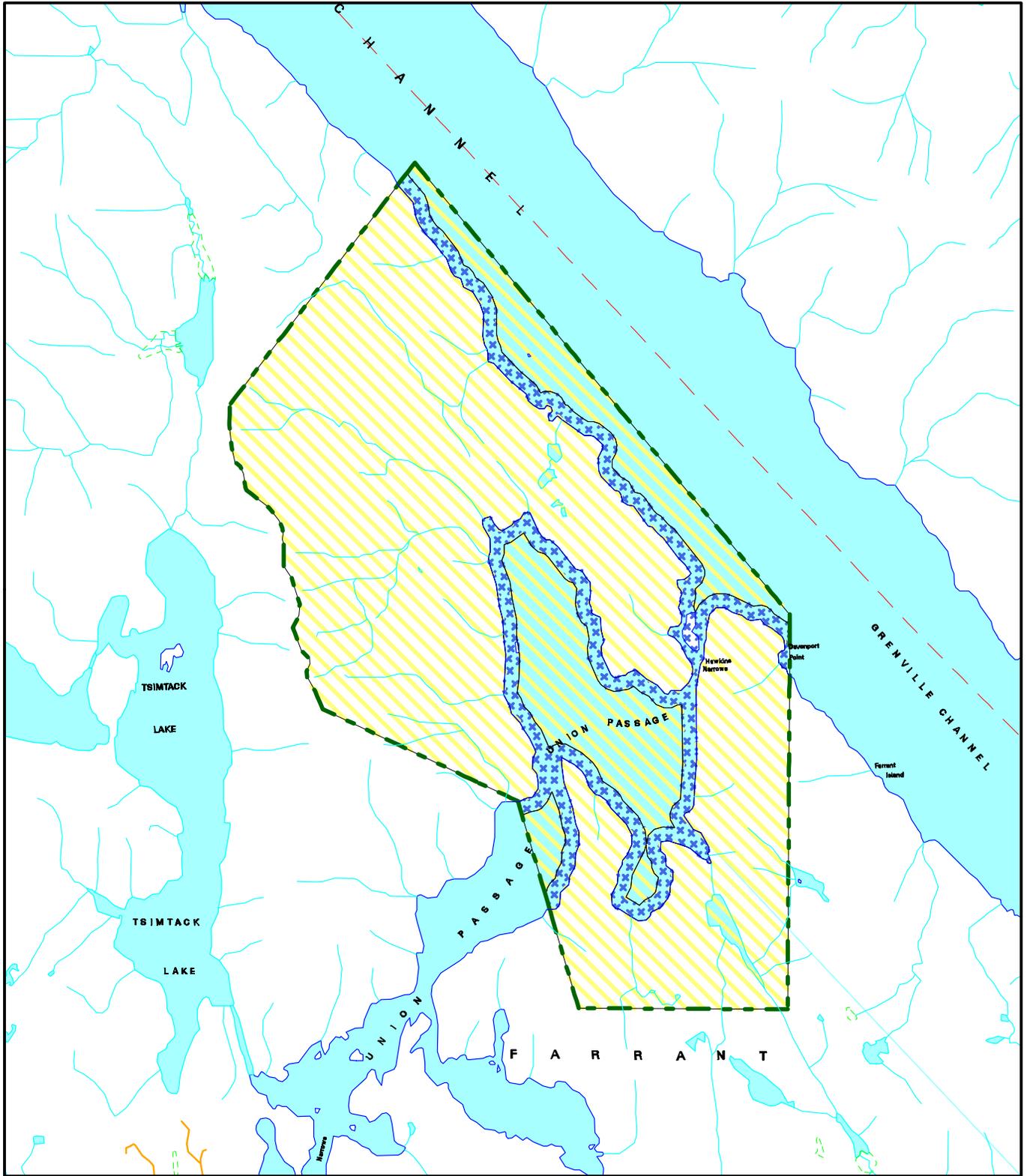
## Zoning Plan

The park’s land above the ocean’s natural boundary is defined as Natural Environment Zone with an emphasis on protecting the park’s natural and outdoor recreation values, including the viewscape from the anchorage. The Natural Environment Zone covers 978 hectares of upland.

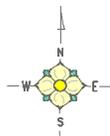
Special Feature Zone applies to the entire foreshore area within the park. This zone ensures protection of the rich estuarine and intertidal environments in the park through the application of more stringent regulations and policies. The Special Feature Zone covers 395 hectares of foreshore. (See Figure 3 for distribution of the zones).

Figure 3: Zoning

Union Passage Marine Park



Projection: UTM Zone 9  
Datum: NAD83



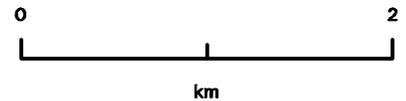
Natural Environment



Special Feature



Protected Area Boundary



Produced in Jan 2003 for Ministry  
of Water, Land and Air Protection

This is a visual representation  
only and should not be used for  
legal purposes.

**Appendix 1. Union Passage Marine Provincial Park  
Table of Acceptable Uses, Activities and Facilities.**

<b>Activity/Use/Facility</b>	<b>Acceptability</b>
Aboriginal traditional uses	Y
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	N
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	Y
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N/A
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N/A
Ski Hills	N/A
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	Y
Backcountry Huts	M
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N
Road Access	N
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorized Water Access	Y
Aircraft Access	Y
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	M
Fire Management (prevention)	M
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1
Noxious Weed Control	N1
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	N1
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N/A= not applicable

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed