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June 9, 2025

William Shulba

Senior Freshwater Specialist
Islands Trust
200-1627 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8R 1H8

Re: Gabriola Freshwater Footprint Information

Dear Mr. Shulba,

On behalf of Friends of the Gulf Islands and our Gabriola members who attended the May 29 Gabriola Freshwater Footprint Workshop (Session 2), we are writing to request answers to several important questions that were not answered during the session.

We welcome and appreciate the information that has been shared so far, but we are still struggling to fully understand some aspects of the water project, the supporting data, and the implications for land use planning on Gabriola, and for other islands.

1. Concerns Raised by GW Solutions Consultants

During the session, GW Solutions consultants highlighted the following serious concerns:

- Fractured bedrock aquifers are low-yield and highly vulnerable to contamination, seawater intrusion, and climate change.
- Climate change impacts are increasing risks to water quantity and quality.
- Well deepening is increasing, with significant associated risks.
- Saltwater intrusion is increasing.
- Monitoring is limited or absent in many areas, especially in high well-density zones.
- Water quality threats include aquifer overuse, drought, earlier seasonal drawdown, and septic impacts due to reduced dilution.

Do you agree with these concerns? Will they be reflected in the Gabriola Water Budget?

2. Resident Contributions to Data Gaps

How can residents, especially long-time landholders, contribute information to help close the data gaps identified during the session? Just as Indigenous knowledge holders are

now valued, so too should the lived experience of residents inform our collective understanding of historic changes and the current state of water sustainability.

For example, a resident shared that the Lockinvar Village/Triangle area was once well-watered. Their parents had an artesian well that supplied several homes, but now there is little or no groundwater during the dry season. Is such historical knowledge being sought and included in your data gathering? If not, why?

3. Use of Outdated Well Drillers' Reports

Some residents have expressed concern that the well data from Elanco Enterprises (Dakin) and other drillers, currently used by the RDN and GW Solutions, is outdated and no longer reflective of Gabriola's groundwater availability. Has this concern been investigated? If so, what was determined? If not, why not?

4. Monitoring in High-Demand Areas

Is it true that there are no records of water level trends from high-demand, high-density areas? If so, how will this critical data gap be addressed?

5. Need for More Monitoring Wells

It was suggested that Gabriola needs more current data from additional monitoring wells, particularly in areas with high well density. Ms. Barosso, Senior Hydrogeologist, GW Solutions appeared to agree. Do you also agree? If so, is this being recommended and implemented? If not, could you please explain why?

6. Declining Water Levels

GW Solutions' records show a "persistent decline" in groundwater levels on Gabriola over the years. However, the RDN's *Groundwater Connections* report describes trends as only "variable." Will the "persistent decline" be clearly presented in the reports you are releasing to the public? If not, why?

7. Contamination and Saltwater Intrusion

Where in your reports is attention given to the potential contamination of groundwater by septic systems and saltwater intrusion? We understand that many wells on Gabriola are already affected by saltwater intrusion and continue to be used, posing a threat to other wells in the area. Is this correct? Will this threat be addressed in the groundwater budget?

We recognize that significant data has been collected, but we are concerned that key information is still missing. While we are not experts, we believe the concerns outlined above are reasonable and deserve attention. We are trying to become as informed as possible on this critical issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Margison

Friends of the Gulf Islands

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