

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, January 3, 2026 9:20 AM
To: Islands2050
Subject: Islands Trust draft Policy Statement

To the Islands Trust:

The Islands Trust's purpose is to "preserve and protect the Islands Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment against unrestrained growth and development." Everyone understands that it is hobbled in this task because it has not been given some of the authority required to ensure that it can do this work. But that does not mean that it can do nothing.

The draft of the policy review statement circulated in 2022 offered welcome improvements that acknowledged practical limitations but also clearly outlined the need for increased ecological protection and made it clear that the Trust would advocate for it.

I am very disappointed that in the current draft, many of these improvements have been removed or watered down. It seems that the intent is to limit advocacy for ecological protection and make statements of principle so vague as to be meaningless. This is a significant step backwards.

Specifically, I draw your attention to a few items:

Advocacy

The 2022 document replaced the previously used word "encourage" with "advocate," implying a more focused and intentional approach to ecological protection, while still recognizing practical limitations. A search of the new document shows that the word "advocate" has been entirely removed. For that matter, there are only 3 examples of the use of the word "encourage." I can only conclude that the Trust has decided that advocacy—for increased powers, or for the ecological protection mechanisms—is not part of what it should be doing, and that is something I strongly disagree with.

Your document "aspires to reflect the values and interests of island communities, Indigenous Governing Bodies and Indigenous Peoples, partner agencies, and all British Columbians, as well as the silent voices of island ecosystems, species at risk, and future generations." How exactly are you doing this if you do not advocate for these interests?

Forest Stewardship

The 2022 document recognized the importance of protecting forest ecosystems, and included a commitment to seek more authority over forest harvesting and tree cutting. This has all disappeared.

Clear-cutting forests is entirely inappropriate in the Trust area, and even small-scale tree cutting can have serious, adverse effects on ecological integrity. The Trust may not currently have authority to do much about it, but pointing out the problem and advocating for that authority is something that you definitely should be doing. These are issues that are fundamental to protection and recognizing them is an essential part of your mandate.

Forest ecosystem preserves

The 2022 draft included a directive policy (4.3.8) that stated, “Local Trust Committees and Island Municipalities shall, in their Official Community Plans and regulatory bylaws, designate protected forest ecosystem reserves where the preservation of native biodiversity and corridors is especially critical and where there should be no extraction.”

This has been replaced by policy 3.3.1, “Identify, establish, and sustain a network of protected areas of sufficient size and distribution to preserve the environmental integrity of ecosystems in their planning area.”

The previous policy, in my opinion, is much stronger, because it clarifies that extraction must be prohibited in some areas, and that there is a need for biodiversity and corridors—it is much easier to weasel out of meaningful action when you only make general statements of intent that don’t indicate how areas should be protected or include the context for making decisions.

Finally

I understand that this is a document that provides general guidance, but words matter. The 2022 draft provided detailed and action-focused language that clearly indicated areas in which the Trust would be active. This has been replaced by short, generic statements of general principles (preserve and protect) but offer nothing of substance in terms of detail. When a policy states only vague principles without addressing their application, those policies are essentially meaningless and can easily be used as a mechanism for “greenwashing” inaction.

I do recognize that the Trust operates under limitations, and that there are many things that it does not have authority over. That does not mean that it should make itself

supine when faced with pressures in favour of development interests. It has an obligation, clearly derived from its mandate, to advocate for better protection.

I ask that you revisit this draft and that you actually pay attention to that mandate when you reformulate it.

- **Please reinstate advocacy for ecological protection as part of your mandate.**
- **Please reinstate the commitment to advocating for limited, small scale forest harvesting and the regulation of tree cutting on private lands.**

Regards,
Nola Johnston



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