

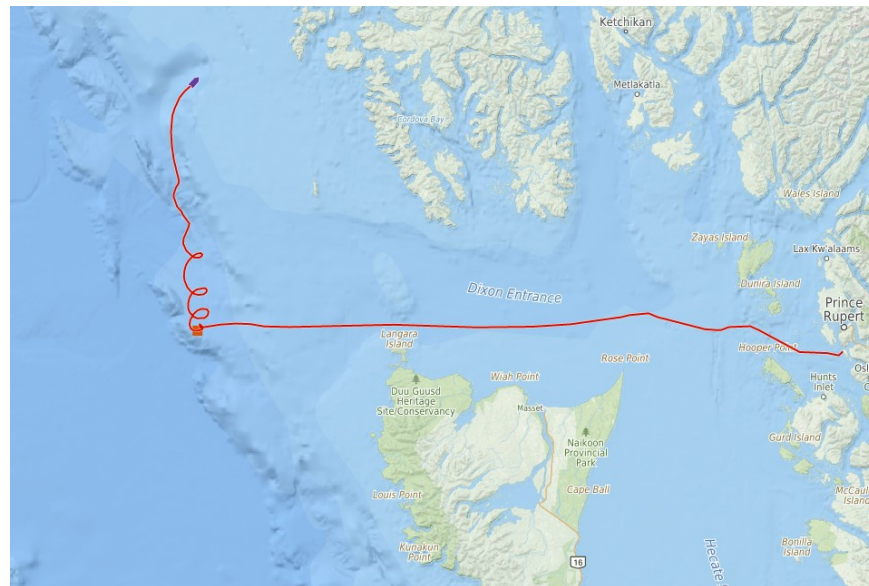
Places of Refuge on [Xaayda Gwaay.yaay](#) • [Xaadaa Gwaay](#)

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Written by Rhea Botel

Imagine it is a dark night on the waters surrounding [Xaayda Gwaay.yaay](#) • [Xaadaa Gwaay](#) *Haida Gwaii*. You and your crew are onboard a bulk carrier chartered to travel from [Kxeen Prince Rupert](#) to South Korea, carrying nearly 80,000 tons of petroleum coke, a byproduct produced in the refinement of crude oil. You are roughly 40 nautical miles offshore when the ship suddenly loses partial power. Eventually, you lose all use of the engine and are now adrift, at the mercy of the currents, and at a high risk of running aground.

This scenario is not a far-fetched hypothetical. It is exactly what happened on July 8th, 2022, when the *Darya Shanti* lost propulsion 40 nautical miles northwest of [K'iis Gwaay Langara Island](#). Due to its close proximity to international shipping routes, [Xaayda Gwaay.yaay](#) • [Xaadaa Gwaay](#) is particularly vulnerable to the potential impacts of adrift vessels. Thankfully, there are plans in place to protect our island and surrounding areas from the environmental devastation that would occur if a large ship were to run aground.



This image, taken from the Enhanced Maritime Situational Awareness System (EMSA), depicts the *Darya Shanti's* path from when it first began drifting on July 5th, to when it was towed to [Kxeen Prince Rupert](#) on July 10th, 2022.

The Places of Refuge Contingency Plan is one key component in Haida Gwaii's preparedness plan. A Place of Refuge is a pre-surveyed and pre-identified area where ships may request to temporarily take shelter in the event of a non-life-threatening emergency, such as an engine failure. The goal of these potential Places of Refuge is to provide ships with an area of mitigated grounding risk where they can take shelter until help, such as an emergency towing vessel, can respond.

