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Property Tax Incentive Program for Land Conservation Reaches Entire Islands Trust Area

UBCM asks Province to expand the program across B.C.

VICTORIA – On September 15, 2015, the Islands Trust Chair and Bowen Island Mayor signed a letter of understanding committing to delivering the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) on Bowen Island. The signing of the agreement on Bowen Island completes the coverage of this program throughout the Islands Trust Area and coincides with the 10-year anniversary of the NAPTEP initiative.

Since its inception in 2005, the program has protected 23 properties with a total land area of about 75 hectares (185 acres). The NAPTEP is a voluntary program and offers 65 per cent property tax exemption for conservation of privately owned ecologically important natural areas, watersheds and habitats.

“Islands Trust Council is always looking at ways to promote voluntary stewardship of the rich yet sensitive natural diversity and ecosystems we are fortunate to inherit within the Islands Trust Area,” said Islands Trust Council Chair Peter Luckham. “On the 10th anniversary of NAPTEP, we are pleased to welcome the Bowen Island Municipality, and indeed Bowen Islanders, into our unique program that rewards landowners for preserving our ecosystems for future generations.”

“Preserving and enhancing our natural ecosystems are values we hold dear on Bowen Island,” said Bowen Island Municipality Mayor Murray Skeels. “By working with the Islands Trust on a property tax exemption program, we have a cost-effective way to protect the environment that our residents treasure while rewarding Bowen Islanders for their conservation efforts.”

The Islands Trust Fund administers NAPTEP on behalf of the Islands Trust Council. Qualifying land must have special features such as undisturbed natural areas with important ecosystems and must be protected by a conservation covenant with the Islands Trust Fund. Landowners applying for NAPTEP are responsible for the costs of surveying and registering the covenant on title, while the Islands Trust Fund is responsible for ongoing monitoring costs. Information on applying for NAPTEP is available online at www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/naptep.

Today, the members of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) passed resolution B-15 “Conservation tax incentive program,” asking the Province to implement a property tax incentive program modelled on Islands Trust’s NAPTEP initiative. In 2011, UBCM passed a similar resolution requesting the Province to enable local governments to implement tax incentive programs to encourage conservation of private land.

Islands Trust Chair Luckham added that “the Islands Trust is a provincial leader in offering the innovative conservation incentive program and we are pleased to see that other regional districts and local governments want to implement it in their jurisdictions,” said Luckham. “We will wait to see the Province’s response to the UBCM resolution and do what we can to promote and further expand this unique and effective program.”

The Islands Trust is a federation of special-purpose local government bodies representing 25,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area and another 10,000 non-resident property-owners. The Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the unique environment and amenities of the Islands Trust Area through planning and regulating land use, development management, education, cooperation with other agencies, and land conservation. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

-30-

Photo below - Islands Trust Chair (right) welcoming Bowen Island Municipality Mayor (left) to the program.

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