

The Object of the Islands Trust: *Raising our sights!*

Submission to Trust Council

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Islands 2050: The Future of the Trust Area

- What can we achieve much sooner than 30 years hence?
- What positive opportunities can be seized now?
- What problems must be solved in much less than 30 years?



Excelling in the Trust Object

*The object of the trust is to **preserve and protect** the trust area and its unique amenities and environment **for the benefit of** the residents of the trust area and of British Columbia generally, **in cooperation with** municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.*



...“to preserve and protect”...

- Let's expand “***preserve and protect***” beyond the defensive precautionary role to “***enrich and enhance***” for benefit of local residents, all British Columbians and visitors from around the world.
- Examples:
 - Trail network development
 - Pro-active forest restoration
 - Encouragement of new cultural facilities

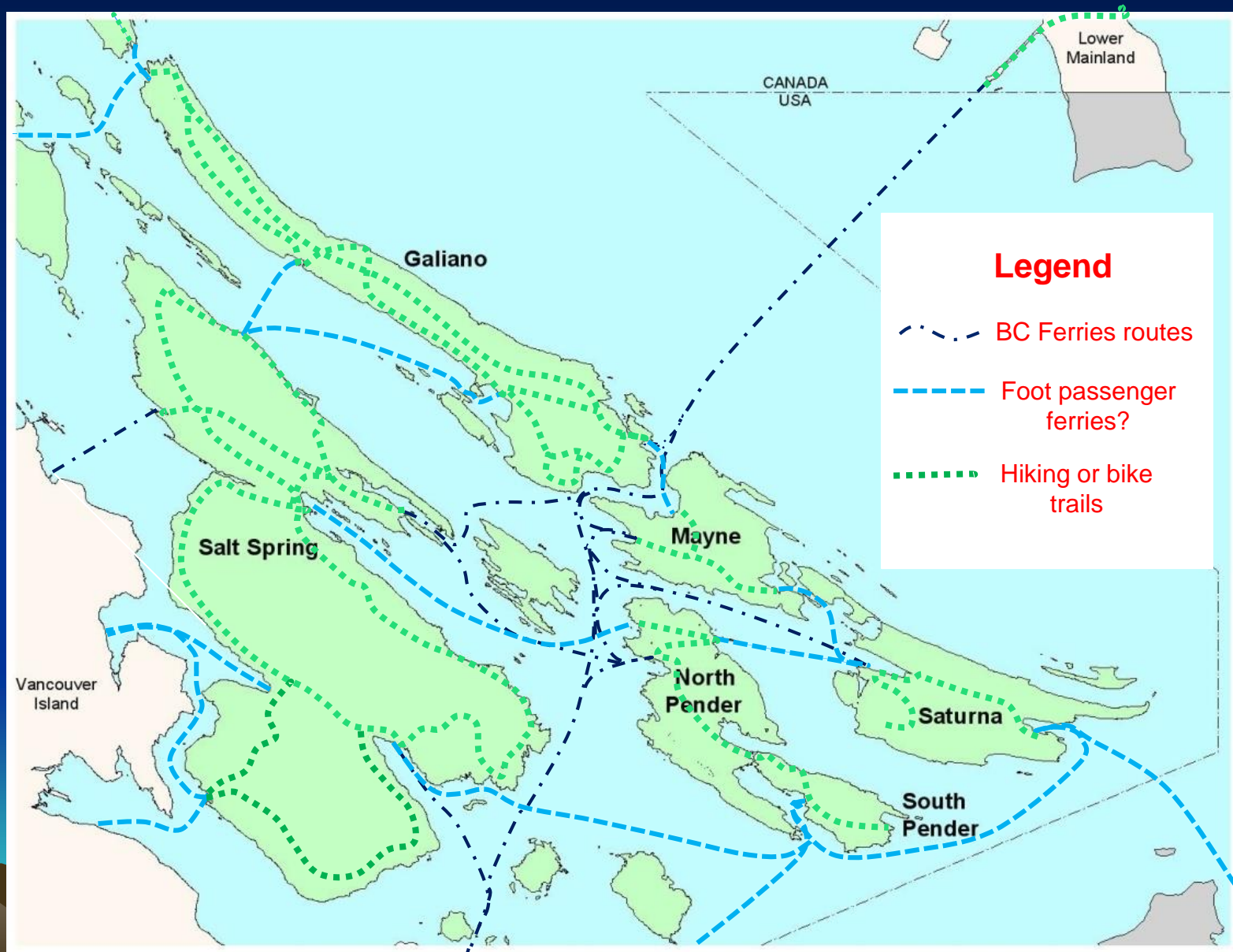


Island and Inter-island Trail Networks

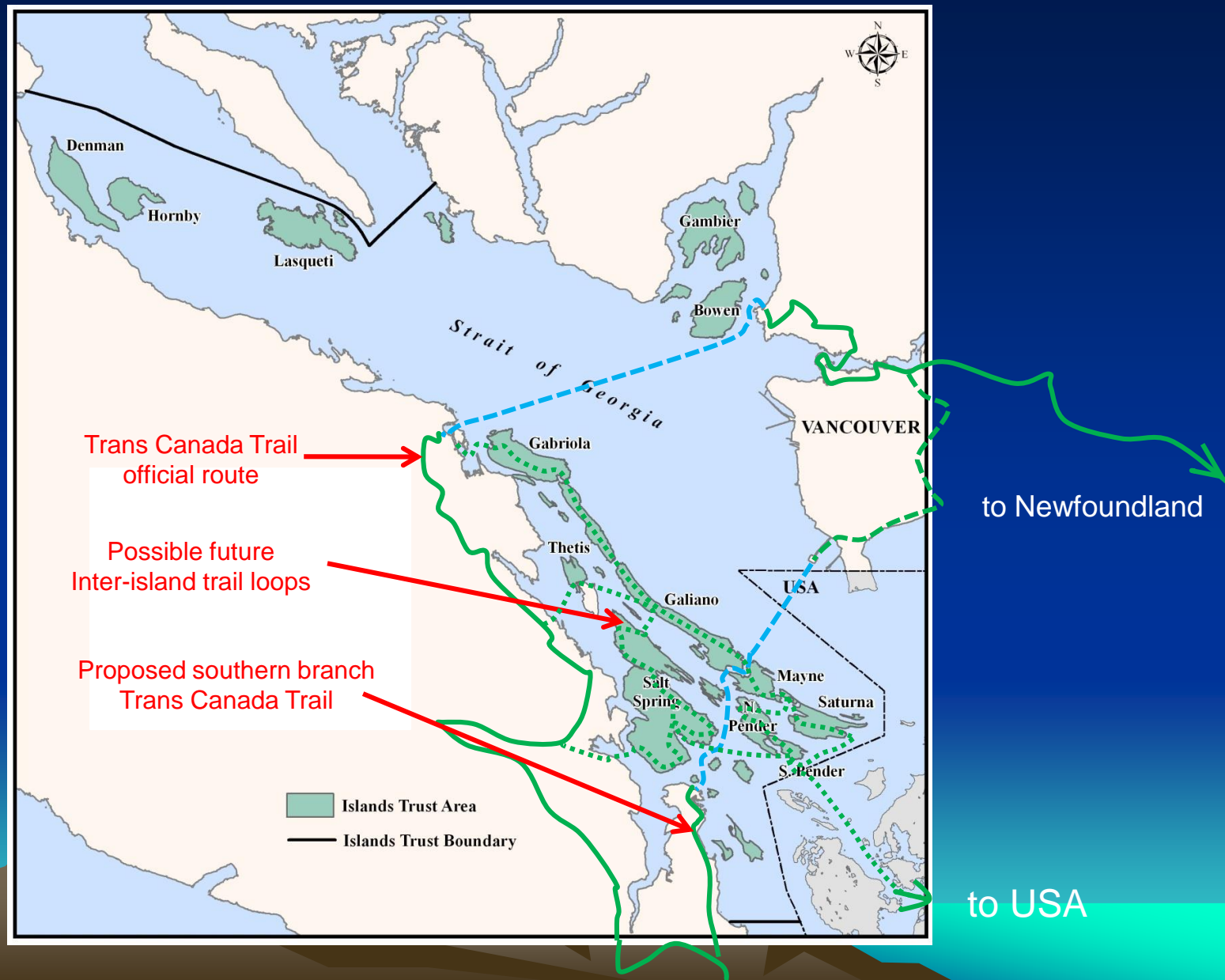
- Public trail networks are rapidly proliferating across the islands and shorelines of the Salish Sea.
- Galiano and Gabriola have been especially successful in obtaining voluntary trail access agreements over private property.
