



# News Release

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## ISLANDS TRUST ADVOCATES FOR MARINE ENVIRONMENT AT UBCM

VICTORIA — Two key resolutions initiated by the Islands Trust to protect the marine environment were endorsed at the annual convention on September 30 attended by more than 1000 representatives of local government throughout BC. The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) endorsed both a resolution to deal with derelict vessels and another supporting a National Marine Conservation Area over the southern Strait of Georgia.

“Up and down the coast the issue of derelict and abandoned vessels, barges, and docks continues to plague local governments and harbour authorities in British Columbia,” said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. “The growing costs of removal and the risks of environmental contamination and visual pollution spurred the Islands Trust and other coastal communities to address this issue at the 2010 UBCM annual convention this fall.”

The Islands Trust worked with three other local governments and the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) and met with Minister Pat Bell, Minister Responsible for the Integrated Land Management Bureau to discuss concerns and possible solutions. The same partners also hosted a workshop on the issue at the UBCM convention. The resolution calls for UBCM to petition the provincial and federal governments to develop a coordinated approach to the timely and adequate removal of all types of derelict and abandoned vessels, barges and docks in all situations and to consider the following strategies:

- funding mechanism(s) such as a fee on vessel registrations or a surcharge on marine fuel to fund the removal of derelict and abandoned vessels, barges and docks;
- designated disposal areas where owners can take their unwanted boats and structures to provide an alternative to abandonment on public property; and
- education and vessel product stewardship programs, for example fiberglass boat recycling centers.

Sheila Malcolmson opened the UBCM workshop with examples of stray barges and other vessels.

“Local governments want to work with senior governments to solve this problem before it gets worse,” said Malcolmson.

The workshop also included a presentation from the Washington State Derelict Vessel Removal Program on their successful approach, from Transport Canada on Canadian policy and legislation, and from the BC Integrated Land Management Bureau on the provincial perspective. About 80 UBCM delegates attended the workshop.

The Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area Reserve resolution that the Islands Trust brought forward to UBCM had been previously endorsed by the AVICC. The resolution calls on the provincial and federal governments to take immediate action while respecting First Nations interests in the area. The Islands Trust Executive Committee also met with BC Environment Minister Barry Penner to encourage his support of the initiative before the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Marine Conservation Congress is held in Victoria in May 2011.

“To protect the rich ecosystems in the Southern Strait of Georgia we need a large, ecologically-zoned National Marine Conservation Area Reserve that reaches from the southern end of Haro Strait up to and including Gabriola Passage,” said Malcolmson. “This area is incredibly important ecologically, economically and culturally, and it is being harmed by a variety of human activities.”

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

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The Islands Trust also supported the following related resolutions which were endorsed at the UBCM convention:

- that the Province implement a legislated ban on off-shore oil and gas exploration and development (and that UBCM lobby the federal government to do the same);
- that UBCM oppose any expansion of bulk crude oil tanker traffic on the north coast (and that UBCM lobby the federal government to establish a legislated ban on bulk crude oil tanker traffic through northern BC coastal waters); and,
- that UBCM oppose tar sands being shipped in pipelines across northern BC for loading onto crude oil tankers.

Trust Council recently amended its strategic plan to make marine protection a priority within the advocacy program.

“In addition to continuing to advocate for progress on derelict vessels and the national marine conservation area reserve, we will also be focusing our advocacy efforts on influencing federal and provincial policies on marine shipping safety and oil spill prevention and response,” said Malcolmson.

The decision follows an information session at the June 2010 Trust Council meeting on Saturna Island which introduced trustees to the state of shipping in the region and warned of BC’s poor preparedness for oil spills. That session included a number of key players including the Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia, a Washington State based marine consultant, the BC Ministry of Environment, a marine shipping safety advocate, Transport Canada, Port Metro Vancouver, and the Pacific Pilotage Authority.

“One goal of the marine advocacy program will be to seek transparency and openness from regulators and industry,” said Malcolmson. “A principle that drives the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council is one that also applies to Islands Trust Area communities, namely that those who have the most to lose when things go wrong should have a role in making sure things go right.”

Traffic in local waterways is predicted to increase as the provincial and federal governments push for more marine activity through their Pacific Gateway and Asia-Pacific Gateway programs. There is also industrial pressure to increase oil export via tankers on the West Coast. An oil or hazardous material spill, whether from an oil tanker or the fuel tanks of a cargo vessel, could severely harm the ecology, livability and economy of the region.

“Our marine advocacy program will attempt to bring about improvements through a variety of approaches depending on issues to be addressed” said Malcolmson. “We intend to work collaboratively.”

Malcolmson cited the following three recent examples of Islands Trust advocacy work:

- In 2009, following years of complaints about gypsum dust clouds in Plumper Sound, Islands Trust staff communicated directly with CSL International, the company that off-loads the gypsum in Plumper Sound, to explain community concerns. By mid-August 2010, the company had installed chutes on their vessels, at a cost of \$65,000 to significantly reduce dust on the two ships that deliver gypsum to barges in Plumper Sound.
- In January, 2010, the Chair of the Islands Trust Council wrote to the Honourable John Baird, then federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities regarding freighter safety in Plumper Sound. Plumper Sound is an anchorage of Port Metro Vancouver and presents a uniquely hazardous situation for anchoring because of its geography, sea floor and wind conditions. In March, Minister Baird responded and stated: “Because of this (the grounding of the *Hebei Lion*) and other similar incidents where vessels in Plumper Sound have dragged anchor, Transport Canada has informed industry that the department intends to issue a strong advisory regarding the anchoring of vessels in the designated anchorages within Plumper Sound during winter months (Oct. 31–April 1).” The advisory was issued in June 2010.
- Earlier this year, there was strong public opposition to a proposal to test a Washington-based fast ferry in Plumper Sound. The Islands Trust contacted the company proposing the test as well as Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard and Fisheries and Oceans Canada to express islanders’ concerns about the project. The Islands Trust was recently advised that Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada has concerns that would prevent the Project from moving forward given the proposed Project design.

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Sidebar:

### **Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area Reserve**

For the past five years, along with other local governments and allies such as the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the Georgia Strait Alliance, the Islands Trust has been writing to and meeting with elected and paid officials of the agencies responsible for negotiating a new Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area Reserve. The Government of British Columbia and Parks Canada agreed in 1995 under the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy to undertake a study to assess the feasibility of protecting and managing the Southern Strait of Georgia as a National Marine Conservation Area Reserve under the *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*, and have been engaged in the feasibility study since 2004. Once designated as a National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, the Southern Strait of Georgia would be managed for sustainable use with the conservation of the ecosystem as the main goal. Any protection and conservation practices would be harmonized with marine resource uses. A National Marine Conservation Area Reserve is just like a National Marine Conservation Area, except that it is subject to a claim, or claims, by Aboriginal people that the federal government has accepted for negotiation.