



Meeting Notes from Monday March 11th, 2024 – 10:30am – 2:30pm

Attendees

AOC Boardroom

1. Elizabeth May, MP (Saanich-Gulf Islands)
2. Paul Brent, CRD Director (Southern Gulf Islands)
3. David Maude, Islands Trustee (Mayne Island)
4. Laura Patrick, Islands Trustee (Salt Spring Island)
5. Lee Middleton, Islands Trustee (Saturna Island)
6. Dag Falk, Islands Trustee (South Pender Island)

Virtual Via Zoom

7. Adam Olsen, MLA (Saanich North and the Islands)
8. Octavio Cruz, Marine Scientific Manager (Pauquachin First Nation)
9. Gary Holman, CRD Director (Salt Spring Island)
10. Tobi Elliot, Islands Trust Vice-Chair, Islands Trustee (Gabriola Island)
11. Timothy Peterson, Islands Trust Vice-Chair, Islands Trustee (Lasqueti Island)
12. Jeanine Dodds, Islands Trustee (Mayne Island)
13. Mairead Boland Islands Trustee (Saturna Island)

Guest

14. Mark LeBlanc, Field Unit Superintendent, Parks Canada (Gulf Islands National Park Reserve)

Staff

15. Ned Taylor (Office of MP Elizabeth May)
16. Helena Murray-Hill (Office of MP Elizabeth May)
17. Laura Parker (Office of MLA Adam Olsen)
18. Deborah Bowman (Office of MLA Adam Olsen)
19. Emily Bryant (Islands Trust) – *virtual*

Welcome

MP May welcomed the attendees and gave the territory acknowledgement. Tobi Elliot requested 2-3 minutes for an overview of a potential advocacy campaign for tiny homes. MLA Olsen and MP May provided updates on relevant work their office is involved with.

MLA Olsen's update on the Mayne Island Deer situation:

- The project is still in the early planning stage. Information is not ready to be shared with the public.
- Met with Minister Nathan Cullen and Chief Don Tom. Both have read the Mayne Island Fallow Deer Committee report and are committed to working together, with the Fallow Deer Committee.
- Next step is for Tsartlip Stewardship connect with the ministry, Parks Canada, and the Mayne Island Fallow Deer Committee.
- The BC government is recognizing that the genesis of the fallow deer problem on Mayne Island started with the Ministry of Agriculture, they are an invasive species and this is their responsibility.

MP May's update since the Roundtable of Marine Matters in January

- Edits made to Roundtable letter to Ministers.
- Letter focuses on key things that can get action from the Ministers of Transport, Environment, Fisheries and Oceans.
- Key topics: anchorages, the Derelict Vessels Fund, proliferation of buoys in harbours not intended for recreational vessels and onboard dwellings.

Discussion

Discussion focused primarily on issues of accessible and affordable housing in the Gulf Islands. Some key points include:

Ganges Harbour and SSI

- The largest homeless encampment in British Columbia. Most of the inhabitants are critical staff for local businesses, living in illegal and precarious situations in boats and trailers.
- Businesses on Salt Spring are having to limit hours or close because staff are leaving the island.

Alternative temporary housing solutions

- LNG dwelling ship for essential workers in Nanaimo, a potential model for the Gulf Islands or a problem of "warehousing our working-class people in a cruise ship so that they can service the people who can afford the houses, not conducive growing communities"?

Tiny Homes background provided by Trustee Elliot

- Tens of thousands of people already living in RVs and unregulated/unregistered tiny homes.
- UBCM in 2022 called on the province to amend the section of the building code so that small moveable dwellings on wheels could be added as a section. Were told by the province that the code could not be amended because health and safety were at a critical standard and any amendments would be onerous.
- RV industry not interested in creating workarounds to certify tiny homes. Provincial and local governments must agree to legalize certifications, municipalities and regional districts need assurances that there isn't going to a massive liability issue.
- Advocacy campaign to create a matrix of regulatory barriers at all levels of government, regulatory frameworks for how to make tiny homes possible depending on situation.

Steps taken on SSI re: tiny homes

- CRD allows RVs so long as they remain mobile and are hooked to septic, looking at incentivizing secondary suits.
- SSI trust bylaw 526 enables cottages up to 1000 sq ft.
- Raising St. Mary's Lake could help with water moratorium, which could help provide water for cottages and suites in the north Salt Spring service area, includes Ganges Harbour.
- Lookout Society purchases of property of Drake Rd.

