

## **Presentation to Gabriola Local Trust Committee (November 20 2025)**

My name is Rob Brockley, and I speak to you on behalf of Gabriola Land and Trails Trust.

In early 2022, GaLTT approached the other conservancies and land trusts that operate within the Trust Area to ask if they would agree to collaborate on a review of a draft revision of the Islands Trust Policy Statement that had recently been released for public comment. Eleven conservancies ultimately participated, and we submitted our comprehensive review to the Islands Trust in March of that year.

Our review enthusiastically endorsed many of the new commitments and policies aimed at protecting lands and waters in the Trust Area and made several specific recommendations for improvement.

We were delighted to see clearly stated recognition that the Islands Trust currently lacks the jurisdictional powers to fulfill its ‘preserve and protect’ mandate, and we strongly endorsed the Trust’s new commitment to move from “encourage” to “advocate” when dealing with the provincial government and other agencies on issues affecting the environment.

We were especially happy to see the new, strongly worded Forest Stewardship commitments and policies, and the Island Trust’s commitment to seek more authority over forest harvesting and tree cutting. As Trustees, you know that unregulated tree cutting on privately owned lands is a leading cause of the relentless fragmentation of natural habitat in the Trust Area.

Three years have passed, and we now have yet another draft Policy Statement in front of us. Sadly, it’s a very different and, in our opinion, far less effective document than the previous draft.

Much of the language that the 11 land trusts enthusiastically endorsed in 2022 regarding Forest Stewardship is absent from the current draft.

Gone is Trust Council’s previous commitment that clear-cutting of forests and logging of old growth is inappropriate anywhere in the Trust Area due to the adverse impacts these activities have on the fragile ecosystems of the Trust Area.

The associated Forest Stewardship coordinating policy that would advocate to the provincial government to grant Islands Trust the necessary jurisdictional authority to prohibit clearcutting and logging of old growth and the ability to regulate tree cutting, has also been removed from the current draft.

Also missing is the previous Directive Policy to designate forest ecosystem reserves where no extraction would take place in order to promote the retention of native biodiversity.

As a land trust dedicated to the protection and preservation of natural areas, GaLTT is deeply disappointed that these important forest stewardship commitments and policies have been removed from the current draft Policy Statement.

The sensitive ecosystems of the Trust Area are under intense pressure from population growth and the effects of climate change. The Islands Trust clearly does not have the tools at its disposal to effectively carry out its 'preserve and protect' mandate with respect to the environment. At the very least, we believe the Policy Statement should be honest enough to acknowledge that fact.

As you know, many islands in the Trust Area currently fall far short of BC's stated '30 by 30' conservation commitments for lands and waters. Gabriola sits near the bottom of the list at 13% of its lands currently protected. GaLTT is very disappointed that the draft Policy Statement does not include this aspirational conservation goal.

Finally, the 2022 draft Policy Statement referenced research by the Islands Trust Conservancy indicating that some islands in the Trust Area, including Gabriola, are approaching, or have already surpassed, accepted thresholds of human disturbance, above which ecosystem health is known to decline. GaLTT is alarmed that this important statement has been removed from the current draft.

The Islands Trust Policy Statement is a foundational document that outlines the principles and policies used by the Islands Trust Council to fulfill its mandate. However, strong policies – and the document does contain many good policies – are simply not enough. Unless the Islands Trust commits to a tolerable cap on human disturbance, the relentless pressures on the Trust Area's unique environment will inevitably continue. We'll be destined to passively watch as it slowly disappears forever, and the Islands Trust will have failed to accomplish what it was created to do.

In GaLTT's opinion, the current draft document falls far short of what is needed to effectively 'preserve and protect' the fragile ecosystems of the Trust Area. I urge our Trustees to soberly reflect on these shortcomings before submitting their recommendations to Trust Council on whether it should be adopted.