



# MEDIA RELEASE

Le Comité sénatorial permanent des pêches et des océans

*For immediate release*

## **SENATE FISHERIES COMMITTEE HEARS URGENT PLEA TO PROTECT UNIQUE BC MARINE LEGACY: THE PLANET'S ONLY KNOWN LIVING GLASS SPONGE REEFS**

**Ottawa, Thursday, November 23, 2006** - The Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans was told of a lost marine "Jurassic Park" off the coast of BC on Tuesday.

Sabine Jessen, Conservation Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) BC Chapter, and Dr. Manfred Krautter of the University of Stuttgart Institute for Geology and Paleontology briefed the Committee on the unique nature and importance of Glass Sponge Reefs found exclusively in the Strait of Georgia and Hecate Strait marine waters. Discovered in 1988, these living reefs were thought to be extinct and finding them is akin to finding a herd of dinosaurs around the Alberta Badlands.

CPAWS is calling for more research and a protection strategy for the Glass Sponge Reefs that includes the establishment of buffer zones, expanded trawl closures and Marine Protected status under the *Oceans Act*. The society is also calling for a long-term, comprehensive oceans plan for Canada. CPAWS recommended to the Committee that Canada look to other countries such as Australia, which has increased Marine Protected Areas and committed \$80 million annually for oceans management activity.

Concerned by repeated witness testimony that Canada is no longer considered in the forefront of thinking on oceans management and marine science, Committee Deputy Chair Janis G. Johnson said, "Glass Sponge Reefs are a perfect example of where Canada can do more research on habitat. They are unique in the world and our government needs to commit itself to preserving these ocean environments."

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