Barriers to tiny homes

- Gulf Islands have been excluded from housing measures because provincial government excludes rural areas.
- Water and sewer are expensive on the islands.
- Lack of federal, provincial funding.
- Companies on SSI (such as ANI) want access to water from St. Mary's Lake meant for housing.

Action item - MLA Olsen, Tobi Elliot, Paul Brent agree to work on a provincial letter to Ministers.

Presentation on Gulf Islands National Park Reserve Work (Parks Canada) by Field Superintendent Marc Le Blanc

Please see slides provided. Additional discussion is noted below along with the slide topic it relates to.

Shared Governance Plan

- Gulf Islands still on an interim management plan.
- Shared governance with First Nations rather than "co-management", beyond the legal requirement to consult.

Sidney Island Ecosystem Recovery Plan (SIERP)

- Phase 1 complete. Reconnaissance - mostly used helicopters.
- Phase 2 underway, ground based. Will involve fencing the island into sections. Hoping to “get going by October 1st, if not September 1st.”
- 52% of residents voted to continue project. First Nations want the project. Since 1980, 15 000 deer have been killed on Sidney Island and they still recover.
- Requires professional hunters (not local recreational hunters). Able to use shorter barrel that fits a silencer (noise control). Require certifications to hunt within a certain range of private lot, to hunt at night etc.
- Hunters may come from other countries as Canada may not provide necessary certifications. Up to contractor.
- 300 to 900 deer on the island. Probably on the low end, around 350.
- In Phase 1 roughly 84 deer were “taken”, 42 from the helicopter shooting and the rest were taken from the ground. 54 recreation hunters over several months took 54 last year.

Prevost Island

- Acquisition of 404 hectares, 11 parcels. Currently mostly owned by the same family. At the treasury board submission phase.
- Not intended to be fully open to the public. Ideally, Parks wants a trail to connect the two ends of the Island the rest will not be open to the public (unless First Nations decide otherwise).
- All the land within the park has the option for return, co-governance, management, depending on how talks with First Nations proceed.

Clam Gardens

- Archaeological sites used for thousands of years.
- Challenge working with Fisheries and Oceans for the right licensing.
- DFO have regulations specifying that they must test the clams before consumption – they have not been doing this testing. Form of environmental racism.
- The only two clam gardens being restored by Parks working with First Nations are Fulford and Russel Island. The Nations may be aware of/doing more.
- Parks Canada people on the shore of the restoration projects are assisting First Nations.

National Marine Conservation Area Research

- 30% of the oceans will be protected by 2030. Parks wants national marine conservation area per field unit that was a marine component. Currently, there are less than 5.
- Aboriginal and Treaty Rights recognized; Outstanding Land Claims refers to: at any time there could be a transfer settlement to First Nations.
- 5 stage program, currently at stage 3. First Nations still assessing whether viable.
- At stage 4. But stage 4 and 5 take the most time.
- Possibility of Parks Canada playing a role in harbour management in Southern Gulf Islands?

Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW)

- Speed restrictions in Tumbo Channel. Park Warden resources to enforce whale foraging areas.
- Looking at long term effects of contaminants in, ex. Plumper Sound. DFO, Parks Canada doing a long-term study on the effects of anchoring. Another study on agricultural recovery being done by Discovery Island.
- Whale Trail – working on describing where SRKW live, their impact to the people living there etc. Public education adding signage to parks to explain to visitors.
- Pretty much the same restrictions as 2023 for 2024.
- Need permanent solution involving Transport Canada. Can't rely on Port of Vancouver to enforce speed limits.

Other initiatives

- Green Vehicles: moving to electric and hybrid.
- New propellers are 30% more efficient and quiet.
- Continue to partner with Shaw. Looking at funding, approval for Visitor Centre, accommodations for staff.
- Sidney Island Ferry: Parks approached WSÁNEĆ Council about taking over.
- Fire prevention: no longer replacing rusty fire pits, no longer offering campfires as a visitor experience, will save 600-\$1000 per steel circle. Fire prevention specialists on staff.
- Beaumont campground: closed due to archaeological consideration. Looking at a new spot nearby to open in place of the current campground.

Discussion of funding for Forum and meeting dates to year end

- Islands Trust will continue funding for the Sothern Gulf Islands forums.
- \$2500 of funding left over from last year has gone to funding a website. It includes the report form the inaugural meeting, a logo, meeting notes, and participant membership.

Please see next page for photographs.

Photographs of the meeting in progress