- The traditional concept of private property is adjusted to enable responsible public enjoyment of designated routes.
- Senior governments can be invited to match the volunteer construction of trail networks on each island with subsidies for foot passenger ferry links between the islands.
- A Pender-Saturna-Mayne-Galiano-Valdes-Gabriola outer loop from Swartz Bay to Nanaimo would rival the West Coast Trail.
- Provincial support and investment is needed for safe bicycle routes.



Sketch concept for Gulf Islands trail loops



Inter-Island Trail Loops from Trans Canada Trail



Galiano Island bikeway project



Climate change mitigation: protecting forest carbon sinks from wildfire

- Natural forests on our islands are mostly preserved and protected in a condition of benign neglect.
- This is not good enough for abandoned industrial forestry plantations.
- Major efforts in forest restoration and fuel reduction must be mobilized.
- Forestry cooperatives can be organized to include:
 - private and public landowners
 - forestry experts and contractors
 - strong conservancy participation.
- A forestry cooperative initiative is underway on Galiano.



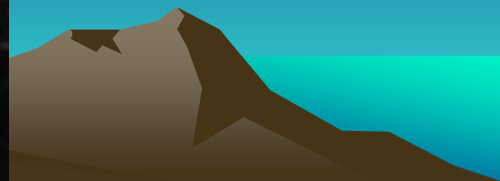


Shaggy young forest in need of work

Douglas-fir plantation
in provincial parkland
has never been
pruned or thinned.

