

DATE OF MEETING: July 16, 2026

TO: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

FROM: Narissa Chadwick, Island Planner
Southern Team

COPY: Stephen Baugh, Island Planner; Renee Jamurat, Regional Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Gabriola Official Community Plan Review – Phase 4 Changes, Engagement, 2027-2028 Business Case for Approval

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the revised Gabriola Island Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw Review Project Charter dated July 2026, Version 8.
2. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the changes to the Gabriola Official Community Plan Phase 4 Communication and Engagement Plan, as discussed at the July 16, 2026 Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee meeting.
3. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the changes to the Draft Gabriola Official Community Plan prior to 1st reading, as discussed at the July 16, 2026 Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee meeting.
4. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff schedule an electronic special Local Trust Committee business meeting to review input from the community on the Draft Official Community Plan, prior to first reading of the bylaw.
5. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee receive the Freshwater Footprint Briefing and Frequently Asked Questions document provided by the Senior Freshwater Specialist.
6. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee approve the 2027/28 Business Case supporting the completion of the Gabriola Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw Review project.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report supports the momentum of Phase 4 of the Gabriola OCP and LUB Review Project. It provides:

- A review, discussion and some proposed policy options to address some of the concerns and issues that have arisen through the review of the draft OCP by Trustees and staff.
- A revised Phase 4 communications and engagement plan.

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- A Land Use Bylaw consistency table
- A revised project charter
- Freshwater footprint briefing including Q&A
- A draft 2027/28 business case to support the completion of the project.

BACKGROUND

Gabriola Island Official Community Plan Review Timeline



The Gabriola OCP and LUB review project began in 2023. It has moved through three phases involving many public engagement activities.

- **Phase 1** focussed on community visioning through in person engagement and surveys.
- **Phase 2** focussed on public engagement around key policy areas and included a number of focus groups as well as broader public engagement.
- **Phase 3** focussed on bylaw writing.

The results of these phases can be found on the Gabriola OCP project webpage.

<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/island-planning/gabriola/projects/>.

Phase 4 of the Gabriola OCP and LUB review project, the current phase, focuses on the review of the draft OCP bylaws, the creation of a DAI bylaw and updates to the LUB for consistency with the new OCP policies.

At the May 26, 2026 LTC meeting:

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED**

that the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee amend the Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw Review Project Charter March 26 version 7 to change first reading to September, 2026.

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED**

that the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the revised Project Charter as amended on May 21, 2026 for the Gabriola Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw project.

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED**

that the Gabriola Local Trust Committee request staff to work with Snuneymuxw First Nation staff to develop a more focussed acknowledgment of Snuneymuxw First Nation connection to Gabriola Island in section 1.2.2 prior to sending the Official Community Plan out for referral.

In the evening following the May LTC meeting a community meeting was held to introduce the draft OCP and answer questions from the public.

DISCUSSION

Revised Project Charter:

Following the direction of the LTC at the May 2026 meeting, staff have revised the project charter (Attachment 1) to reflect first reading of the OCP in September. As discussed at the meeting, this will provide more time for the community to engage with the draft and provide comments. As well, it provides more time for staff to work with Snuneymuxw First Nation on the Indigenous context section of the OCP.

Revised Phase 4 Communications and Engagement Plan

At their March LTC meeting, the LTC was presented with a communications and engagement plan that included Phase 4. This plan has been revised to reflect the revised dates in the project charter as well as addressing concerns raised related to the effectiveness of using staff time to support community engagement at summer markets at this time. Staff note that the scheduling of any additional public engagement events prior to first reading will be challenging.

OCP Draft Policy Amendment Option Table

In Attachment 3, staff have provided a list of topics that have emerged from the Gabriola community and Trustees. Where possible staff have provided policy options. In some cases the topics are listed for discussion without clear policy options identified. The intention of this table is to review topics and options in order for staff to receive direction from the LTC to move forward with discussed amendments to the draft prior to first reading.

Due to report deadlines it is possible that not all topics brought up by the community have been included. Recognizing that there has been a lot of interest in engaging with the draft OCP prior to first reading, staff have extended the deadline for input until July 31st.

Proposed Special Meeting Prior to First Reading

Given the high chance of receiving additional feedback from the community by July 1st, staff are proposing a special meeting be held in August by zoom to provide an opportunity for the LTC to review additional feedback and provide direction to staff to make further changes prior to first reading. Staff have explored possible dates which have considered staff vacation time, Trustee meetings and preparation time for the first reading of bylaws at the September 3rd LTC meeting. If the LTC support this recommendation, staff will follow up with LTC members to confirm the date and time. The two possible dates identified are August 6 or 7.

Land Use Bylaw Consistency Table

Attachment 4 includes a land use bylaw consistency table. This table identifies LUB regulations that will need to be updated to be consistent with the OCP. It is important to note that consistency is the focus of the LUB update at this time. While the new OCP will provide opportunity for further changes to the LUB to support the OCP vision and goals, these changes will need to happen over time. One example of this is the implementation of flexible housing policy. At this time there are no locations being identified for flexible housing zoning. However, the opportunity will exist for this to be realized through rezoning or LTC project.

Freshwater Footprint Briefing and Frequently Asked Questions

The freshwater footprint analysis has been an important component of the Gabriola OCP review project. Using multiple data sets as well as engagement with the Gabriola community a number of maps have been created to provide opportunity for data-based decision making related to groundwater sustainability. Two maps emerging from the freshwater footprint work are referred to directly in OCP policy and included as schedules in the OCP for reference. The briefing in Attachment 5 includes higher resolution copies of these maps then previously shared in the draft OCP (these will also be added to the draft OCP online) as well as paragraphs describing each map. Attached to the briefing is a Q&A requested by the LTC on the questions that have emerged related to the freshwater footprint project. Once reviewed by the LTC the Q&A will be posted to the project website.

Draft Business Case 2027/28

The attached business case for 2027/28 is based on the possibility that the OCP may not be granted second reading by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year and more time will be needed to complete the Archeological Overview Assessment (AOA) (Procurement for the AOA has not yet begun). It is important to ensure that funds are available if this is the case. The funds would be directed toward the completion of the AOA, public engagement and legal review.

Rationale for Recommendation

The recommendations support the completion of the Gabriola OCP project.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Request changes to the communications and engagement plan

If the LTC chooses to make changes to the communications and engagement plan, staff capacity and availability will need to be considered.

2. Request changes to the draft OCP prior to 1st reading

The LTC is encouraged to identify changes they would like staff to make to the draft OCP prior to 1st reading that are beyond what is currently captured in the OCP change options table (Attachment 3).

3. Request that staff not schedule a special meeting prior to first reading

If the LTC chooses not to schedule a special meeting prior to first reading it will require that any additional changes identified between now and first reading be discussed at the September meeting just before first reading. After first reading, changes will be still be possible. However, at that point in the process they will need to be introduced as formal amendments to the draft.

4. Request changes to the project charter

This is the opportunity to determine if the LTC is comfortable with first reading in September. If not, the project charter will need to be changed.

5. Request changes to the business case

Changes to the communications and engagement plan and the project charter may impact the business case. Related changes will need to be made.

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendations are endorsed staff will:

- Schedule a special meeting via zoom prior to first reading
- Integrated proposed changes in to the draft OCP
- Proceed with communications and engagement as identified in plan
- Continue to draft LUB amendment for consistency with the OCP
- Complete draft DAI bylaw
- Send business case to finance committee for review

Submitted By:	Narissa Chadwick RPP CIP, Island Planner	June 29, 2026
Concurrence:	Renee Jamurat RPP CIP, Regional Planning Manager	July 8, 2026

ATTACHMENTS

1. Revised Project Charter
2. Phase 4 Communications and Engagement Plan
3. OCP Changes Options
4. LUB Consistency Table
5. Freshwater Footprint Briefing and Frequently Asked Questions document
6. Draft Business Case 2027/28

Gabriola Island Official Community Plan(OCP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Review (Phase 3) - Project Charter

Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC)

ATTACHMENT 1

Date: July 2026 (Version 8)

Purpose: To explore, through targeted engagement specific questions related to key topics relevant to the OCP and LUB review and begin to draft OCP policies and related LUB changes needed to for consistency with OCP policies .

Background: An OCP describes the long-term vision for a community, through policy statement that guide decisions on planning and land use. An LUB contains regulations to implement the OCP policies. The Gabriola OCP has not been updated since 1997 and the LUB since 1999. The Gabriola Island OCP and LUB Comprehensive Review will address a number of issues of importance to the Gabriola Community. In Phase 1 (2023/24) helped to identify vision and values of the community. Phase 2 (2402/25) explored, though focused public engagement, specific questions related to different topics. A freshwater footprint was developed. Part 3 focusses on the writing, review and approval of the new OCP, a Development Approvals Information (DAI) Bylaw to support OCP policy as updates to the LUB to ensure constancy.

Objectives

Through targeted and focused engagement on specific topic areas, begin to draft OCP policies and LUB based on the values and principles emerging from Phase 1.

In Scope

- First Nations Engagement.
- Public engagement
- LUB changes for consistency OCP policies
- DAI bylaw to support OCP policy implementation

Out of Scope

- New DPA mapping
- Substantial LUB amendments

Workplan Overview

Deliverable/Milestone	Date
First Nations consultation	Ongoing
Milestone: LTC Review of draft policy language	April 2026
Community Meeting	April/May 2026
Public Engagement - review of OCP draft policy language	April – August 2026
Milestone: First Reading OCP	September 2026
Legal Review	July 2026 – September 2026
Public Review/Referrals	July 2026 – September 2026
AOA Initiated	January 2027
Milestones: Community Information Meeting OCP –Second Reading LUB – First Reading DAI – First & Second Readings	February/March 2027
Milestones: OCP – PH + Third Reading; LUB – Second Reading, PH, Third Reading; DAI – Third Reading	April/May 2027

Project Team

Regional Planning Manager	Renée Jamurat
Regional Planning Team Project Lead	Narissa Chadwick
Gabriola Island Planner	Stephen Baugh
Planning Team Assistant	Shalini Nakai

Budget

Budget Sources:		
26/27	Communication and Engagement	\$6,000
	Arch Overview Ass.	\$25,000
	Legal + contingency	\$4,000
TOTAL		\$35,000

ATTACHMENT 2

Appendix 2: Communication and Engagement Plan Phase 4

Event/Activity	Comments/Communications	Timing
Public Comment Period	Feedback opportunity through email until July 31st (extended from June 30th). Trustee engagement sessions. • Webpage update with info on how to engage • Webpage FAQs • Companion Document • Draft OCP • Social media • Sounder Article written by Trustees • Subscriber notice in July issue re: feedback opportunity	June – July 31 st
First Reading OCP and official referrals to Agencies and Indigenous Governing Bodies	Public feedback opportunities through webpage and email. • Website updates as needed • Subscriber notice/ Email interested and affected. • Social media • Ad/article in the sounder • Printed document available at the library	September 2026
In-person fall market presence	Providing information on what will change with new OCP and process for further engagement. • Website updates as needed • Subscriber notice/ Email interested and affected. • Social media	September 2026
Referral and engagement responses received	OCP revisions	September - December 2026
Community Information Meeting	• Website updates as needed • Subscriber notice/Email interested and affected. • Social media • Ad/article in the sounder	February 2027
OCP Second Reading LUB First Reading DAI First and Second	• Website updates as needed • Subscriber notice/ Email interested and affected. • Social media • Ad/article in the sounder	February/ March 2027
CIM, Public Hearing OCP Third Reading LUB Second/Third DAI Third	• Website updates as needed • Subscriber notice/Email interested and affected. • Social media • Ad/article in the sounder	April/May 2027?
OCP/LUB/DAI Approval	Timing dependent on Ministry review	Summer/Fall 2027
OCP Completion Celebration	• Update website • Subscriber notice • Add in Sounder	Fall 2027

APPENDIX 3 – OCP Draft Policy Amendment Option Table

Note: changes supported by the LTC at the May LTC meeting are not listed. These have been noted by staff and will appear in the next draft of the OCP. Also, any input that is missed can be addressed at the Special Meeting prior to first reading.

