

July 27, 2026

To: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

Submitted by: Deborah Ferens

NEW 1.1 Object of the Islands Trust Legislation

The object of the Islands Trust, established by British Columbia law, is to preserve and protect the Trust Area (islands and waters) and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, First Nations, and other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.

NEW 1.1.1 Purpose of the Object

The Islands Trust legislated object is central to the Official Community Plan and significantly informs land-use objectives and policies.

Comments:

The very first mention of the Islands Trust Object is in Section 1.3.2 "The Islands Trust" on page 15 of the draft OCP.

The object is the original "vision" for the Trust Area and deserves to have a prominent and early placement in Gabriola's OCP. It is the original context and the original values envisioned by the BC government and residents in the early 1970s.

1.4.1 Community Vision

Suggested Changes highlighted

Gabriola Island is an active, resilient, inclusive and sustainable Island 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 within the Island's ecological limits. The Island fosters a rural sensibility with a strong sense of belonging and care, supporting diverse and affordable housing, accessible services, active and low-impact transportation, vibrant arts and culture, resilient local food systems and livelihoods, and collaborative action among residents, First Nations, and all levels of government.

Comments:

The Community Vision (1.4.1) is lacking in concrete “island” imagery and references. Substitute “Coombs” or “Ladysmith” or “Black Creek” in place of Gabriola Island in the first line of the vision statement which fundamentally describes any wonderful, special rural community on Vancouver Island. What makes Gabriola fundamentally different than these other rural communities is the fact that it is an island, completely surrounded by water, its terrain largely forested, with its rocky cliffs and coastal sandstone formations sculpted by glacial ice and coastal erosion. On almost all the Gulf Islands in the Trust Area, you can stand in the middle of the island, walk in any direction and within a relatively short time you can reach the marine shoreline. Try reaching coastal waters in all directions in a short time when leaving Ladysmith, Coombs or Black Creek without first encountering large open untreed areas, commercial and industrial zones, and large cleared farm acreages.

You can drive from Victoria or Campbell directly to smaller rural communities on Vancouver Island. From anywhere on Vancouver Island you can only reach Gabriola Island by a marine vessel. Crossing over to Gabriola by ferry, boat, kayak, canoe, rowboat, paddleboard is a fundamentally different experience than driving directly from one location to another.

Yes, Gabriola includes an extremely important rural landscape which contributes hugely to the sense of community and valued characteristics. But an island isolated by water develops unique ecosystems, provides subtle but distinct sensory details and is often more associated with characteristics of serenity, escape and respite.

Climate Change Emergency Declaration

Add new 1.2.3 in Section 1.2 Community Context

1.2.3 Climate Emergency Declaration

On Mar 4, 2019 Islands Trust Council unanimously adopted the Climate Emergency Declaration. (Release: March 25 Islands Trust Council Declares Climate Emergency)

“Islands Trust is joining local governments around the world in declaring a climate change emergencyThe Islands Trust Council voted unanimously to join Vancouver, the Capital Regional District, Los Angeles, London and a growing number of regional and local governments internationally in calling for an urgent response to the threats and costs posed by climate change”.

COMMENTS:

Climate Change is more than an environmental crisis. It is a systemic crisis that is reshaping global economics, human health and society.

It requires a high level statement in the OCP in the keeping with the two significant Declarations of 2019.

From this high level acknowledgement within the “Community Context” section, the climate change and climate readiness goals and objectives in the OCP flow with greater significance and urgency.

DARK SKY PRINCIPLE

Add to Part 2: Goals and Objectives

2.2.2. Protection of Natural Environment and Biodiversity

New Objective 2.2.2.7 Artificial Light

Adopt land use policies and regulations to mandate dark sky-friendly lighting in new commercial, industrial and multi-family developments in keeping with the Dark Sky Principles which reduce light pollution, cuts energy waste and protects nocturnal wildlife and keeps star filled skies visible.

COMMENT: Several Vancouver Island communities (Comox Valley RD, Saanich, North Cowichan, Metchosin, Ladysmith and Nanaimo Huu-ay-aht First Nation have included dark sky principles and regulations into OCP and strategic policies.

Tree Protection

1.2.6 Natural Environment and Biodiversity

Add to the end of the final paragraph:

The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Trees officially recognizes trees' rights to life, integrity, natural growth and regeneration.

COMMENT: This sentiment is largely reflected in community context, vision, values and objectives "to preserve large, contiguous forested areas for biodiversity, conservation, wildlife habitat and low level recreation" (2.2.2.6)

Forest Protection Designation

2.4.3.5 Forest Protection (FP)

Make new Policy 2.4.3.5.1 Ecosystem Value

"To ensure maximum tree protection and preserve large contiguous forested areas, planning and zoning decisions shall weigh the ecological and cultural values of trees and include local bylaws:

- To heavily restrict unnecessary or arbitrary removal of trees

- To ensure robust replacement policies when removal is unavoidable.

- To safeguard a trees' natural growth and regeneration

Renumber current 2.4.3.5.1 to 2.4.3.5.2 and renumber 2.4.3.5.2 to 2.4.3.5.3

COMMENT:

The suggested new policy 2.4.3.5.1 is in keeping with many references throughout the draft OCP with high level statements regarding the critical and important preservation and protection of forests and tree canopy on the island, but the OCP is lacking objectives and policies to support the values and context.

On June 9, 2026 a small town in Quebec, Terasse-Vaudreuil, became the first municipality in Canada to adopt a resolution recognizing trees as living beings with fundamental legal rights by signing on to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Trees.

If corporations can have rights so can trees.