Left alone, this forest
will eventually shake
out after years of
intensified fire risk.

We can do better!



Fuel load reduction in progress

before and after 1 man-hour of pruning and brushing

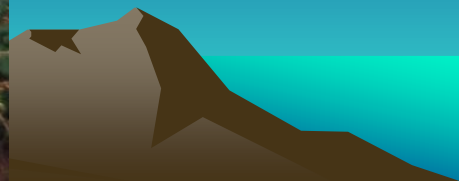




Restoration of young forest

Pruning and thinning in this Managed Forest have reduced fuel load, brought light to the forest floor, and improved biodiversity.

This is labour-intensive, but very rewarding.



...“in cooperation with”...

Islands Trust and Managed Forest Council

- Sustainable forestry is a fully shared objective.
- Performance by Managed Forest owners on approved management plans is strictly enforced.
- Large clear-cuts in the Trust area should be banned, either by decree of the Managed Forest Council or by voluntary compliance in landowners' forest management plans.
- Conflict: *Galiano forest zone bylaws are misaligned with PMFL Act and Regulations which unconditionally allow one dwelling per Managed Forest parcel.*



Cooperation at 1627 Fort Street facilitated by one flight of stairs!



... “for the benefit of” ...

- Galiano Island has been bogged down in frozen conflict since 1991.
- Failure to resolve this forest zone impasse has been very harmful to local residents and the wider general public.
- Conflict has become institutionalized, with each side nursing its own “*groupthink*” narrative blaming the other side.
- The loggers who offended islanders through heavy clear-cutting a quarter century ago have long since gone.
- The remaining forest owners are well-intentioned people who generally share community values in caring for the island.



FROZEN CONFLICT

Galiano forest owners are not allowed to build a home on larger unsubdivided “F1” parcels unless they rezone by entering unpalatable forestry covenants on top of their Managed Forest commitments. They may also be required to donate land for public road allowances.

Result: civil disobedience, many homes built, prosecutions that can't be prosecuted, terminal unenforceability of bylaws.

Further result: large tracts of Galiano have been blockaded from community and public access for 24 years.

There are about 70 “F1” zone parcels. At the present rate of about one rezoning completed every four years, this conflict would be continuing far beyond 2050.



The Stevens rezoning derailment

- Fred and Isobel Stevens own District Lot 37, which is Managed Forest with a large gravel pit for Fred's excavation business.
- In 2005 the Trust launched a court action for removal of the Stevens home as not allowed by the "F1" zoning of DL 37.
- This court action has not been prosecuted because of vehement community reaction at the time, but is still hanging over the Stevens household.
- The previous LTC agreed to rezone the gravel pit and the residential footprint to "Forest Industrial" zoning, while the owners agreed to donate 6 acres of land for the east side road allowance.
- The enabling bylaws were taken all the way through first, second and third readings, public hearing, and ministerial approval.
- The new LTC has declined to adopt the approved bylaws, instead changing its mind to propose relocating the road allowance deeper into DL 37, and asking for a sustainable forestry covenant which is not required by the zoning.



Suggested pathway forward

1. The Galiano LTC is urged to adopt the Stevens rezoning bylaws ASAP.
2. The larger issue of allowing one home per existing parcel can be resolved by positive movement on both sides.
3. Movement by the forest owners should include:
 - Strong commitments to protect the integrity of the forest canopy
 - Generous public access to the forests for emergency corridors and recreational trails (already forthcoming to a large extent!)
 - Reservation of needed public road alignments for future acquisition at fair market value in the absence of subdivisions.
4. The OCP should be amended to allow one dwelling on each existing forest parcel of any size, in consistency with PMFL Act.
5. Provincial acquisition of the east side road allowance needed under the road network plan and for a safe north-south bikeway.

The leap from deadlock to cooperation requires leadership.



Tempering the “pound of flesh” mentality

- Recent examples of cultural and tourism facility proposals...
 - Buddhist meditation retreat centre
 - Literary and artistic cultural centre
 - Family holiday resort with nostalgic flavour
 - Camping shelters.
- Instinctive reaction of Trust...
 - First reflex response: **NO!**
 - Second reflex response: **we might consider a scaled-down version if you donate 75% of your land in a process taking several years.**
- Innovative proposals should be welcomed, objectively evaluated, and not necessarily penalized.



Reflections for the Islands Trust

- The Trustees on each island have a key role as community leaders.
- We all take great pride in local environmental leadership.
- We are cultivating a ***higher environmental ethic*** which
 - mobilizes energetic community action on forest stewardship to restore biodiversity and protect carbon sinks from wildfire.
 - welcomes gentle public recreation on large blocks of private land, thus extending well-tended “virtual parkland” across the landscape.
- Trust Council provides overall guidance, and may need to provide mediation or other assistance when breakdowns happen.