Input	Option/Comment
Editorial/ Addressing Errors	
Reduce numbering to 4 places	This has been done and is ready to implement in the draft that will go forward for first reading.
Use of word “attainable”	Recommended changes to be made.
Use of words “moderate” “middle” and “medium” with reference to income levels needs to be reviewed as well as “affordable” and “non-market”	Staff will review and make sure use of words is consistent with definitions provided.
Need consistence when referring to “land use regulations” land use bylaw regulations” and regulations	Staff will review for consistency
Update Parks and Protected Areas Map and other identified inaccuracies	Information Systems is updating this map based on information received by the community.
1.2.8 need to update reference to docks and marinas	There are 3 private marinas: Silve Bay, Pages, and the Royal Vancouver Yacht club on Tugboat Island. Also, missing is the Green Wharf used by Mudge residents and the emergency dock by the 7 ferry terminal.
Other editorial changes (there are many suggested for clarity)	These are being tracked and will be made in the next draft.
Logistics	
Move DPA and TUP Guidelines to LUB	This is best practices and supported by the Island Trust Bylaw Manager as a more direct way to support compliance.
Review of “must”, “should”, “may”, “can”	

Issue: A number of community members have questioned the use of “must”, “should” and “may”

Discussion: Staff did do a preliminary review of the use of “must”, “should” and “may” and will do another review based on community input and the best practices as identified below.

The draft Official Community Plan (OCP) uses the terms "should," "may," and "must" deliberately to reflect different levels of policy direction and to align with current planning and legislative drafting practices in British Columbia.

As an OCP is a strategic policy document rather than a regulatory bylaw, "should" is used as the default term for most policies. It expresses the Local Trust Committee's intended policy direction while recognizing that future land use decisions require consideration of site-specific circumstances, technical information, and the balancing of multiple OCP policies. The term "may" is used where flexibility or discretion is intended, such as when describing actions the Local Trust Committee may choose to undertake or support, or where a range of implementation approaches may be appropriate. The term "must" is generally reserved for circumstances where the OCP refers to mandatory requirements established through provincial legislation, regulations, or other regulatory processes, rather than creating new mandatory obligations through the OCP itself.

The term "shall" has generally been avoided in the draft OCP. While historically used to express mandatory obligations, modern legislative and policy drafting practices have largely replaced "shall" with "must" because it is clearer and less susceptible to differing legal interpretations. Avoiding the use of "shall" also supports a plain-language approach and reinforces the OCP's role as a policy document that guides future decision-making rather than regulating land use directly.

Vision Statement - Option

Gabriola Draft OCP Vision Statement – a compilation by Trustee Yates from several wordsmiths and engaged citizens:

Gabriola Island is an active, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable rural community that respects Indigenous and local cultural heritage, protects the natural environment and biodiversity, supports diverse housing and livelihoods, and works collaboratively to balance human needs and the island's ecological limits.

The community fosters a strong sense of belonging by supporting diverse and affordable housing, accessible services, active and low-impact transportation, vibrant arts and culture, resilient local food systems and livelihoods, and collaboration among residents, First Nations, and all levels of government.

Goals and Objectives

2.2.3 Responsible Resource Stewardship

Issue: Identified need for an objective that addresses Indigenous use of the land.

Option: *Objective 2.2.3.5: Support the continued stewardship and sustainable use of land, water, and natural resources by First Nations by recognizing and supporting Indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and traditional resource use in land use planning and decision-making.*

Definitions

Definition of “horticulture” and “Agricultural Activity”

Issue – In the rural residential (RR) designation the current OCP draft identifies that horticulture is permitted and agriculture is permitted on lots 2 hectares or larger.

Discussion – Staff interpret the question related to definitions as one that may be related to the larger question of what type of growing and cultivating should be permitted in areas designated residential. This is a discussion for the LTC. Related definitions are as follows:

Horticulture means the cultivation of plants, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, herbs, sprouts, mushrooms, and ornamental/landscape plants.

Agricultural activity means an occupation, use, or operation involving the production of agricultural products, including the farming of land, plants, mushrooms or animals, and includes farm uses and farm operations recognized under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, the *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Regulation*, and the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*.

Community use- definition to be added or reference to be changed to “community service”

Review of definitions related to Dwelling units

Issue – revised definitions have been provided

Discussion – revised definitions may be inconsistent with the direction the Islands Trust is moving with consistency across the Trust Area and with the Province and Federal Government. Staff will need to access the proposed definitions based on that context

Definition of “Freshwater Management Plan” requested

This will be clarified in the DAI bylaw.

Update to Community Context	
1.2.2 Update Indigenous Context	Content is being worked on with SFN staff.
1.2.5 Update to Groundwater Resources	Suggested additional context: The availability of groundwater can, however, in certain areas be variable in especially dry seasons; wells can and do fail, resulting in situations where freshwater must come from alternate sources. Rainwater harvesting over water delivery is encouraged.
1.2.8 Update to Gertie Bus info	Public transportation is available on Gabriola Island. The GERTIE bus, operated by the Gabriola Community Bus Foundation, provides regular reliable service in all areas of the island. + BC Ferries is the most common means for drivers and foot passengers to travel beyond Gabriola.
1.2.9 Mention community hall and agricultural hall	Can be updated but note that the reference is not meant to be inclusive of all community spaces

1.2.4 Housing and Service Need – questions regarding numbers	Staff will review
Update to Objectives	
Responsible Stewardship 2.2.4.3	Change “locations” to applications and LTC lead projects
Climate Resilience 2.2.4.5	Change to “Support walking, cycling and taking the bus to reduce reliance on private automobiles while maintaining Gabriola’s rural island character”.
Policy Amendment – Alternative Options	

2.4.2.1.13.1 Subdivision Policy

Updating based on legal review. Includes edits to make policy more consistent with the Local Government Act language.

Addition of a Community Amenity Policy

Issue - A question was raised during community engagement about whether the Official Community Plan (OCP) should include a standalone policy related to community amenities.

Discussion - A separate community amenity policy is not considered necessary for the Gabriola Island OCP.

The draft OCP already encourages the provision of community amenities through its subdivision policies. While a standalone policy is not required, additional guidance could be added to these subdivision policies to provide examples of the types of community amenities that may be considered.

Community amenities could also be considered as part of site-specific rezoning applications for multi-unit housing. However, the draft OCP limits consideration of new multi-unit housing primarily to projects that provide housing for seniors, people with special needs, and low- to moderate-income households secured through a housing agreement. These projects are expected to be developed primarily by non-profit housing providers, which often have limited financial capacity to provide additional amenities. Nevertheless, opportunities to secure community benefits, such as public trail connections, environmental protection covenants, or other site-specific improvements, can still be considered and negotiated as part of the rezoning process where appropriate.

Option

Expand the subdivision policies to provide additional guidance on the types of community amenities that may be encouraged when applications propose the creation of new private lots through subdivision. This approach provides greater clarity while retaining flexibility to consider site-specific circumstances.

POLICY 2.5.2.1.1 When received, applications for the purpose of facilitating the creation of additional private lots should provide community amenities such as:

-
- *the provision of land for preservation of natural environments and ecologically sensitive areas;*
 - *the provision of land to preserve groundwater regions;*
 - *the provision of land to protect archeological sites and other cultural heritage interests;*
 - *the transfer of land to a First Nation or Indigenous governing body, where feasible and mutually agreed, for housing, cultural, conservation, or community purposes;*
 - *the provision of land for community park or public open space;*
 - *the provision of land for community sewage treatment facilities or community water systems;*
 - *the provision of community wells for domestic water supply;*
 - *the provision of fire protection infrastructure, including storage reservoirs;*
 - *the provision of easements or rights of way for utilities or publicly accessible trails;*
 - *the provision of community facility;*
 - *the provision of land for community facility or use;*
 - *the provision of community facility or service in a commercial building;*
 - *the provision of non-market housing; and/or*
 - *the provision of any other amenity which is similar in nature to the foregoing and/or is consistent with the objectives and policies of the OCP.*
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2.4.2.9 Freshwater Sustainability

POLICY 2.4.2.9.3

Issue: The policy requires all new residential, commercial, and institutional development to incorporate cisterns for the collection of freshwater. It is not intended for property owners to fill these cisterns with water trucked to their property.

Option: While the Islands Trust does not have the ability to regulate water use directly the intended use could be made clearer:

“Land use regulations should require all new residential, commercial, and institutional development to incorporate cisterns for the collection and storage of on-site freshwater resources, including rainwater and groundwater, sized to support water needs during prolonged drought conditions and to reduce demand on groundwater aquifers and imported water supplies”.

2.4.2.9.4

Issue: The policy requires “*potable rainwater catchment systems consistent with installation and maintenance requirements of Island Health for all secondary and accessory dwelling units located in freshwater hazard areas*”. There has been some interest expressed from community members to expand this requirements.

Options:

1. Expand to all new residential, commercial and institutional developments requiring potable water in the freshwater hazard area.
 2. Expand to all new residential, commercial and institutional developments requiring potable water.
-

2.4.2.5.1 Light Industrial

Issue: Language related to light industrial use such as “heavy truck traffic and “significant amounts for water” is not defined.

Recommendation: Do not change or remove entirely . It is difficult to define these terms. As well this approach would be hard to enforce if eventually included in the LUB. As policies in the OCP they stand as a statement of intent.

