

From: Valdes Island Conservancy <valdesconservancy@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 23, 2026 4:09 PM
To: Islands2050
Cc: Valdes Island Conservancy
Subject: Response from Valdes Island Conservancy re: IT Draft Policy Statement
Attachments: FINAL response to Islands Trust Policy Statement_VIC.pdf



Please see the Valdes Island Conservancy's response to the Islands Trust Policy Statement.

We appreciated the opportunity to comment and hope that our concerns are considered and addressed.

Sincerely,

Marja

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February 23, 2026

Islands Trust Council

islands2050@islandstrust.bc.ca

Re: Valdes Island Conservancy Response to Draft Islands Trust Policy Statement

Dear Members of Islands Trust Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Islands Trust Policy Statement (TPS).

The Valdes Island Conservancy (“the Conservancy”) is a volunteer, non-profit organization representing recreational property owners and leasees on Valdes Island. We have no land base and no statutory authority. Our role is to ensure that the ecological sensitivity and structural realities of Valdes Island are properly understood and reflected in planning policy.

The Conservancy does not take positions on Goals 1 and 2 of the Islands Trust Policy. We respect reconciliation processes and limit our comments to land use, environmental stewardship, governance, and policy applicability as they relate to Valdes Island.

Valdes Island differs in several important respects from many other Islands Trust planning areas. The majority of the island consists of Crown land, Indian Reserve, Provincial Park, and privately managed forest land. A relatively small portion comprises privately owned recreational cottage lots. There are no public roads, no electrical grid, no municipal water or wastewater systems, and no public marine infrastructure. Access is by private boat, and freshwater is primarily supplied through individual rainwater catchment systems. Occupancy is largely seasonal and recreational.

Valdes falls within the jurisdiction of the Thetis Island Local Trust Committee, and property owners and leasees are geographically dispersed across British Columbia, Alberta, and internationally. As a result, participation in traditional meeting formats can be challenging. As the Draft TPS moves toward implementation, we encourage clear recognition of these structural conditions and consideration of engagement approaches that ensure Valdes stakeholders are effectively included when matters specific to the island arise.

Response to Draft Policy Statement Goals

Goal 3 – Preserve and Protect Healthy and Biodiverse Ecosystems

Valdes Island is largely intact ecologically, but the Draft TPS relies heavily on zoning-based tools to achieve ecosystem protection. On Valdes, most of the land base is Crown, Indian Reserve, Provincial Park, or private forest tenure — outside Islands Trust regulatory authority.

The TPS does not adequately address how ecosystem integrity is to be maintained on tenure-complex islands where local zoning applies only to a small fraction of the land base.

Further, while sensitive ecosystems are identified, the policy framework remains high-level and largely aspirational. It does not establish measurable ecological thresholds, climate-adjusted standards, or clear cumulative-effects triggers.

Specific scientific gaps include:

- No clear linkage between sea-level rise projections and enforceable shoreline setbacks.
- No operational standards for coastal erosion under increasing storm intensity.
- No requirement for precautionary riparian buffer application where headwater or ephemeral streams are unmapped.
- No climate-resilience metrics for forest health under increased drought and wildfire risk.
- No integration of watershed-to-nearshore connectivity in marine ecosystem protection.

On islands such as Valdes, ecological change will be driven more by climate stress, forestry activity, and shoreline processes than by cottage lot zoning. The TPS does not sufficiently account for this.

More consideration is required for islands where ecological integrity depends on factors largely outside Islands Trust's direct land use authority.

Goal 4 – Foster Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Communities

Goal 4 assumes the presence of infrastructure, services, and permanent population centres.

Valdes Island has none.

Policies encouraging increased density, clustered dwellings, housing diversity, transportation networks, and community facilities are structurally inapplicable to a boat-access-only, infrastructure-absent, seasonal island.

The TPS does not clearly differentiate between:

- Serviced residential communities, and
- Seasonal, recreational islands with no infrastructure capacity.

Without differentiation, housing and growth language risks being applied inappropriately.

In addition, climate-related risks, including wildfire, prolonged drought, and emergency access constraints, are heightened on islands without road networks or services. The TPS does not meaningfully analyze resilience in the context of islands that cannot rely on conventional emergency response infrastructure.

More consideration is required for islands that do not fit the serviced residential model assumed throughout Goal 4.

Goal 5 – Foster Sustainable Stewardship of Lands and Waters

Freshwater resources

Directive 3.5.1 addresses density increases where freshwater is inadequate. However, the TPS does not explicitly recognize rainwater-dependent islands as a distinct category.

On Valdes:

- Freshwater is primarily roof-catchment based.

- There is no centralized storage or aquifer management.
- Climate projections indicate increased summer drought.

The TPS does not require climate-adjusted water availability modeling. “Adequate supply” is not defined against projected future drought conditions.

For rainwater-dependent islands, freshwater constraints are absolute. The policy language does not reflect that distinction.

Forest Resources

The TPS references fragmentation and wildfire risk, but does not integrate forward-looking climate stressors such as:

- Increased drought-driven forest decline.
- Pest vulnerability.
- Intensified wildfire exposure.

Further, forest tenure lands dominate Valdes. The ecological interface between private forest operations and small recreational enclaves is not addressed in any meaningful way.

On tenure-complex islands, sustainable stewardship cannot be evaluated solely through residential parcel size or zoning tools.

Marine Resources

Marine policies address eelgrass, kelp forests, and soft shoreline protections. However:

- No quantitative setback standards are tied to sea-level rise projections.
- No operational erosion thresholds are identified.
- No acknowledgment is made of anchor scour impacts in shallow eelgrass systems.
- No integrated watershed-to-marine sediment management approach is articulated.

On islands where shoreline processes and nearshore ecosystems define ecological integrity, general policy statements are insufficient.

Conclusion

Valdes Island does not fit the conventional residential planning model reflected throughout the Draft TPS. It is tenure-complex, infrastructure-absent, rainwater-dependent, climate-exposed, and largely outside direct Islands Trust regulatory control. Without clearer differentiation and stronger scientific grounding, the policy risks being either inapplicable or misapplied to islands such as Valdes. We respectfully request that these structural realities be explicitly considered as the TPS moves toward finalization and implementation.

Respectfully submitted,

Valdes Island Conservancy Board