

Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association



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PHARA Volunteers Clean Up Ghost Gear in Pender Harbour

From March 19th to 21st, the Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association (PHARA), in collaboration with SeaWolf Diving and their seven-person crew, successfully retrieved 2,384 pounds of abandoned nets (also known as ghost gear), tires, Styrofoam, rope, batteries, and other pollutants from the waters of Pender Harbour. These items were unloaded at the future site of the Pender Ocean Discovery Centre at Irvines Landing (thanks PODS!), then cleaned, sorted, weighed, and bagged by PHARA volunteers and staff from the Ocean Legacy Foundation. The recyclables were loaded into a 30-yard bin from Salish Soils and transported to Ocean Legacy's Richmond recycling depot. Approximately five percent of the total materials, which were not recyclable, were taken to the Sechelt landfill.

The retrieved materials had been abandoned on the ocean floor many years ago, primarily at a time when there was much less concern for our environment. However, our attitudes have changed in recent years, and the increasing presence of whales, dolphins, herring, and other sea life in our harbour indicates improving environmental conditions.

On the 19th and 20th, the PHARA food crew provided delicious meals, including morning snacks, hot lunches, drinks, and desserts. Special thanks to Gail Paton and Sheila Scoular for their tureens of chili and stew. Suzanne Yuile provided drinks and extras. Thanks to Kim Allinson and Val Morrison for their delicious baked goods. All food was prepared and donated by the cooks. Suzanne Yuile and Sage Robson did an outstanding job of support and food organization. Additionally, special thanks to Matt McDonald, store manager of our local IGA, for providing trays of sandwiches. The PHARA team worked seamlessly to ensure no one left without a full stomach. The labor crew included PHARA members Ron Badley, Al Donor, Doug Hardwick, Doug Le Patourel, Richard Paton, and Peter Robson—with all of us ending up covered in muck from lifting, sorting, and pressure washing the nets. Thanks to Ray Des Harnais who let us use his water and to Bonniebrook Industries for their donation of a portable toilet.

The idea for this cleanup initiative was born several years ago but could not proceed without approval from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and their associated paperwork, which required SeaWolf Diving to first survey the net sites, document their locations, and take photographs.

Specific protocols dictated the use of commercial divers following all WorkSafe procedures and having all necessary insurance in place. Many thanks to Rob Alliston, owner of SeaWolf Diving, whose company volunteered its services for the ocean cleanup project. All paperwork went through the Ocean Legacy Foundation, which did an excellent job of managing the complex government documentation.

Your association is committed to improving the ocean ecosystem of the Pender Harbour area. This project demonstrates that residents are taking tangible steps to enhance the harbour environment. In addition to ocean cleanup efforts, PHARA is involved in other programs such as removing derelict vessels and cleaning up illegally dumped trash and vehicles from our backwoods. PHARA aims to continue backwoods and ocean cleanups on an ongoing basis. For more information, visit phara.ca, seawolfdiving.ca and oceanlegacy.ca.