Exclusion of Heavy Industry Prohibition

Issue: Not clear if heavy industry is prohibited

Discussion: Staff will explore and can include a policy as directed.

2.4.2.8.1 Aggregate - review to comply with existing jurisdiction

Issue: The draft policies provided appear to be stepping outside of the Islands Trust jurisdiction.

Discussion: Creating policy related to the regulation of aggregate mining is challenging given Provincial jurisdiction over this use.

Options :

POLICY 2.4.2.8.1: The processing of mineral and aggregate resources should be directed to locations where potential impacts on surrounding land uses, community character, environmental values, and infrastructure capacity can be appropriately considered and managed through applicable land use planning processes.

POLICY 2.4.2.8.2: The establishment of new aggregate extraction facilities should be carefully considered in relation to potential impacts on environmental values, neighbouring properties, community character, and infrastructure capacity. The Local Trust Committee encourages provincial agencies to consider these values in decisions related to aggregate resource development.

Hospice Care and Boarding Homes

Issue – Support for hospice care and boarding homes was identified to be missing from the OCP.

POLICY 2.4.2.9.4

Discussion: As the current OCP draft does not prohibit these uses staff interpret them being able to be permitted subject to other jurisdictional policies. A more explicit policy could be added (see option below) . If restrictions are to be placed on these uses these can be identified in zoning provisions.

Option:

POLICY 2.4.2.1.5 Hospice care, boarding homes, and similar small-scale supportive residential uses as forms of residential accommodation that contribute to a diverse range of housing options and needs are permitted subject to zoning regulations.

2.5.2.6 Changes in Use and Density – Marine

Issue: There is only one policy here and it is related to the provision of toilets.

Discussion: Staff can review and identify additional policies .

Flexible Housing

Flexible Housing

Issue: POLICY 2.4.3.6.3 supports rezoning for additional units within a maximum floor area (outside the freshwater hazard area). Concerns have been raised related to the lack of limits on number of dwellings and maximum size provided in the OCP.

Discussion: The limits related to flexible housing zoning are most appropriately identified in the LUB . The LUB will be updated for constancy with the OCP . It can include details related to flexible housing similar to the example below which comes from the Mayne Island LUB:

(a) On lots having an area less than 0.6 ha (1.5 acres) hectares, one additional dwelling is permitted if the total combined floor area of all dwellings does not exceed 232 m² (2500 square feet).

(b) On lots having an area of 0.6 ha (1.5 acres) or greater, and not exceeding 1.2 hectares (3 acres), two dwellings and a cottage are permitted if the total combined floor area of all dwellings and cottages does not exceed 325m² (3500 square feet).

(c) On lots having an area of 1.2 ha (3 acres) or greater, and not exceeding 5 hectares (12.355 acres), three dwellings and a cottage are permitted if the total combined floor area of all dwellings and cottages does not exceed 436 m² (4750 square feet).

TUPS

TUP Exemptions

Issue – TUP exemptions contained in the draft OCP are based on previous OCP review and may not be appropriate at this time.

Discussion – The list of OCP exemptions are a direct carry over from the existing OCP. Staff note that as TUP applications provide an opportunity for the LTC to make decisions on the appropriateness of the use there is not need to have exemptions.

Option- remove exemptions from TUP section.

TUP for Water Extraction for Commercial Sale

Issue 1 : It was identified that Guidelines for TUP related to water extraction do not explicitly state that TUP can not be issues in the freshwater hazard area.

Discussion: General Guideline 2.8.1.1.4 “ all TUP applications should demonstrate that there is suitable sewage system, and sufficient quantity and quality of water available for the proposed use” would discourage the issuance of a TUP for water extraction for the commercial sale of water in the freshwater hazard area.

Option: Inclusion of an TUP Guideline specifically focussed on prohibiting water extraction from the freshwater hazard area for commercial sale.

Issue 2: There is interests from some community members to remove the ability to issue a TUP or any other permission for the extraction of groundwater for private sale.

Discussion Staff have not had time to explore this topic in detail.

Options:

1. Include a policy that prohibits future permits for the private sale of on island water
2. Enhance TUP guidelines to include more detailed control measures.

TUPs for Tiny Homes and RVs

Issue: Guideline identifies that “*tiny homes on wheels or recreational vehicles should be safe for full time occupancy*”. The word “safe” is not clearly defined.

Discussion: A focus on what makes things “safe” would address the ambiguity.

Option: Change GUIDELINE 2.8.1.6 to read:

“The tiny home on wheels or recreational vehicle should be connected to sewage disposal facilities consistent with the provisions of the Public Health Act and have access to potable domestic water supply”

Secondary Dwelling Units

Detached Secondary Dwelling Units on lots < 2H in RR

Issue: In the rural residential and agricultural designations one principal dwelling and one secondary suite is permitted on lots 2h or larger. Outside the freshwater hazard area one principal dwelling, one secondary suite and one detached secondary dwelling is permitted.

Discussion: The LTC has an opportunity to consider whether they want to increase flexibility to allow one secondary suite or one detached secondary dwelling unit within the freshwater hazard areas. While this will increase flexibility is may in some instances increase impacts. Consideration of size restrictions and location to principal dwelling could help to reduce impact to the land.

Limitation of size of detached secondary unit

Issue: Interest raised related to limiting size of detached secondary units

Discussion: While regulatory in nature limitations to the size of detached secondary units could be identified in OCP policy. The more appropriate place for the limitation is in the land use bylaw. Gabriola's current land use bylaw places limitations on secondary suites and detached secondary units.

B.6.6.5 The maximum permitted floor area for a secondary suite located within or attached to a single family dwelling is 90 square metres (968 square feet) or 40% of the floor area of the dwelling, whichever is less;

B.6.6.6 The maximum permitted floor area for a secondary suite located within an accessory building is 90 square metres (968 square feet);

OCP can identify that LUB regulation size limits for secondary units be subordinate to the principal dwelling.

New Policies

Add Dark Skies Policy

Issue: It was identified that dark skies policies were inadequate.

Discussion: Existing Policies in the draft OCP are specifically related to areas of Islands Trust jurisdiction. Additional policies would be advocacy in nature. Existing policies are as follows:

- *POLICY 2.4.3.7.4: Establish Multi-Unit Residential DPA guidelines that protect dark skies.*
- *POLICY 2.4.3.8.3: Bright lights at night are discouraged and DPA guidelines for commercial areas should be established to protect dark skies.*

Options:

1. Under heading "Dark Skies" in the "Land and Marine General Policies" section 2.4:

- *POLICY X.X.X: Development in all zones should be designed and located to minimize light pollution, including light spill, glare, and skyglow. The Local Trust Committee may use zoning regulations, Development Permit Areas, and development approval processes to manage the siting, orientation, and intensity of outdoor lighting associated with land use, rezoning, subdivision, and variance applications*
- *POLICY X.X.X: The Local Trust Committee will work with other levels of government and agencies to encourage outdoor lighting on public lands, roads, parks, and facilities to be appropriately scaled and designed to reduce light spill and preserve dark sky conditions.*

2. Add dark skies guidelines to all DPAs where appropriate

Exemption from Agricultural Use for Housing

Issue: The ability to support a community of farmers living together and farming on a piece of land in the agricultural land reserve is prohibited by the Agricultural Land Commissions (ALC)'s restriction on residential dwellings (1 primary, 1 secondary suite, 1 detached unit).

Discussion: The only way to address this issue is through application to the ALC for exemption from agricultural use.

Option: A policy can be included in the OCP that encourages the LTC to support applications to the ALC for exclusion from agricultural use for specific uses. Example policy below:

POLICY XX: The Local Trust Committee may support applications to the Agricultural Land Commission for non-adhering residential use, or exclusion where the proposal provides small-scale, permanently affordable housing and meets all of the following:

- *The land is outside the freshwater hazard area*
- *Housing is designed and sited to minimize impact on the agricultural capacity of the land*
- *Long-term affordability is provided through a housing agreement*
- *Other criteria TBD.....*

Increasing Flexible Housing Potential Locations

Issue: The way the OCP is written restricts flexible housing to the Rural Residential designation. This means that a potential OCP amendment may be necessary to permit flexible housing in the Agricultural or Forestry designation.

Option: A policy similar to POLICY 2.4.3.6.3 "Land use bylaws can establish flexible housing areas, outside freshwater hazard areas, to allow up to two or more dwellings per lot within a maximum combined floor area provided total combined floor area does not exceed a maximum prescribed in the land use regulations", could be adapted for the Agriculture and Forestry designations.

Additional Advocacy Policies

Including policy related to no water pipelines connecting the Island to Vancouver Island

Discussion: Is a policy of this kind to be included in the OCP it would have to be advocacy in nature based on the Islands Trust's limited jurisdiction in the area.

Option: *POLICY X.X.X: Large-scale water supply infrastructure, including a pipeline connection to Vancouver Island, should not be considered unless it can be demonstrated that local water conservation, stewardship, and supply management approaches are insufficient and that significant impacts can be avoided or mitigated.*

Other Items for Discussion

Concern about Opening up Unlimited Development Potential

Issue: Concerns have been raised that policies related to flexible housing (multiple units within a maximum floor area without a housing agreement to protect affordably through time) and the lack of a density cap may open the island to an unlimited increase in development.

