

From: Liz Montague [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 11:11 AM
To: Islands2050
Cc: Kristina Evans; Dag Falck; Kim Stockdill; Tobi Elliott
Subject: Draft Policy Statement - further comments

February 11, 2026.

Greetings, Trustees and Islands Trust Council, Policymakers and Decision-makers.

Having examined the draft policy statement and completed the survey, I now offer more detailed comments.

In my view, the increased attention in the draft policy statement to development, infrastructure, housing and tourism, all human-centred categories, distracts from the core responsibility of the Islands Trust. Including these human-centred headings in "unique amenities" is a wrong-headed approach. These human-centred concerns are in no way unique to the Islands Trust area. They are not in need of preserving or protecting. Including them confuses and obscures the original meaning of "unique amenities" defined generally as distinctive natural features of a landscape, including native species and local biodiversity, climate, an island's landscape, topography and environment. These NATURAL amenities represent the focus that originally inspired the "preserve and protect" mandate and the creation of the Islands Trust. The mandate to preserve and protect the unique amenities and environment is, after all, the Island Trust's *raison d'être*.

If anything, the increasing human-centered development and densification constitute the threat from which the natural amenities need protection. Loss of focus and clarity with regard to the meaning of "unique amenities" in need of preservation and protection would inevitably create confusion as to the core purposes and goals for which the Islands Trust was created. When the Island Trust loses its core focus - that of protecting NATURAL amenities - it also undermines its own legitimacy and reason for being.

Furthermore, the goals of preserving and protecting the natural environment and unique amenities, must include stronger statements regarding limits to growth and development. That language in the draft policy statement is weak or absent. Without it, the draft policy statement misses the mark. It does not rise to the imperatives of the present moment with rapid population growth on our islands at a time of increasing temperatures, warming oceans and general climate uncertainty.

For example, one key concern for our islands is water security. In his presentation at the Pender Island Community Center in 2015, Dr. Jim Henderson, an oft-cited authority on water issues on the Pender Islands, emphasized that rainfall alone provides islands with their freshwater supply. That fact, by itself, signals a clear limit to sustainable development. We know that climate change introduces increasing uncertainties with regard to rainfall. Our islands have fluctuating levels of annual rainfall and the year 2025 was relatively dry. As a result, many of our wells went dry in late Summer and Autumn. Dr. Henderson emphasized that sustainable, responsible planning must be guided by an appreciation for an island's limited capacity, its "carrying capacity." Rather than calculating potential for growth, it is limits to growth and development that are needed. These limits must be clearly defined, rigorously assessed, understood, tracked, established and maintained.

In addition to considering freshwater security, when calculating the potential for building lots and subdivisions on an island, all the inevitable losses must also be factored into the equation. These include loss of natural, undisturbed wildlife habitat and corridors, and increased burdens on the freshwater supply available for ALL species. The increasing noise, disturbance and traffic that accompany growing density and development affect all species who inhabit this landscape. The rare peace and quiet, and the slower-paced existence as experienced by plant, bird, animal as well as human communities, ought to be included in the cherished values that merit protection.

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In my view, an updated policy statement would fortify the preserve and protect focus, better establish the limits inherent in sustainable development planning, and expand educational opportunities and programs so that the “preserve and protect” values can be better understood and supported.

With appreciation for your work and service,
Liz Montague, former Trustee and 17-year full-time resident,
South Pender Island.