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Sent: Wednesday, February 2, 2022 10:28 PM
To: Islands2050
Cc: MARY BETH RONDEAU
Subject: Revision of the Draft Policy Bylaw to include Forest Fire Risk Management

Forest Fire Risk Management

The Islands Trust's Draft Policy Bylaw does not adequately address the issue of forest fires within the Trust Area and the need for proactive Fire Management policies and actions. The only mention of forest fires is a single bullet in 6.1.18 ("wildfire risk mitigation"). The Draft Policy Bylaw needs to be revised to address forest fire risk and management, before the draft can proceed to first reading.

As witnessed in the past decade, forest fires associated with climate change and human use are resulting in devastating losses of forest ecosystems, biodiversity and infrastructure. Forest fires on the Gulf Islands could result in substantial adverse impacts to forest ecosystems, biodiversity, freshwater systems, groundwater recharge and more, as well as loss of human infrastructure, detrimental effects on Indigenous use and cultural heritage, community heritage, and the residential character of the Trust Area.

The draft Bylaw needs to speak to how forest fire management and response is integrated with Forest Stewardship policies, environmental conservation, land use and development policies, and housing. For example, what is the minimum setback of structures from the forest edge (i.e., relationship between the size of a structure and the cleared building area)? Should new buildings or major renovations in the Trust Area be required to use fire resistant materials? How are water supplies maintained within the Trust Area to respond to forest fires?

To address this deficiency, the Draft Policy Bylaw should clearly describe how the Islands Trust, including Local Trust Committees, will work with provincial government agencies (e.g., BC Wildfire Service) and local community groups to assess and identify forest fire risk and develop appropriate risk management measures that can be incorporated into the Trust's bylaws, as appropriate. Of importance, risk management measures for forest fires need to be integrated with measures for ecosystem conservation (Part 4 of the Draft Bylaw). The Trust should collaborate with programs such as FireSmart BC to identify measures that residents and commercial entities in the Trust Area can use to reduce forest fire risk. The Draft Bylaws might also consider establishing setbacks and vegetation management requirements to reduce forest fire risk.

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