Discussion:

Things to consider include but are not limited to:

Regarding flexible housing:

- Requires rezoning
- Rezoning criteria are multilayers and may end up prohibiting flex housing in areas where impacts to groundwater, the environment and cultural heritage are high
- Policy may help facilitate land sharing in order to make ownership more affordable
- Policy may help to support intergeneration living in separated units on the same property

Regarding density cap:

- OCP focusses on suitable location instead of numbers
 - Multilayers bylaw amendment criteria will limit applications for additional density
 - Lack of flexibility to provide a variety of housing options perpetuates the proliferation of unhealth and illegal living conditions.
 - OCP policies can be revisited and changed if there is a proliferation of applications.
-
-

ATTACHMENT 4 – Land Use Bylaw Consistency Table

Existing LUB	New LUB	OCP #
General Policies		
No specific siting requirements for secondary dwelling units	Siting regulations for detached secondary dwelling units to encourage clustering	2.4.1.5
No requirement for cisterns	Requirement that new development incorporate cisterns for freshwater storage	2.4.2.3
No potable water catchment system required	Potable water catchment system required for secondary and accessory dwelling units in freshwater hazard area.	2.4.2.4
Various minimum lot areas dependent on location	35 ha minimum lot area for subdivision except community uses.	2.4.14.1
Subdivision does not require provision of active transportation infrastructure.	Update subdivision servicing requirements to for consistency with 2.4.14 including requiring provision of transportation infrastructure to improve existing networks and contribute to active transportation objectives.	2.4.14
Zoning Consistent with Designations		
No Conservation Zone	New conservation zone for conservancy land	2.5.2
Small islands in Resource zone	New zone for small islands	2.5.3
2 accessory dwellings permitted in Agriculture Zone on lots 2 ha or larger	One secondary suite and one detached secondary dwelling unit permitted on lots 2 ha or larger outside freshwater hazard area, 1 secondary suite on lots 2 ha or larger within freshwater hazard .	2.5.4
1 accessory dwelling unit permitted on lots 2 ha or larger in residential zones	One secondary suite and one detached secondary dwelling unit permitted outside the freshwater hazard area on lots 2 ha or larger in	2.5.6.2

	residential zones, 1 secondary suite on lots 2 ha or larger within freshwater hazard .	
1 accessory dwelling per lot in commercial zones	Accessory dwellings permitted up to half the total floor area of commercial buildings	2.5.8
Residential not permitted in Institutional zone	Accessory dwellings permitted up to half the total floor area of institutional buildings	2.5.12
Ferry terminal within multiple designations	Ferry Terminal designation	2.5.16
Development Permit Areas		
DPA Guidelines	Add dark sky guidelines to form and character DPAs	



BRIEFING

To:	Gabriola Local Trust Committee	For the Meeting of:	July 16, 2026
From:	William Shulba, P.Geo Senior Freshwater Specialist	Date Prepared:	July 9, 2026
SUBJECT:	Gabriola Island Freshwater Footprint OCP Maps and FAQ		

PURPOSE

The purpose of this briefing is to provide high-quality reproductions of the two proposed freshwater schedule maps for the draft Official Community Plan (OCP), together with a companion Frequently Asked Questions document prepared to support trustee and community understanding of the Freshwater Footprint project. The maps and the FAQ are included as attachments to this briefing.

BACKGROUND

The Freshwater Footprint is a planning-scale framework, developed under the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy, that brings freshwater conditions into land use policy and decision-making.

The methodology was developed by GW Solutions Inc. and applied to Gabriola Island as the first case study, with the final report delivered in March 2026 and presented to the Local Trust Committee and community through the February 2026 briefing and the March 23, 2026 Special Business Meeting. Two schedule maps derived from this work are proposed for the draft OCP.

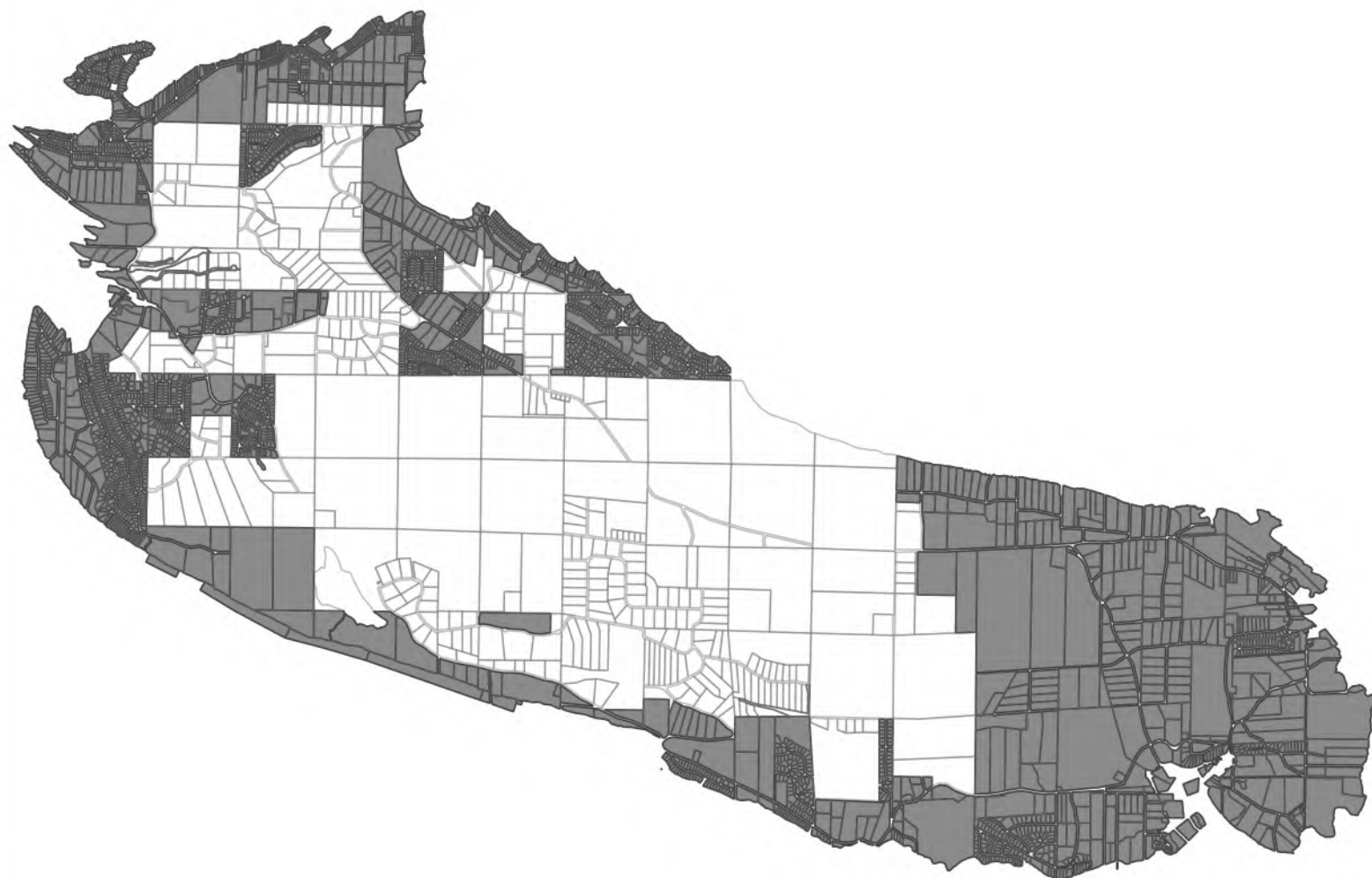
The Gabriola Island Freshwater Hazard Area map (draft OCP Schedule D) provides a parcel-based representation of areas where freshwater conditions are more constrained, vulnerable, or sensitive from a planning perspective. It was derived by staff from the raw consultant hazard outputs through standardised spatial processing and planning filters that convert the science mapping into a layer suitable for a plan schedule.

The Gabriola Island Critical Aquifer Recharge Area map (draft OCP Schedule E) identifies the areas of the island of highest importance to groundwater recharge and aquifer replenishment. It provides spatial context for where land use change may carry greater implications for infiltration, recharge function, and long-term groundwater sustainability.

The Frequently Asked Questions answers 63 questions across nine themes in plain language: what the project is, how the work was done and reviewed, the science of island freshwater, the case study findings, how the results and schedule maps are applied in planning - including how the parcel-based map layers were derived from the raw science data - water governance and licensing, stewardship actions for well owners and water users, next steps, and where to learn more. The questions were drawn from community correspondence, the workshop series, the water use survey, and the March 2026 meeting.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Gabriola Island Freshwater Hazard Area Map
2. Gabriola Island Critical Aquifer Recharge Area Map
3. The Freshwater Footprint - Frequently Asked Questions (July 2026)



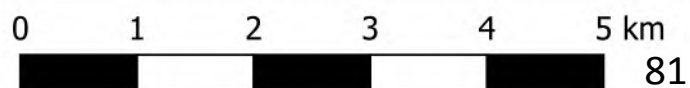
Legend

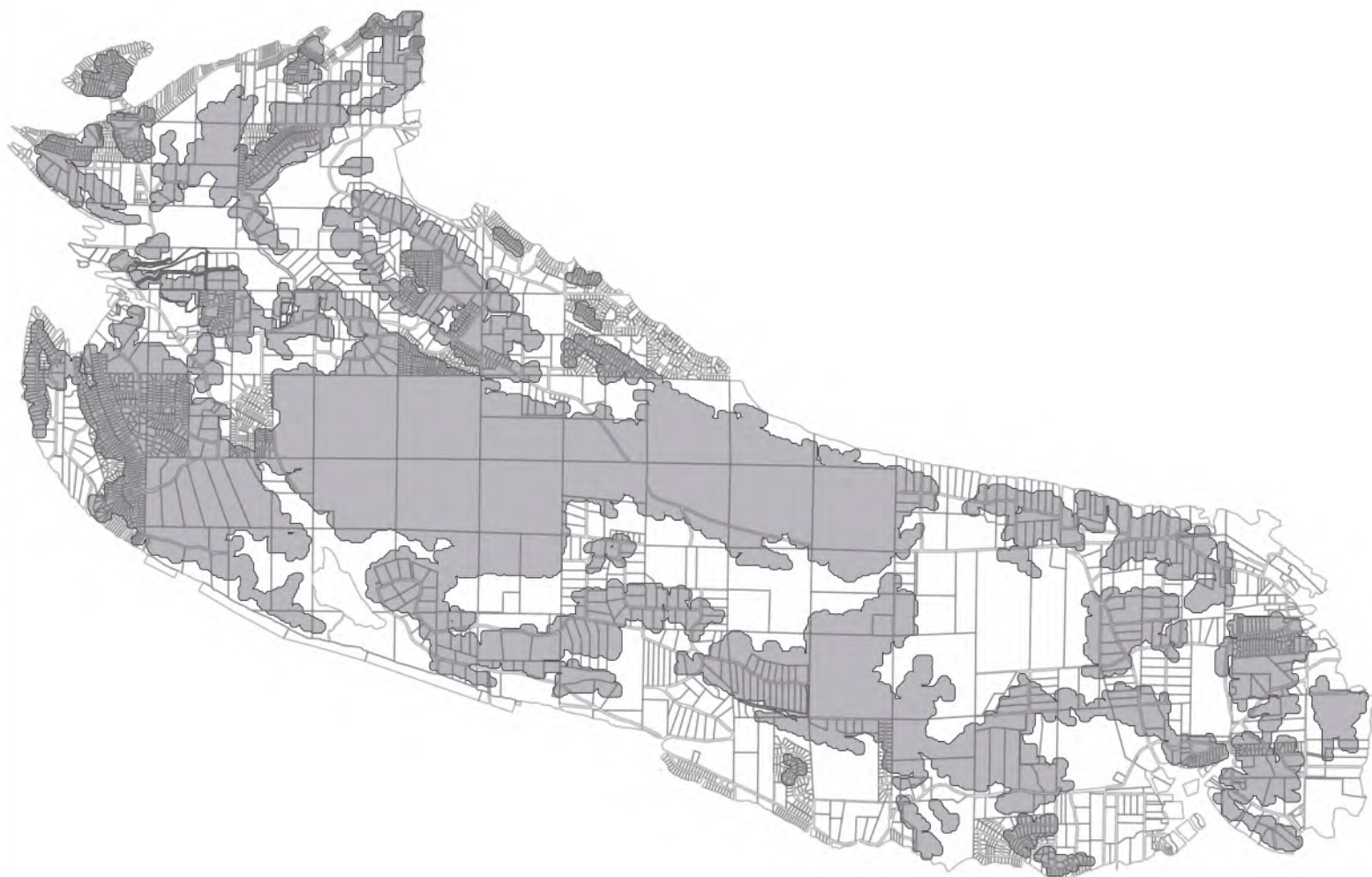
 Parcel Cadastral

 Freshwater Hazard Parcels With Buffer and Filtering

GABRIOLA ISLAND Freshwater Hazard Parcels

Drawn by: William Shulba, P.Geo
Data Sources: Islands Trust Freshwater Atlas,
Islands Trust Freshwater Footprint



