



## Howe Sound Lifeboat – 30 Years of Rescue Service

Rescue vessel *RCM-SAR 1B* was built by Zodiac Hurricane in 1986, with a fiberglass hull and an open deck. She was one of the very last Mark VII RHIBs built by Zodiac. Originally she looked very much like this:



Named the *Spirit of Sooke*, she was owned and operated by the Coast Guard Auxiliary Unit 37 out of Sooke. In 1990 the fiberglass hull was cracked and replaced by an aluminum hull, built by Silverstreak. This company was more used to building aluminum trailers than boats and decided to play it safe by using aluminum plates as thick as the original fiberglass for the new hull. This likely makes *RCM-SAR 1B* the strongest boat in the RCM-SAR fleet. The current “phone booth” cabin was also added at that time, with seating benches and seatbelts for six crew – the Sooke team felt that the long rescue missions in the Juan de Fuca Strait would be more comfortable with seats.

Some years later the Sooke unit got involved in a friendly race around Vancouver Island with their counterparts of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary. The latter brought a true racing boat to the competition,

and *Spirit of Sooke* lost out badly. This prompted the Sooke unit to move on to a new, faster boat – something alike to what could be seen in *Baywatch* on TV at the time.



Station 1 in West Vancouver took this opportunity to purchase *Spirit of Sooke* in 1998 for the princely sum of \$15,000 and changed her name to *Howe Sound Lifeboat*. The boat was extended a few feet by adding the engine pod to the stern, the seats were removed and the rear console added as the Station 1 team decided that the choppy conditions in Howe Sound were better handled when standing in the cabin, rather than sitting.

The purchase of the *Howe Sound Lifeboat* was a huge step up for Station 1, which had been operating a smaller open Boston Whaler until that time, similar to the unit in the picture below. The unit's new boat came with modern comforts such as a roof, a small heater and a proper windshield, and was much faster and more sea kindly than the old Whaler.



She became known as *Auxiliary 1* and performed well over 500 rescues in our local waters, helping save innumerable lives and vessels. She handles exceptionally well in all weather and has withstood winds of 80 knots and furious seas on some of the more intense rescue missions. She typically had a crew of three or four, and covered most of Howe Sound, English Bay and a large section of the Strait of Georgia. Some missions were so lengthy that crew members would at times take a nap in the rescue stretcher.



As the volume of rescue calls kept increasing year after year, Station 1 helped design and eventually purchased the much larger Type II *Craig Rea Spirit* vessel in 2012, at which point the *Howe Sound Lifeboat* became the back-up boat for the station. At about the same time the CCGA rebranded to RCM-SAR, and she became known as *RCM-SAR 1B*.



As *1B* is approaching her 30th birthday she's ready to retire from active duty, to be replaced by a new Type I vessel that conforms to the current safety standards and operational needs of Station 1. We expect to put our new vessel in service in July. She will be moored at the Government Dock in Horseshoe Bay, alongside our primary Type II vessel.



## ***Howe Sound Lifeboat – Key Data***

Length: 27'0"    Beam: 9'11"    Draft: 3'0"

Height: 9'0" to top of anchor light, 16'0" to the top of highest VHF aerial

Power plant: Twin Mercury Verado 200hp four stroke outboard engines

Fuel capacity: 360 litres aft, 190 litres forward, total 550 litres

Cruise speed: 25 knots    Max speed: 38 knots

Range: Approximately 5 hours or 170 nautical miles at 34 knots

Crew: 3 to 4



**ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE  
SEARCH & RESCUE**

*Saving Lives on the Water*

Station 1 • West Vancouver