

From: April Steele <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, May 24, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Executive Admin
Subject: The role of the Islands Trust

May 24, 2021

To the Islands Trust Executive, Trust Council and All Trustees:

As a resident of Gabriola, I request that the Trust Council and the Trustees think very carefully about how they are proceeding with the review of the Trust Policy Statement (TPS). This document is critical to protecting our precious island ecosystems. The Gulf Islands are currently under great pressure from development according to the recent Trust press release and island residents observe this with alarm.

The inclination of a majority of Trustees in the current TPS review process to give community needs such as housing and transportation the same importance as the protection of the environment due to strident community lobbies is a grievous error. This approach will inevitably result in disaster for the environment as there will always be ways to justify our destructive human footprint on the land and water if human needs are considered to be of equal importance.

Satisfying human needs was never the mandate of the Trust at its inception and there is even more onus on the Trust now with the declared climate crisis to stand up for the environment above all.

You heard from the islanders in the public engagement process Islands 2050. And yet their overall and overwhelming concern for the environment and the rural nature of the islands is not being heard it appears by many Trustees, as reflected in the motions that were voted on at the last Trust Council meeting in March where the efforts of Pender Trustee Wright and Denman Trustee Critchley's motions to reaffirm that the paramount object of the Islands Trust Act is preservation and protection of the natural environment were defeated.

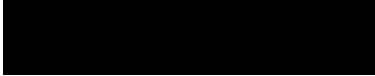
Without this affirmation, present and future Trustees will not have any firm ground to stand on when it comes to land use decisions. We are already witnessing this on Gabriola where little discussion or examination of environmental impact accompanies rezoning for higher density. We know this to be the case on other islands as well.

Extreme caution must be exercised when it comes to forests, water resources, wetlands, wildlife habitat, wildfire risk etc. on our islands. And Trustees must be given clear Trust Policy Directives to guide their decision-making. That should be the primary focus of this Policy Statement Review, not muddying the waters with inclusion of "community needs, healthy communities, inclusivity" and so on. Promoting residential land use and solving social problems is NOT the legislated object of the Trust. Surely we have learned that human need will always overwhelm the environment's ability to support it.

Prior to the upcoming June Trust Council meeting, we ask all Trustees to carefully reflect on the charge they have before them in the review of the ITPS. It is “to preserve and protect the Trust area and its unique amenities and the environment” above all else. We ask you to not allow a few strong but misguided voices among you and within your constituents to distract you from this mandate. The future of the Trust area depends on you.

Sincerely,

April Steele



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