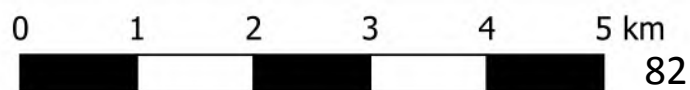


Legend

-  Parcel Cadastral
-  Critical Aquifer Recharge Area

GABRIOLA ISLAND Critical Aquifer Recharge Area

Drawn by: William Shulba, P.Geo
Data Sources: Islands Trust Freshwater Atlas,
Islands Trust Groundwater Recharge Potential Mapping



The Freshwater Footprint

Frequently Asked Questions

July 2026

Purpose

This guide explains the Islands Trust Freshwater Footprint project and answers the questions the community has asked about it. It is written in plain language for residents, trustees, and anyone interested in island water.

Background

Freshwater is the foundation of island life. The Freshwater Footprint project considered how much freshwater the Gabriola Island community has, how much it uses, and where the water supply faces the greatest pressure. It is the product of years of science, strong partnerships, and the knowledge of the community itself.

The project is a keystone of the [Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy](#), adopted in 2021. A hydrogeology consulting firm, GW Solutions Inc., developed the methodology and applied it to Gabriola Island as the first case study, with the final report delivered in March 2026. The results are now part of the evidence base for the [Gabriola Official Community Plan review](#).

How to use this document

The guide is organised into nine themes, from the project itself through to where to learn more. Each theme begins on its own page, and every question is numbered so it is easy to reference. The Contents page lists every question and a Table of Questions link at the top of each page brings you back to it.

Words in [blue](#) are links to other parts of this guide and to more information on the internet. Questions and comments are welcome by email to freshwater@islandstrust.bc.ca.

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What is this project?

1. What is the Freshwater Footprint?

The Freshwater Footprint is a science-based way to measure the sustainability of an island's freshwater. It considers three elements together: how much water is used compared to how much nature replaces each year, the quality of the water, and hazards that are particular to islands, such as the risk of saltwater intrusion into the aquifer. The results are combined into maps that show where the demands on water are greater and where they are less.

2. Why is it called a footprint?

The freshwater footprint measures the influence that human water use has on the island's freshwater system. Areas where the freshwater footprint is lighter have more capacity to support water use, and areas where it is heavier are already under stress. The name reflects the practice of measuring the human mark on a natural system.

3. Why did Islands Trust do this work?

Islands in the Trust Area depend almost entirely on limited groundwater, the water stored in cracks, fractures, and faults in the bedrock beneath our feet. Land use decisions, particularly the density of lots and the intensity of groundwater use that density brings, affect that water. The project is a keystone of the [Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy \(FWSS\)](#), a ten-year strategy adopted in 2021. Its purpose is to give trustees, planners, and the community solid evidence for decisions about land and water.

4. Who did the work?

Islands Trust retained GW Solutions Inc., a hydrogeology and water resources consulting firm, through a procurement process that involved a request for proposals issued by the Province and evaluated by Islands Trust staff in September 2024. Islands Trust staff directed the project, and many others contributed: the Regional District of Nanaimo, provincial ministries, Island Health, independent experts, community water champions, and Gabriola residents who shared their local knowledge.

5. Why was Gabriola Island chosen for the first case study?

Gabriola is one of the best-studied islands in the region with respect to water resource management. It has more than ten years of groundwater monitoring records at several wells by the Regional District of Nanaimo's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection program, which has supported water testing and community engagement for decades. Starting where the data is strongest gave the new method its fairest test.

6. Is this the same as the OCP review?

The Freshwater Footprint project and the OCP review are connected but separate processes. The Freshwater Footprint is a science project. The [Gabriola OCP review](#) is a planning process that sets policy for the island. The results of the freshwater footprint are one important source of evidence for the OCP review. See [What does it mean for planning?](#) for how the two fit together.

7. What did the project produce?

The project produced four groups of deliverables. The first is the consultant report: the methodology, the Gabriola case study, and appendices covering hydrographs, geological cross-sections, and the community water survey. The second is a geospatial data package containing the mapped layers for groundwater recharge, water use, hazard, and water quality, with full spatial metadata. The third is the public engagement record: workshop materials, presentations, and answers to community questions, including this guide. The fourth is the planning products derived by staff, including the draft OCP maps.

8. Who paid for the project?

Islands Trust funded the project as part of implementing the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy. The work was delivered under a fixed contract awarded through the public procurement process, and it builds on data and monitoring that partner agencies, particularly the Regional District of Nanaimo and the Province, have invested in over many years.

9. What does planning-scale mean?

Planning scale means the scale at which patterns across the island are reliable: comparing areas, regions, and neighbourhoods rather than judging single properties. A planning-scale study answers questions such as where caution is warranted and where policy should look next. It does not answer whether a particular lot has water; that remains the job of a site-specific assessment by a qualified professional.

How was the work done?

10. What steps did the project follow?

The project began by assembling the existing science: past groundwater studies, well records, water quality tests, climate data, and land use information. The team then built an updated picture of the island's aquifers, calculated a water balance comparing water use to natural replenishment, mapped water quality patterns, and assessed island hazards such as saltwater intrusion and poor water quality. Finally, they combined these results into the Freshwater Footprint maps, including the Freshwater Hazard map.

11. How was the community involved?

Community input shaped the work throughout. Residents completed a water use survey. Two public workshops were held in spring 2025, one online on water monitoring and one in person on developing the freshwater footprint method. The team interviewed local water operators and community groups. On March 23, 2026, the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee held a special public meeting where the consultant presented the results and answered questions.

12. What data did the project use?

The evidence base for this project is substantial. The water quality database alone drew on results from about 540 groundwater samples collected between 1985 and 2025. The team used registered well records from the province's [GWELLS database](#), water licence records, long-term monitoring wells, climate records, census information, and parcel-by-parcel land use data.

13. What is the relevance of a survey?

The community water use survey conducted for this project reflects the views of the households that answered, not the whole island, and the report treats it that way. It was used to add local context, not to prove statistics. One thing to know when reading the survey charts: people could pick more than one answer to some questions, so the percentages can add up to more than 100. The full survey results are in Appendix E of the consultant report. Surveys are one social science tool among several, and residents with important knowledge are not always reached by them, which is why the project added workshops and interviews, and why structured resident interviews are part of the path for future work.

14. Is this work peer reviewed?

The project was reviewed the way scientific consulting for government is reviewed, through layered professional checks rather than an academic journal. The study proposal was prepared by a Licensed Science Officer who is a professional geoscientist with competency in hydrogeology and water resource management, and the project was carried out by professional geoscientists and engineers at GW Solutions, with internal review by the firm's senior professionals.

In British Columbia this work is regulated: professional geoscientists and engineers are registered with Engineers and Geoscientists BC, must follow professional practice standards and ethics, and take professional responsibility for their work under stamp and seal. Islands Trust's planning and professional staff reviewed the outcomes, and the method builds on earlier regional studies that received formal external professional review.

15. How are community questions being answered?

Questions have arrived through the survey, the workshops, the special meeting, letters, and email, and more arrive as the OCP review continues. Staff compile them and respond through documents like this guide, public meetings, and staff reports to the Local Trust Committee. Clear public questions are part of how the work improves. If yours is not answered here, send it to freshwater@islandstrust.bc.ca.

16. How long did the project take?

The project took about a year and a half from procurement to final report, building on decades of previous research and years of strategic projects. The request for proposals was issued in September 2024. Field engagement, data compilation, and modelling ran through 2025, with the workshop series in spring 2025 and a full draft report that September. Results went to Trust Council in February 2026, the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee held its special public meeting in March 2026, and the final report was delivered that same month.

17. What earlier work does the project build on?

The freshwater footprint is a capstone, not a first step. Earlier Freshwater Sustainability Strategy projects built the aquifer conceptualisation for the Trust Area, updated the groundwater regions, and mapped groundwater recharge potential. Groundwater availability assessments in the Southern Gulf Islands came first and received formal external professional review, and the lessons from that review, especially about water demand assumptions and uncertainty, were carried into the Gabriola work. Each layer strengthened the next.

How does island water function?

18. Where does Gabriola's freshwater come from?

Meteoric water, which is rain, snow, and fog that land on the island terrane, is the entire supply. An island aquifer cannot borrow water from a neighbouring valley the way mainland aquifers sometimes can, because the island is surrounded by salt water, and the aquifers below the sea hold dense, saline groundwater. Freshwater transport from one island aquifer to another, even within the same geological unit, is rare and in most cases non-existent. Most of the replenishment happens in winter, when rain is abundant and plants use little water. Summer adds almost nothing, so the island lives off stored winter water during the dry months.

19. What is groundwater recharge?

Groundwater recharge is the share of rain that soaks down into the rock and refills the aquifer, instead of running off to the sea or evaporating off leaves and plants. On Gabriola, most of the island receives roughly 200 to 400 millimetres of groundwater recharge in an average year. Higher elevations of the island recharge the most; low coastal ground recharges the least.

20. What is a water balance?

A water balance is an accounting of water in and water out. Water arrives as precipitation; it leaves through evaporation, plant use, runoff to the sea, groundwater discharge, and pumping from wells. The project built this accounting on a fine grid across the whole island, so the balance can be examined for any area, which is what makes the aquifer stress calculations possible.

21. What is the freshwater lens?

The freshwater lens is the body of fresh groundwater beneath an island that floats on top of denser, saline groundwater, thickest under the middle of the island and thinnest at the coast. The depth to that saltwater interface was mapped across Gabriola as part of the study. Where the lens is thin, wells have less freshwater to draw on and the hazard of saltwater intrusion is higher. The shape of the lens follows topography and groundwater recharge: high ground with strong groundwater recharge builds a thicker lens, while low coastal ground carries a thin one. The lens is not static; it responds to seasons, sea level, and pumping, which is why deep wells close to the shoreline carry a higher risk of drawing up saline water.

22. What is aquifer stress?

Aquifer stress compares how much groundwater people use each year against how much nature puts back. The project used five categories: low (less than 5 percent of groundwater recharge is used), moderate (5 to 10 percent), high (10 to 20 percent), extreme (20 to 40 percent), and very extreme (more than 40 percent). The thresholds are deliberately cautious, because a healthy share of groundwater recharge must stay in the ground to feed creeks, wetlands, and the coastline.

23. Why does the risk of saltwater intrusion deserve attention and adaptation?

Saltwater intrusion can take a water supply away permanently. Under every island sits a lens of fresh groundwater floating on top of heavier saline water. If wells near the coast pump too hard, or sea level rises, salt water can be drawn upward or inland into the freshwater. When that happens it is the aquifer that turns saline, not just the well; a contaminated well cannot simply be flushed and restored, because the water body feeding it has changed. The study found saltwater intrusion is the most significant hazard for Gabriola's aquifers, and that the risk can reach up to about 500 metres inland in low-lying areas.

24. How is the risk of saltwater intrusion detected?

Increases in chloride and total dissolved solids are early warning signs of saltwater intrusion into aquifers. Chloride is the salt signal: rising chloride in a well suggests sea water is mixing in. Total dissolved solids, or TDS, measures all the minerals in the water. High TDS often means the water is coming from deep, old fractures in the rock, where natural contaminants such as fluoride, arsenic, or manganese are more common. Watching these two indicators tells us a lot about the health of the aquifer.

25. What are groundwater regions?

Groundwater regions are the planning units the method uses: areas of the island grouped by how their groundwater behaves. Each region works like a water budget zone, the unit where water supply and water demand are compared. Gabriola was first divided into eleven groundwater regions in the late 1970s under provincial water allocation planning, defined on watershed boundaries and groundwater conditions, and the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy updated this framework with modern science. Fractured bedrock can vary a lot from one lot to the next, so the method assesses conditions across these broader regions rather than pretending to predict a single well.

26. Is Gabriola one connected aquifer?

In an important sense, yes: Gabriola is one connected unit basin of groundwater, linked through a broad, island-wide fracture network, and the study treats it that way. The bedrock beneath Gabriola is one connected geological system, and the project built a single conceptual model of the whole island before any dividing lines were drawn. Groundwater regions do not contradict that connection; they are practical planning units within it. Water conditions genuinely differ from one part of the island to another, in groundwater recharge, in depth to salt water, and in demand.

It helps to know that the word aquifer means a water-saturated mapped geological unit capable of providing sufficient groundwater to support ecological, agricultural, industrial, and domestic needs, and islands differ in how theirs are mapped. Some islands have distinct sand and gravel aquifers, such as the Quadra sands on Denman and Hornby. Salt Spring has several geologically distinct regions that are mapped as separate aquifers. Islands like Gabriola and Galiano, whose shape follows the lateral trend of the Nanaimo Group bedrock, are mapped as a single aquifer.

Connected does not mean uniform. In fractured sedimentary bedrock, groundwater moves through networks of cracks, fractures, and faults rather than through evenly porous material. Where fractures are open and connected, water moves readily; where they pinch out, it barely moves at all. Two wells a few hundred metres apart can behave very differently, and conditions can change with depth in the same well. The island-wide pressure system is connected, but the connection is slow and uneven, which is why a single mapped aquifer can hold real, lasting differences in groundwater recharge, storage, and water quality from one part of the island to another.

It helps to picture the travel path of a single molecule of water. In fractured bedrock, groundwater moves only a few metres per year, so the water drawn from a well today entered the ground long ago and comes from long-term storage. Groundwater levels in wells are therefore best understood as measurements of hydraulic pressure in the fracture system rather than as a direct gauge of stored volume. When well levels decline, the pressure in the system is declining, which may not mean the volume of groundwater is falling. Conditions at the surface, particularly forests and water bodies at higher elevations with saturated soils, contribute to the pressures that support operational water levels in wells.

Groundwater regions capture exactly those differences. The Province divided the islands into water management regions as far back as the 1970s water allocation plans; Galiano, one mapped aquifer, carries more than a dozen, and Gabriola carries eleven. The Freshwater Sustainability Strategy updated this regional framework with modern science through the aquifer conceptualisation work, which treats each island as a whole geological system while refining the regions within it. The freshwater footprint method inherits both: the whole-island conceptual model came first, and the regions serve as the water budget zones where supply and demand are compared. One aquifer and many regions are not competing ideas; they are the same system described at two scales, and sound planning needs both.

The geology beneath the island explains why the connection behaves the way it does. Gabriola is built of the Nanaimo Group, a layered sequence of sandstones and mudstones deposited roughly 70 to 90 million years ago and gently tilted by later west coast mountain building. The sandstone layers are hard and hold little water within the rock itself; nearly all of the groundwater lives in the cracks, fractures, and faults that break the layers in the shale sections of the geology. Fractures near the surface tend to be open and connected, and they tighten with depth as the weight of the overlying rock closes them. Most wells on the island draw their water from a small number of productive fracture zones rather than from the whole thickness of rock.

Depth changes the water as well as the plumbing. Shallow groundwater is young, recently recharged, and generally fresh. Deeper fractures carry older water that has been in contact with the rock for a long time, dissolving minerals as it sits, which is why deeper wells often show higher total dissolved solids and naturally occurring fluoride, manganese, or arsenic. Drilling deeper is therefore not a guaranteed remedy for a struggling well; it can trade a quantity problem for a quality problem. The water quality indicators in the freshwater footprint were designed to read exactly this signal.

A connected system means that wells share their behaviour with their neighbours. Pumping one well lowers the pressure in the fractures around it, and in a dense neighbourhood many wells drawing on the same fracture network can interfere with one another, particularly in late summer when the system is at its lowest. No single well causes the pattern, and no single well can fix it; the meaningful unit is the cumulative demand of an area compared to the groundwater recharge that area receives. That is the calculation the freshwater footprint performs for each groundwater region, and it is why planning decisions about density are made for areas rather than for individual wells.

In summary, Gabriola is one connected groundwater basin that behaves differently from place to place. The island's freshwater is stored in a fracture network that fills with winter rain, moves slowly, and responds to pumping as a shared pressure system supported by the forests and wetlands above it.

What did we learn?

27. How much water does Gabriola use?

The study estimates total demand of up to about 740,000 cubic metres per year, which is about 740 million litres, or an island-wide average of roughly two million litres per day, roughly 300 Olympic swimming pools. This figure is estimated water use: how much water is drawn, estimated from land use, occupancy, and regional metering patterns. Licensed water volumes are recorded separately and describe entitlements rather than actual use. Demand peaks in summer because of higher occupancy, outdoor watering, and visitors.

28. How much stress is Gabriola's water supply under?

The stress on Gabriola's water supply varies, and place matters. Most of the island falls in the low to moderate [aquifer stress](#) categories. Some densely developed areas with small lots, including the Sands in the north, the village core, and the Descanso Bay area, are in the high to very extreme categories. The finding is that water stress differs sharply from place to place, and planning should respect those differences.

29. What did the study find about water quality?

Overall, groundwater quality on Gabriola is good. Most samples meet water quality guidelines, and the patterns in the data tell a hydrogeological story: a small share of samples had naturally occurring fluoride, arsenic, or manganese from the rock itself, and chloride and TDS levels helped map where sea water or deep mineralised water is mixing into the fresh groundwater. Bacteria results are a reminder to look after wells: total coliform bacteria appeared in up to 60 percent of samples, and E. coli in about a third, usually reflecting well construction and maintenance rather than the aquifer itself. Regular testing and a sound surface seal are the best protection.

The study did more than take a snapshot; it established background concentrations for key indicators, including chloride, total dissolved solids, and nitrate, so that future samples can be compared against a known baseline. Nitrate, the classic marker of septic and agricultural influence, was below drinking water guidelines in every sample, which is encouraging news for a rural island. A baseline of this kind turns routine well tests into monitoring: any result that stands out from the background can be investigated early, before a local concern becomes a regional one.

30. Are groundwater levels falling?

The long-term monitoring records do not show a general island-wide decline. Six monitoring sites on Gabriola have ten or more years of records; most show stable trends, and one shows a moderate decline. Groundwater levels in wells reflect the hydraulic pressure of the fracture system rather than a simple volume of stored water, and wells usually recharge to full levels over winter.

In summer, pumping lowers the pressure in the system at the same time as dry conditions reduce the support from forest watershed ecosystems and saturated upland soils, so seasonal declines are expected. A persistent long-term decline indicates a declining pressure system, and in some cases an overall loss of stored volume, called groundwater mining, can contribute to lower well levels. An information gap is that monitoring is thin near the community centres and in areas of high well density, which is why one of the study's first recommendations is more monitoring in exactly those places.

The monitoring record itself is worth knowing. Four of the six long-term sites are provincial observation wells, and two are volunteer wells monitored through the Regional District of Nanaimo; the full hydrographs are published in the report appendices for anyone to examine. A healthy record shows a seasonal saw-tooth pattern: levels fall through the dry months and recover with the winter rains. The question that matters is whether each winter brings levels back to where they were, and for most of the monitored sites on Gabriola, it does. Every new monitoring well added in the years ahead will make the answer to this question stronger.

31. How do estimates, assumptions, and data gaps affect the results?

Estimates, assumptions, and data gaps set the scale at which the results should be used. Like every regional water study, this one uses estimates and stand-ins where direct measurements do not exist: water demand is estimated from land use and occupancy, and lot size and population density stand in for cumulative pressure. These approaches are appropriate and defensible at the planning scale, comparing areas of the island, but not for judging a single property.

The report names its data gaps plainly, as professional practice requires: metered water use, surface water monitoring, and monitoring wells in some developed areas. The conclusions are drawn where the data supports them, and the gaps themselves became recommendations, a to-do list for making the next assessment even stronger.

The method is built so that uncertainty leans in the protective direction. The aquifer stress thresholds are set cautiously, the results are reported as classes rather than precise numbers, and a class boundary does not shift with every small change in the data.

32. What did the study find about ecosystems?

Ecosystems are built into the method rather than added on. The aquifer stress thresholds are deliberately cautious so that a healthy share of groundwater recharge stays in the ground to feed creeks, wetlands, and the coastline. The study mapped areas where groundwater and surface water are likely connected, so future monitoring can protect those links. It formally recognises aquifers, wetlands, springs, creeks, and forested recharge areas as natural infrastructure, assets the community depends on.

