

CANADA-USA MARITIME BOUNDARY ISSUES

While the judgement, in October 1984, of a Chamber of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) fixed a single maritime boundary between Canada and the United States in a large portion of the Gulf of Maine area, several maritime boundaries remain unsettled between the two countries.

Gulf of Maine - Landward and Seaward Extensions

Under the terms of the agreement submitting the Gulf of Maine maritime boundary dispute to a Chamber of the ICJ, the Chamber was to fix the single maritime boundary seaward from a point 39 nautical miles from the terminus of the land boundary. The reason for not having the Chamber rule on the maritime boundary landward from this point related largely to the dispute over Machias Seal Island, which is claimed by both countries. The eventual seaward extension of the continental shelf dividing line will also have to be agreed in due course.

Strait of Juan de Fuca

The international boundary inside the Strait was fixed in the last century and is not the subject of dispute.

There is no agreement between Canada and the United States regarding the extension of the maritime boundary seaward of the Strait. The United States position has been to espouse equidistance, using a line drawn by reference to coastal sinuosities.

Dixon Entrance

Inside the Entrance, the Canadian position is that the "A-B Line", established by the 1903 Alaska Boundary Tribunal, is the international boundary with respect to both land and sea. The Americans, who earlier claimed a three-mile territorial sea and a nine-mile contiguous fishing zone in the area, now maintain that the maritime boundary should follow a median line, more or less equally dividing the waters inside the Entrance between Canada and the United States.

There is no agreement between Canada and the United States regarding the extension of the maritime boundary seaward of the Dixon Entrance. The United States position has been to espouse equidistance.