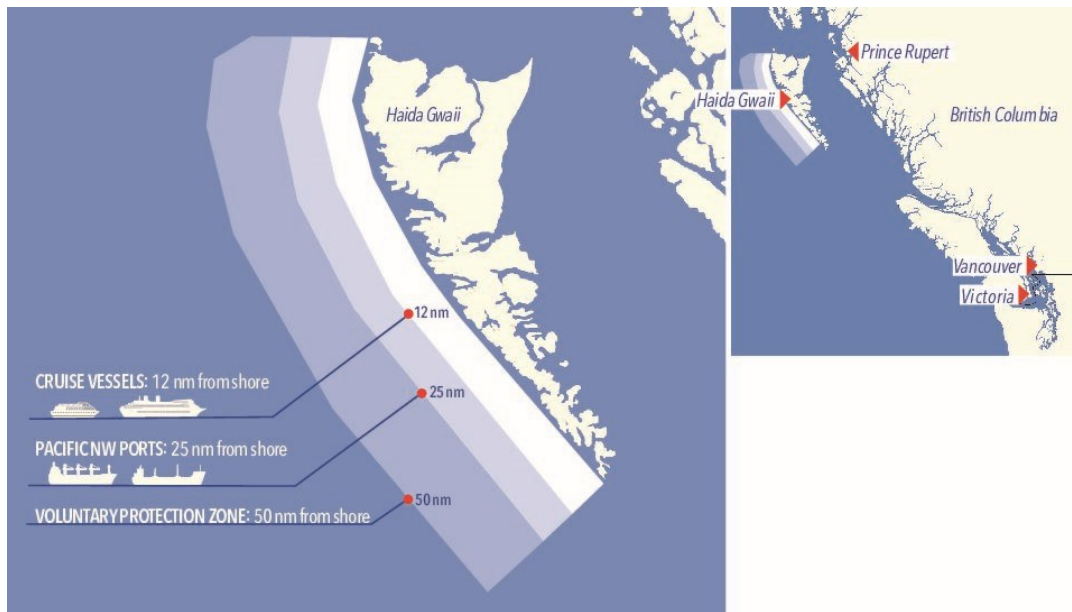
In order for a ship to be granted a Place of Refuge in [Xaayda Gwaay.yaay](#) • [Xaadaa Gwaay](#), the vessel must first make a distress call, describing the emergency that necessitates a Place of Refuge. This initiates a multi-step process in which the Council of the Haida Nation (CHN), Transport Canada, and the Canadian Coast Guard work collaboratively to assess the risk and determine the most suitable Place of Refuge. Monitoring plays an important role in the implementation of the Contingency Plan. CHN has designated analysts who monitor vessel traffic using the Enhanced Maritime Situational Awareness System (EMSA), and may notice an adrift vessel before even receiving a distress call. This type of early notification can aid in the efficient execution of the multi-step process that must occur in order for a vessel to be granted a Place of Refuge.

Potential Places of Refuge surrounding [Xaayda Gwaay.yaay](#) • [Xaadaa Gwaay](#) were pre-surveyed by the CHN and Transport Canada in 2016, with the following factors taken into consideration: available logistics support, environmental and cultural sensitivities, commercial uses of land and water, and navigational challenges. Once identified, additional measures were put into place to ensure the protection of potential Places of Refuge. These include baseline monitoring, which will allow any potential impacts to be measured and addressed, as well as Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) that have been developed for each specific Place of Refuge.



Shaun Edgars, GRS Coordinator, is developing Geographic Response Strategies - tactical plans that can be implemented to prevent oil from reaching shorelines. (PC Hannah Bregulla)

At the end of the day, CHN's primary goal is the prevention of shipping incidents. In September of 2020, CHN implemented the [Voluntary Protection Zone \(VPZ\)](#), which is a preventative measure that ensures vessels stay further offshore, allowing more time for emergency towing vessels to reach them in the case of an emergency. The Places of Refuge Contingency Plan is an additional step in keeping [Xaayda Gwaay.yaay • Xaadaa Gwaay](#) and its surrounding waters safe from the unwanted impacts of marine shipping.



The Voluntary Protection Zone is a preventative measure that ensures large vessels stay further offshore. The increased distance offshore gives an emergency towing vessel more time to get to a drifting ship.