The groundwater recharge methodology draws on [Precipitation Interception Potential](#), a methodology developed in-house at Islands Trust by the Senior Freshwater Specialist working with a co-op student. It maps how forest canopy intercepts precipitation before it reaches the ground, refining the groundwater recharge assessment and strengthening the scientific case for retaining forest cover in groundwater recharge areas.

Streams and wetlands received their own attention. Many of Gabriola's creeks are ephemeral, flowing only in the wet season, and no continuous streamflow records exist for the island. The study therefore mapped where groundwater and surface water are most likely connected, so that future monitoring can be placed where it will tell us the most. Groundwater discharge in these connected areas supports baseflow and keeps water temperatures stable, which is life support for wetland and stream ecosystems through the dry months.

33. Did the study consider climate change?

The study considered climate change directly. The water balance uses long-term climate records, and the analysis recognises the seasonal imbalance that climate change is expected to sharpen: wetter winters, drier summers, and more demand in the dry season. Sea level rise and storm surge add to the saltwater intrusion hazard at the coast.

In March 2019, the Islands Trust Council declared a climate emergency in the Trust Area, directing staff to include a central focus on equitable climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience in strategic planning. The Freshwater Sustainability Strategy and the Freshwater Footprint carry that direction into water, where island communities feel a changing climate first: in longer, drier summers, in the timing of winter rains, and in rising seas pressing on the freshwater lens. Climate adaptation means monitoring climate, streamflow, and groundwater so trends are measured rather than assumed. It means protecting the natural infrastructure that buffers the island through dry years: forest cover that feeds groundwater recharge, and wetlands that hold water on the land. It means managing summer demand.

What does it mean for planning?

34. What is the Freshwater Hazard Map?

The Freshwater Hazard Map is the principal spatial product of the project. The map combines aquifer stress, saltwater intrusion hazard, lot and population density, and water quality indicators into one picture, classed from low to high hazard. Central and southern Gabriola generally show a lower freshwater footprint; Descanso Bay and the community centres show a higher one, and the Sands area shows the highest, driven by saltwater intrusion risk.

Reading the map well means remembering what the classes are. The low, moderate, and high classes are relative comparisons across the island, not absolute verdicts on any property. A higher class is a flag that says look closer here: it may reflect saltwater intrusion hazard near a coastline, aquifer stress in a densely developed area, or water quality indicators, and knowing which driver applies in an area tells the reader far more than the colour alone. The map is a place to begin asking good questions, not a place where the questions end.

35. How is the Freshwater Footprint being used in the OCP review?

The OCP review draws on the freshwater footprint results when weighing land use designations, density, and water-related policies. The hazard mapping helps answer a basic planning question: are the plans for growth in line with what the island's water can support? Areas of higher hazard may call for more caution or stronger requirements; areas of lower hazard may present fewer constraints.

36. What do the buffering and filtering on the Freshwater Hazard Area map mean?

Buffering and filtering are the steps that turned the raw science map into a practical planning map. The raw science map is a fine grid of coloured cells, technically called a raster map. That is excellent for analysis, but awkward for planning, which works parcel by parcel. Staff converted the science map into the Freshwater Hazard Area, the parcel-based planning layer proposed for the draft OCP, in careful steps. The hazard grid was converted to smooth map shapes. A 30-metre buffer was added around the hazard areas to account for mapping uncertainty and for adjacent hazard conditions. A parcel was included in the Freshwater Hazard Area when more than 10 percent of it fell inside the buffered hazard area. Finally, filters removed parcels where the mapping does not apply, such as parks, protected areas, and other non-residential lands.

37. Does the map tell me whether my property has water?

The map does not tell you whether your property has water, and that is the most important limitation to understand. The freshwater footprint is a planning-scale study: it shows patterns across the island, not conditions on a single lot. It does not confirm water availability, well performance, or development feasibility for any specific property. Where a development proposal needs that certainty, a site-specific assessment by a qualified professional is still required.

38. Will the map change what I can do with my land?

The map by itself will not change what you can do with your land. Maps do not make rules; the Local Trust Committee does, through the OCP and Land Use Bylaw process, which includes public input. The freshwater footprint provides evidence-based information and data to planners and trustees to help make decisions. Any policy that flows from it, such as area-specific requirements to demonstrate water availability, would be decided through that public process.

39. What is proof of water?

Proof of water means showing that a reliable, safe water supply exists before land is subdivided or rezoned. The study suggests such requirements could be calibrated, stronger in areas of higher hazard and lighter in areas of lower hazard, using groundwater regions as the unit rather than one blanket rule for the whole island.

The Province publishes guidance on well testing and water supply assessment. Land Use Bylaws and Development Approval Information bylaws of the Islands Trust direct when proof of water analysis is required, and in complex cases Islands Trust staff establish a Terms of Reference to guide the assessment.

40. What is the Critical Aquifer Recharge Area map?

The Critical Aquifer Recharge Area map identifies the parts of the island that matter most for groundwater recharge and aquifer replenishment. Other areas provide essential groundwater recharge too, but these areas have the greatest influence on water resources and watershed ecosystems. As a proposed map for the draft OCP, it shows where land use change may have greater implications for infiltration, groundwater recharge, and long-term groundwater sustainability.

41. What is a development permit area?

A development permit area, or DPA, is a planning tool under provincial law that lets a local government set guidelines for how development proceeds in defined areas, for example to protect the natural environment or manage hazards. Galiano Island has a groundwater protection DPA informed by groundwater recharge mapping. Whether and how Gabriola uses DPAs for freshwater is a policy decision for the Local Trust Committee through the OCP process.

42. Will the maps be updated over time?

The maps will be kept current as the science improves. The derivation of the planning layers is recorded step by step, so they can be regenerated when new monitoring data arrives, when the parcel fabric changes, or when the underlying consultant data is updated. The OCP process provides the venue for adopting updated maps when that becomes appropriate.

How is our water governed?

43. Who is responsible for water on the islands?

Several governments share responsibility for freshwater in the Islands Trust Area. The Province owns and licenses groundwater under the Water Sustainability Act and keeps the well registry. Island Health regulates drinking water systems that serve the public. Regional districts run monitoring and stewardship programs, such as the Regional District of Nanaimo's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection program. Islands Trust is the land use planner: it decides what gets built where, which shapes water demand. Well owners are responsible for maintaining and testing their own wells.

44. Do I need a licence for my well?

If the well serves a single home for drinking, cooking, washing, and garden use, that is domestic use, and no licence is required in BC. Any other use is non-domestic: commercial operations, irrigation for farming, and water systems serving multiple homes all require a water licence under the Water Sustainability Act, which has been in force since February 29, 2016. Licence applications are administered by the Province; the [GWELLS registry](#) records wells, and the [BC Water Calculator](#) helps estimate water demand for licence applications. The study observed that a significant share of non-domestic users in the area appear not to hold licences yet, and recommends better awareness and uptake.

45. Did the project check whether individual operators hold licences?

The project did not review the licence status of individual operators. Reviewing individual properties, operators, or licence files was outside the project's scope. The project estimated island-wide demand using each well's recorded use type, so larger water users are counted in the totals. Concerns about a specific operation are a regulatory matter for the Province, and the Local Trust Committee can direct staff to seek information through a resolution.

46. How is hauled water tracked?

Some households and businesses buy hauled water to top up their supply, especially in dry months. Water sold in bulk from Gabriola sources is metered, but water hauled over from Nanaimo is not specifically tracked. Changes in delivery patterns over time are an early signal of seasonal water stress in particular neighbourhoods, which is why the study recommends collecting this information.

What can I do to protect our water?

47. What can well owners do to protect their water?

Well owners can protect their water through four habits. Test the water regularly, including after heavy rains. Keep the well in good repair; a sound surface seal and secure cap keep surface contamination out. Watch and record the water level and any changes in taste or clarity; long records from private wells are valuable science.

48. How often should well water be tested?

Well water should be tested on a regular schedule. Test for bacteria at least once a year and after events that could affect the well, such as flooding or work on the wellhead. Test the broader chemistry, including chloride and TDS, the saltwater intrusion indicators, every two to three years, and more often near the coast or after a change in taste. Testing goes through accredited laboratories, and results can be compared against the [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality](#).

49. How can households reduce water use when it matters most?

Household reductions matter most in summer, when the aquifers receive almost no groundwater recharge. The levers are familiar and effective: fix leaks promptly, choose efficient fixtures, water gardens from storage rather than the well, let lawns brown in summer, and shift heavy uses like laundry away from peak weeks.

50. Can rainwater harvesting help?

Rainwater harvesting can help as a supplement. Collecting winter rain into storage for summer gardens, livestock, and fire protection reduces the draw on wells at the driest time of year. For drinking water, treatment and Island Health requirements apply, and harvested rainwater is an engineered storage response rather than new supply; the rain that falls on the island is still the whole budget.

51. How can residents contribute to the science?

Residents can contribute to the science in practical ways by noting when a well changes character, and reporting observations to freshwater@islandstrust.bc.ca. The Regional District of Nanaimo's WaterSmart and Drinking Water and Watershed Protection programs offer conservation resources and volunteer monitoring opportunities.

What happens next?

52. What happens next with the project?

The consultant's work is complete and the final report was delivered in March 2026. The results now live on in two ways. First, the Gabriola OCP review continues to draw on the freshwater footprint evidence as draft policies are refined through the public process. Second, the report's recommendations give staff and partner agencies a work plan for the coming years: more monitoring near community centres, support for water system operators, tracking of bulk water, better data sharing between agencies, and stronger licensing uptake.

53. Will other islands get a Freshwater Footprint?

The method was strategically designed for the whole Islands Trust Area, and Gabriola was the case study. Applying it elsewhere depends on data availability and direction from trustees. The Gabriola case study showed that even data-rich islands have gaps to fill, so building monitoring and data partnerships is part of the path for every island.

54. How will progress be tracked over time?

Progress will be tracked through monitoring and adaptive management. The report recommends expanding groundwater monitoring near community centres and high-demand areas, supporting water systems to monitor and share data, tracking bulk water deliveries, and re-establishing climate and streamflow stations. The Freshwater Sustainability Strategy that the project belongs to carries an annual review, so what is learned each year feeds back into the work.

55. When will the OCP review conclude?

The draft OCP is in active public review, with edits reflecting trustee and community feedback presented at Local Trust Committee meetings through 2026. From there the process follows the statutory steps for adopting a community plan: further readings, referrals, and a public hearing before adoption. The timing of each step is set by the Local Trust Committee, and the review page carries the current schedule. Community members can follow each milestone there, and formal public notice is given ahead of a public hearing.

Where can I learn more?

