



Trustees' Report

Islands Trust Tony Law and Alex Allen

Protecting Ecosystems

The fourth in a series looking at how key issues are addressed in our OCP.

On Hornby Island, 23% of the island is under some kind of protection (more if we include the Mount Geoffrey Crown Land which does not yet have protected status); 37% of the island has been deforested; and 27% has been converted to human uses (about a third of this for cultivation, the rest for development and roads). This is a high level compared with other islands; 30% is the threshold for significant habitat loss and resulting decline in species abundance.

OCPs are required to address Islands Trust Policy Statement directives which include identifying and protecting ecologically sensitive areas and preserving representative ecosystems. (The Islands Trust Policy Statement recognizes that protection involves a co-operative approach involving government, property owners, residents and visitors.)

An overriding objective of the OCP is to preserve our island's natural ecosystems and biodiversity. This includes protecting sensitive areas and important habitat from adverse effects of development, conserving relatively undisturbed natural areas and securing connectivity of such areas whenever possible. It includes managing public land to restore ecological integrity while also retaining some native vegetation on each property. Containing the spread of invasive species is also identified.

Our OCP identifies important habitats and includes mapping of environmentally sensitive areas. A policy supports the use of Development Permits which would enable a higher level of scrutiny of proposed development in these areas. So far, these only apply to Riparian Areas on Hornby (the CVRD also has Development Permit areas protecting eagle and heron nests and coastal ecosystems).

We encourage landowners to identify areas (including significant features) on their properties to be left undisturbed before proceeding with any site development and to work with the Islands Trust Fund to fully protect those special features. So far, two Hornby landowners have established conservation covenants to protect in perpetuity significant natural values on their properties.

Low-impact sustainable forestry that maintains

forest cover and biodiversity values is supported. However, cutting of forest land that leaves large openings is discouraged, except where agricultural land is being cleared in accordance with a plan for farming the land.

Our OCP recognizes the need for information to be available to enable voluntary stewardship programs and to protect our special and vulnerable ecosystems. Contact Tony (in his capacity as Chair of the Trust Fund Board, which is currently protecting over 100 island habitats), if you would like information on how to protect your property through nature reserves or conservation covenants (giving you a reduction in property taxes).

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Email the Local Trust Committee at:
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Meeting notification service:
<http://islandstrust.bc.ca/meetingnotify.cfm>

Next LTC Meeting:

Friday, February 9

Room to Grow, 11:30 am.

