

Delegation To March 2022 Trust Council Meeting **Submitted by "Friends of the Gulf Islands"**

My presentation to you today is on behalf of many Gulf Island residents who came together recently as "Friends of the Gulf Islands" as signatories of a petition presented to you at the December Trust Council meeting. That petition requested that the Trust Policy Statement make protection of the natural environment and preservation of the rural character of the islands the top priority. It also requested that no further rezoning be allowed in areas where overall ecosystem health is threatened, or where the quantity or quality of freshwater supplies for already-approved development may be adversely affected. I want to speak to you specifically about freshwater protection today.

It has been stated by William Shulba, the Trust's Freshwater Specialist that freshwater is the most precious resource of the Trust area. The fact that a hydrogeologist is the Trust's only environmental expert on staff also emphasizes the importance of this natural resource.

However, it is the concern of some Trust area residents who have followed their LTCs' land use deliberations and decision-making, that current Trust Policy Statement directives 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 "Freshwater Resources" do not in reality serve to "protect and preserve" our freshwater resources. Further, our concern is that the proposed revision to the Trust Policy Statement as represented in Draft Bylaw 183, specifically through directives 4.2 "Freshwater Stewardship Policies" will also not serve to "protect and preserve" our freshwater resources.

in the current Trust Policy Statement, Directive 4.4.2 Freshwater Resources states:

Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address measures that ensure:

- neither the density nor intensity of land use is increased in areas which are known to have a problem with the quality or quantity of the supply of freshwater,
- water quality is maintained, and
- existing, anticipated and seasonal demands for water are considered and allowed for.

The public believes that these directives ensure that;

1. there is the quantity and quality of freshwater necessary to sustain the proposed scale of a development before an LTC, and
2. that neighbouring wells will not be disadvantaged.

Yet, we consistently observe that, when the Trust Policy Statement Directive Checklist is presented in a Staff Report, staff advise that the bylaws being considered "are not contrary to or at variance with the Islands Trust Policy Statement" Freshwater

Resources Directives and the LTCs accept the staff recommendations and approve the bylaws.

In several examples I will cite, there appears to be no evidence in either the Staff Reports or in LTC deliberations, or even in the commercial water licence approvals by FLNRO, that **already occurring problems with freshwater; anticipated demands**, namely already zoned-for build-out of the adjacent neighbourhoods or **seasonal demands** were or will be taken into consideration.

On **Galiano**, in the case of a high-density housing rezoning before the LTC (GL-RZ-2019.1 GIGARHS), many letters were submitted to the LTC and to FLNRO on already occurring water problems of nearby wells. The strata adjacent to the land for this proposed 48-person multi-unit development is only 33% built-out and the surrounding neighbourhood is less than 50% built-out. All are reliant on an aquifer rated as "low productivity".

On **Salt Spring Island**, Bylaw 461 was passed allowing full time occupancy of suites on over 1500 properties, many in an area where water shortages were projected and later confirmed. Later, Bylaw 512 was passed, rezoning 411 properties to allow full time occupancy of cottages, many in the north of the island where many homes already had inadequate groundwater. In neither case were current water shortages, climate change effects or anticipated demand considered in selecting the areas for increased density.

On **Gabriola**, (GB-RZ-2020.1 Gabriola Housing Society), in a rezoning for a multi-dwelling complex for 70 people, there is no evidence that in the same area, the water demands of an approved 27 lot subdivision were considered, in an area of high density near the school, three malls, two seniors housing complexes, two medical/dental clinics and a neighbourhood of approximately 150 wells.

And there appears to be no evidence that **seasonal demands** from longer drought periods due to climate change and increases in water volume usage that occur at the most water-stressed time of year due to part-time residents, visitors and garden irrigation were or will be taken into consideration in LTC Land use decision making. We know our groundwater in the Trust area comes solely from precipitation. We also know that precipitation for 8 of the 12 months in 2021 was well below normal. This should give us pause.

The Trust Policy Statement requires that "local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws address measures that ensure" these directives are observed. Cumulative environmental effects of development must be assessed. Indeed, that is surely the heart of the Islands Trust Act and Object.

Instead, the Trust Policy Directives Checklist, when presented to our LTCs, appears to be a meaningless document, simply words on paper, not offering any accurate assessment of risks to freshwater resources where there is valuable local knowledge of

water problems, where it is not evident that anticipated and seasonal demands have been allowed for and where a precautionary approach and a check on development should be recommended. The communities who are concerned about the environmental impact of developments are being misled and misinformed.

Our requests are as follows:

1. When it comes to applications for commercial water licences, we request that Staff ask FLNRO to specifically assess the cumulative effect of those licences, providing clear evidence that any already occurring water problems have been investigated and build-out is taken into account.
2. We request that the Trust Council give the issue of Freshwater Resources their most serious consideration and rectify what appears to be a major implementation flaw in the Trust Policy Statement, addressing the most basic but critical question - will there be sufficient water for all, now and in the future?

Presented by Jennifer Margison

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for Friends of the Gulf Islands representatives:

Jacinthe Eastick, Gabriola Island, [REDACTED]

Ali Svendsen, Gabriola Island, [REDACTED]

Maxine Leichter, Salt Spring Island, [REDACTED]

Carmita Menyhart, Galiano Island, [REDACTED]