56. What is the Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy?

The [Freshwater Sustainability Strategy \(FWSS\)](#) is the ten-year strategy, adopted in 2021, that organises Islands Trust's freshwater work from 2022 to 2032. It is built around science programs for groundwater and watershed sustainability, cultural knowledge and engagement, and freshwater reporting, with collaboration across agencies throughout. The Freshwater Footprint is one of its keystone projects.

57. What is the Islands Trust Freshwater Atlas?

The Freshwater Atlas is the spatial home of the freshwater science: the maps and data layers produced by the FWSS science programs, organised so staff and decision-makers can find and use them. Deliverables from the Freshwater Footprint project, including the Gabriola geospatial data, take their place within it.

58. Where can I read the full report?

The complete consultant report, covering the methodology, the Gabriola case study, and the appendices, is posted on the Islands Trust website: [Islands Trust Freshwater Footprint report](#). The staff reports and meeting records of the Gabriola Local Trust Committee are on the [Gabriola OCP review page](#).

59. How do I find records about my well?

The Province's [GWELLS well registry](#) holds well construction records, depths, and reported yields, searchable by address or map. The Regional District of Nanaimo's [Depth2Water](#) site shows monitoring well data for the region.

60. Where can I watch the project presentations?

The March 23, 2026 special business meeting, including the staff presentations, the consultant presentation, and the moderated question and answer session, was recorded, and the recording and presentation files are posted to the [meeting event page](#). The full agenda package is available through the [Gabriola OCP review page](#).

61. How can I stay involved?

Community members can stay involved throughout the review. Follow the [Gabriola OCP review](#) page for meetings and engagement opportunities, attend Local Trust Committee meetings, and write to freshwater@islandstrust.bc.ca with questions or local knowledge; resident observations are part of the science.

62. Where can I see the maps?

The maps can be viewed in three places. The draft OCP maps, including the Freshwater Hazard Area and the Critical Aquifer Recharge Area, are part of the draft OCP on the [Gabriola OCP review page](#). The science maps and figures are in the [consultant report](#) and its appendices. The underlying geospatial data layers were delivered with full spatial metadata for use in mapping systems.

63. Who do I contact about the OCP review itself?

Freshwater questions go to freshwater@islandstrust.bc.ca. Questions about the OCP review as a whole, covering process, timelines, and policies beyond water, go to the planning team through the [Gabriola OCP review page](#) or northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca. Both routes reach staff who will answer or pass the question to the right person.

Key references, collected in one place:

- [Islands Trust Freshwater Footprint report \(GW Solutions, methodology and Gabriola case study\)](#)
- [Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability programs](#)
- [Gabriola Official Community Plan review](#)
- [Provincial well registry \(GWELLS\)](#)
- [Regional District of Nanaimo well monitoring \(Depth2Water\)](#)
- [Island Health drinking water programs](#)
- [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality \(Health Canada\)](#)

Questions that are not answered here may be sent to freshwater@islandstrust.bc.ca. This guide is a living document and will be updated as the OCP review proceeds.



**Budget Funding Request
Short-Form Business Case**

ATTACHMENT 6

Completion of this form initiates a request to the management team, Financial Planning Committee (FPC), and ultimately Trust Council for allocation funding in the next fiscal year budget. The form is to be completed and submitted at the start of the decision making process. The business case forms part of the Annual Budget Process (refer to Islands Trust Council Budget Process Policy 6.3.i).

TO BE COMPLETED BY INITIATOR

Requested by (Committee or Operational Unit): GABRIOLA LTC	Budget Source (select all that apply):
Department: LPS-Planning Services	☒ Specific Project Funding (select all that apply) ☐ Third Party Contractors ☒ Staff Travel Expense ☐ Staff Overtime Expense ☐ New Staff Member – Temporary for project ☐ Computer Hardware/Software ☐ Furniture & Equipment ☐ Computer Hardware/Software/Supplies ☐ New Staff Resources (see Staff Costing Tool) ☐ Permanent ☐ Temporary Temp Duration: _____ ☐ Other – please describe:
Name of Request: Phase 3 - Gabriola OCP and LUB Review - Major Project (Year 3 of project)	
\$ Value of Request (indicate by fiscal year <u>and</u> total if project is multi-year): 2027-2028 - \$22,000 Total to-date: \$160,000 2023-24 -/2024 = \$18,000 2024-25-/2025 = \$77,000 2025-26 = \$30,000 2026- 27 = \$35,000	
Date of Submission to Finance: September 2026	Funding Required for (date range): April 1, 2027-March 31, 2028

TIE TO ISLANDS TRUST GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Trust Council [Strategic Plan 2025-2028](#) contains objectives to:

- Preserve, protect and advocate for forest and terrestrial ecosystems
- To preserve and protect marine ecosystems
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts
- Strengthen Housing Affordability Throughout the Islands Trust Area
- Engage with Indigenous Governing Bodies and Indigenous Peoples on governance, growth management, heritage and ecosystem protection, and climate change

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:

The Gabriola Island OCP and LUB has not been substantially updated since 1997 and 1999 respectively. The review is introducing a new OCP format and substantially update the bylaws addressing a number of Islands Trust Strategic objectives and emerging issues. As the first substantial OCP/LUB review undertaken by the regional planning team, the project and resulting bylaw amendments will serve as a model for other LTC OCP/LUB reviews.

With this business case the LTC is seeking the funds to support the completion of Phase 4 of the Gabriola OCP Review Project. While originally anticipated to be complete by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year, the need for additional time for the Architectural Overview Assessment (AOA) which will inform OCP implementation, as well as, communications and engagement to report on OCP review implications requires an additional round of funding.

It is anticipated that by September 2026 the draft OCP will be through first reading. This business case is based on the possibility that the OCP may not be granted second reading by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year and more time will be needed to complete the AOA.

With this business case the LTC is seeking the funds to support Phase 4 – Project Completion in 2027/28.

PROJECTED RESULTS/DELIVERABLES for 2027/28: /**Phase 4****Fiscal 2027/28 \$22,000:**

- AOA Part 2
- Communications and Engagement
- Legal contingency

The Gabriola OCP process will provide model policies and process for other LTCs and a model process to demonstrate the successive process of updating the LUB to ensure OCP consistency.

Project Phases:**Phase 4 (Part 1) Fiscal 2026/2027 (\$35,000)****Achieved:**

- Focussed public engagement
- Focussed legal review
- OCP Policy Drafting
- Development Approval Information Bylaw drafting

On going and to come:

- Public engagement between readings
- Continuing First Nations engagement
- LUB drafting
- Development Approval Information Bylaw - second reading*
- OCP- second reading*
- LUB update for consistency – second reading*
- AOA Phase 1 – data gathering and analysis
- Additional focused legal review

*First reading is planned for September 2026. Timing of second and third reading will depend on timing of first reading.

Phase 3 Fiscal 2025/2026 (\$35,000):

- Public Engagement on growth management
- OCP Drafting including integrating freshwater footprint analysis
- DPA prioritization (analysis and discussion)
- Focussed legal review
- AOA Part 1

Phase 2 Fiscal 2024/2025 (\$77,000) - Data Collection and Discussion

- First Nations consultation
- Compiling baseline/technical information
- Suitable Land Analysis
- Freshwater Footprint Analysis
- Engagement on key topics
- Initiation of bylaw drafting

Phase 1 Fiscal 2023/2024 \$18,000 – Gabriola Visioning 2050

- Initial FN consultation
- APC/HAPC/Community Engagement
- Public Education

RISK ASSESSMENT:

Factors potentially affecting the timing of project deliverables:

- The LTC requiring more community engagement prior to first reading
- Staff requiring more time to integrate the feedback from the community, referral agencies and First Nations prior to first reading
- More time required to complete the AOA (procurement process has not yet begun)
- First Nation capacity to engage may not align with project timelines

Financial implications:

- Cost may exceed the budget due to additional consultation needs or other factors.

Resource requirements:

- RPT has allocated time to the continuation of this project in anticipation of budget approval.
- Overall staff resourcing from the RPT to complete all major projects is limited and may not be able to accommodate any extensions to project timeline and work scope.
- Overtime hours have not been estimated at this time, however it is reasonable to expect based on a project of this kind.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Option 1: Proceed no further. Staff time and funding are not allocated to the project. Under this alternative the project does not complete proceed through bylaw readings.

Option 2: Reduced funding. In this case retaining the amount for legal contingency is recommended. This will primarily impact public engagement opportunities and the ability to complete the AOA.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS:

- Allocation of planning services staff time (Regional Planning Team and staff support)
- First Nations engagement
- The project would be considered successfully completed if the amendments to the OCP and LUB are adopted.
- Success could be measured over the longer term through measurables such as improved relations with First Nations and updated policy and regulatory bylaws to address their interests.
- Success can also be measured by evaluating how many LTCs are able to use the model policies and model process of updating their LUBs for OCP consistency.

RECOMMENDED OPTION:

The present funding request is for \$22,000 for fiscal 2027/28 to allow the Gabriola Island OCP-LUB project to progress through the completion of this Project.

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS:Quantitative Analysis:

\$22,000 for fiscal 2027/28:

- \$15,000 – AOA Phase 2
- \$3,000 – legal contingency
- \$4,000 – Communications and Engagement

Qualitative Analysis:

- The completion of the Gabriola Island OCP Review will provide a balanced approach to protecting the environment and cultural heritage while addressing housing need.
- The project provides a template policies and process for other LTCs
- The trust that has been building between Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Islands Trust will be challenged and the process of engagement will be undermined if the project is not successfully completed.

PURCHASING PROCEDURE:

Appropriate procurement procedure will be followed when soliciting legal advice and hiring the consultant to do the AOA. Snuneymuxw First Nation will participate in the hiring and oversight of the AOA consultant.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

Deliverable/Milestone	Date
Phase 1 AOA Completion	March 31, 2027
Phase 2 AOA Completion	September 2027
Community Information Meeting	April 2027
Public Hearing/ Third Reading	May 2027
Post Approval Communications and Engagement	May – September 2027

STAFF RESOURCING:

- (0.40 FTE) Regional Planning Team Project Manager
- (0.20 FTE) Island Planner Support
- (0.20 FTE) Communication Support
- Limited support needed from Planning Team Assistant and GIS staff

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION:

- Significant engagement with the Snuneymuxw First Nation has strengthen this project and provided insight into how to work with First Nations governments on major projects.
- The Freshwater footprint work has played a significant role in informing OCP policy providing a methodology for future OCP reviews and major housing projects.
- Public engagement has been done in a focussed way supported by a number of supportive materials providing a template process for future engagement throughout the Trust Area.

Requested by: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

Prepared by: Narissa Chadwick, Island Planner / June 29, 2026

Reviewed by: Mary Storzer, Regional Planning Manager / June 30, 2026