



September 2008

*The Islands Trust is the local government responsible for land-use planning and the zoning of land, with a legislated mandate for protecting and preserving the Gulf Islands. Together with Chair **Kim Benson** from Keats Island in Howe Sound, locally-elected Island Trustees are responsible for land use decisions in the **Gabriola Local Trust Area**. This newsletter is our report on the Local Trust Committee's work.*

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The Local Trust [Committee](#) depends on broad public involvement, for both responding to development applications and identifying priorities. We can only reflect the input that we receive, so please take the time to write us, and help us shape the future of Gabriola, Mudge and the surrounding islands. Many thanks to all who participate; it helps our work a lot.

Protecting Natural Areas & Saving Property Tax

The Islands Trust got Provincial legislation five years ago to implement a private-lands stewardship program that's unique in BC. For property owners willing to protect ecological values in perpetuity with conservation covenants, taxes could be reduced 65% on the protected area. Every case is different, but the program tends to generate the most savings for owners of large lots with high ecological values. Islands Trust Council has just approved making the Natural Areas Protection Tax Exemption Program available on Gabriola, Thetis, and their surrounding islands. To date, the Natural Area Protected Tax Exemption Program had been available just in the Gambier Local Trust Area and the southern Gulf Islands, and over 60 hectares of ecologically sensitive private land have been protected there. Many thanks to the RDN, landowners, GaLTT and Gabriola Land Conservancy, whose encouragement made NAPTEP's expansion possible. www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/napter.cfm

Bylaw Amendments Proposed; Hearing October 8

Gabriola's land use bylaws periodically need updating, sometimes when we learn of errors, sometimes when we see changes we think can't wait until the next Official Community Plan Review. We've been gathering a list over the past four years, and having incorporated advice from the Advisory Planning Commission, are ready for a **Public Hearing October 8 (Agi Hall 7pm)**. Up to October 8, any letter or email will be considered, and we can make final changes based on what we hear. Many of the changes are simple fixes of errors. Others are more fundamental changes that respond to public input we've received, e.g. that garages and other accessory buildings (larger than 10x10') be limited to one story on small lots, to ensure new developments don't block the views of existing homes and don't create additional densities in zones allowing just one home per lot. Another significant change is that (other than narrow stairs and boathouses) new structures not be built into the shoreline. Please look at proposed Bylaws 249 and 250 and the staff reports outlining the rationale at the Trust office or at www.islandstrust.bc.ca (click on Gabriola), and contact us with your advice.

New Advisory Planning Commission Appointed

The Advisory Planning Commission (APC) consists of seven members appointed by the Gabriola Local Trust Committee for a two year term, and any Gabriolan can apply (you must either live here full-time, or own property here). When rezonings or bylaw changes are referred to it by the Islands Trust, the APC meets in public and formulates a recommendation to the Local Trust Committee. We're very grateful to retiring members Jeremy Baker, Steve O'Neil, Mike Pelzer (Chair), and the late John Buttrick.

We had excellent applicants and found it hard to choose just seven. We appointed Michael Brown, Stuart Denholm, Jacinthe Eastick, Howard Houle, Jenny Brown MacLeod, Patricia Maloney, and Melanie Mamoser. We're very grateful for their service to the community. Already, they have given the Local Trust Committee advice on proposed Bylaws 249 & 250, and on the draft Community Profile, which will be a baseline document for the OCP review. Mudge Island had an APC during its Official Community Plan review, and when DeCourcy Island's OCP review begins, we'll appoint an APC there.

Ecosystem Mapping

We've had great projects this season, mapping special habitats with community volunteers.

Frogs: GROWLS (Gabriola Rescue of Wildlife Society) worked with the Local Trust Committee and Dr. Purnima Govindarajulu of the Ministry of Environment, to launch a mapping and monitoring project to protect amphibian habitat. Despite the deep (April!) snow, we identified many frog ponds, dozens of Rough-Skinned Newts, and one Red-Legged Frog. We can use the winter to get organized for a more full monitoring program next spring. If anyone has seen toads (good news) or bullfrogs (bad news) on the island, please let us know.

Crabgrass: Hosted by the LTC and Topographics, Nikki Wright of SeaChange taught a fabulous workshop on the importance of crabgrass (AKA eelgrass) to the marine ecosystem, and taught dozens of islanders how to map the extent and density of crabgrass in False Narrows. An island-wide inventory is now underway, thanks to keen Gabriola and Mudge Island volunteers.

The Local Trust Committee can use the data to put in place more Development Permit Areas to protect sensitive habitat, if we have it precisely mapped. Many thanks to all the participants for the work and enthusiasm!



Islands Trust

preserving **island** communities,
culture and environment

Mudge OCP adopted; DeCourcy Firehall Opens

After years of community input and effort, the new Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw was adopted this month for Mudge, Link and Round Islands. Many thanks to the Mudge Advisory Planning Commission, and Planner Chris Jackson for all their excellent work.

Congratulations also to DeCourcy Island volunteers who donated labour and a lease on land to build a beautiful firehall. The Gabriola LTC approved its rezoning last year, and the firehall was formally opened in August.

Development Applications Within Zoning

Official Community Plans and Land Use Bylaws outline how and what development may happen. Both are developed with a great deal of community input, and anyone who chooses to act on development potential consistent with the bylaws can get a building permit from the RDN, without any input from the public and the elected trustees. Here are two examples:

Silva Bay Resort proposed building 25 tourist accommodation units. Islands Trust planning staff identified a number of ways in which their initial plans were inconsistent with elements of Gabriola's bylaws, including allowable number of units (zoning allows 24), and other issues around parking, setbacks, roads, septic, water, and a nearby archeological site. Silva Bay Resort will submit a revised set of plans for further review by Islands Trust planning staff. The RDN has not issued a building permit for this proposal.

Emcon (the highways yard next to the school): It is the Province that will ultimately authorize the 7-lot subdivision, once Islands Trust planners confirm that it conforms to Institutional zoning. No Residential use will be allowed on the lots resulting from the subdivision. If eagle nest trees had been previously mapped on that lot, Provincial regulations would have protected the tree, and Gabriola's Land Use Bylaw would have required that a 7.5 metre buffer of vegetation be retained. Contact us if you can add to the eagle nest inventory.

The Rooks subdivision on Taylor Bay Road/Descanso Bay is a third, more complicated example. The potential to create six lots existed in zoning for decades. Local trustees do not get to decide whether the subdivision goes ahead, but do need to approve two small items. Community input on park dedication and access to water resulted in a new proposal from the developer, which the LTC will consider at a future meeting. In the meantime, although a road has been built, the subdivision hasn't been approved.

Development Applications Requiring Rezoning

When a proposed development or use does not comply with the Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw, a rezoning application is required. It takes at least a year to go through the community process, and public input is very important in determining whether the proposal will be approved. The locally elected Islands Trustees have the final vote. Examples of approved rezoning applications include the Hope Centre and Borsuk Density Transfer. Current applications include the Commons, and Powell seniors' townhouses (neither are advanced enough to be ready for Public Hearing this term).

If you have technical planning questions, you can drop into the Islands Trust office (700 North Road) Monday to Friday 8:30 - 4pm. Wednesday mornings, Regional District of Nanaimo building permit staff are also at the Trust office.