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Islands Trust Northern Office
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14 October 2022

Subject: **Gambier Island Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw Targeted Review**

Dear Islands Trust Northern Office,

At our 12 October monthly meeting of directors, it was decided to proceed with providing you with our Conservancy's carefully considered input to this subject review by attaching to this letter our response to the 19 questions in the online survey. Our response includes a comment on Question 8 in which there was no opportunity to do so in the online survey. We also feel that lands designated as Wilderness Conservation could have been included in Question 3 along with lands designated as Forestry.

In 2014, our Conservancy led a campaign against the provincial government's plan to log two new large woodlots on the north part of Gambier Island. This campaign, with the help of the Squamish and Tseil-Waututh First Nations, was successful in halting these plans. More recently, during in the past two years, we have been campaigning against plans to log an old growth forest in the headwaters of Whispering Creek which lies within the existing commercial woodlot. These two campaigns demonstrate our desire to protect the forests on Gambier Island's Crown land, so we are very pleased that one of the targets of this OCP review is forest ecosystem protection.

One of our biggest concerns in the existing 2001 OCP that we feel needs to be addressed through this targeted review is Policy 7.26 which is as follows:

- Policy 7.26 The permitted uses in the Wilderness Conservation designation should be:
- i. preservation and conservation of large areas of undisturbed open space;
 - ii. open space to permit water recharge;
 - iii. provincial or regional park;
 - iv. low impact recreation (including hiking and wilderness camping);
 - v. restoration and rehabilitation of natural ecosystems and biodiversity;
 - vi. sustainable harvesting of trees including woodlot and community forest use.

We feel that item vi. is not compatible with items i. through iv., so would like to see it removed in a revised OCP. There was no mention in the online survey of these permitted uses in the Wilderness Conservation zone, so we additionally included this concern of ours in the comments on Question 3.

Due to our interest in protecting old-growth trees on the island, we have this year initiated a project to begin documenting the circumference at breast height and the location of big trees on the island. In April, we documented 40 big trees in the old-growth forest in the headwaters of Whispering Creek. In September, we documented 10 big trees in and nearby the nature reserves in the vicinity of Brigade Bay and Mt Artaban. Due to the importance of these big trees in protecting the forest ecosystem of Gambier Island and their significant role in sequestering CO2 from the atmosphere, we would like to suggest a policy statement in a revised OCP that would emphasize the importance of protecting these big old trees on the island.

Noting the 25 August 2021 Backgrounder for the Trust Council session on tree cutting authority, it looks like the Islands Trust was considering giving local trust committees the same power as municipalities to regulate trees under Section 8 of the Community Charter. Such an initiative would respond nicely to a big tree protection policy in the OCP. Here is an excerpt from the backgrounder:

Local Trust Committees

If the Ministry amends legislation to give local trust committees the same power as municipalities to regulate trees under Section 8 of the Community Charter, then:

1. Local trust committees would have ability to draft bylaws to protect trees for any reason in their local trust areas, provided that the restrictions did not prohibit uses as permitted in the zoning bylaw; and
2. Local trust committees could draft bylaw to prohibit tree cutting, regulate tree cutting, and/or require a permit for the cutting or modifications of trees, but would have no effect on woodlots, land in under the *Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL) Act*, or land covered under the *Forest Act* (e.g. Crown land, community woodlots, road rights-of-way owned by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure).

We hope that our attached answers to the online survey and these additional comments will be a helpful contribution to the OCP review process.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Scholefield, President

Cc:

Kate-Louise Stamford, Islands Trust Trustee for the Gambier Island Local Trust Area
 Khelsilem, *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation)* Council Chairperson
 Chief Thomas, Tsleil-Waututh Nation
 Suzanne Senger, Executive Director of the Sunshsine Coast Conservation Association
 Ruth Simons, President, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society
 Directors of the Gambier Island Conservancy

We recognize that Chá7elkwnech (Gambier Island) lies within the traditional territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation).