



Islands Trust
2004 AWARD WINNER PROFILE

WINNER: TOM GOSSETT

CATEGORY: INDIVIDUAL

PROJECT: WATERSHED PROTECTION SALT SPRING ISLAND

NOMINATOR: SALT SPRING ISLAND CONSERVANCY AND SALT SPRING ISLAND WATER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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Project Description:

For a quarter century, Tom Gossett's focus has been on the protection of the watersheds and lakes used by the Salt Spring community for drinking water. He formed and has worked through the Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society, actively partnering with other groups like the North Salt Spring Water District and the Salt Spring Island Conservancy.

Tom's indefatigable leadership led to the securing of the hundred acres of the St. Mary Lake watershed and a ban on internal-combustion propelled watercraft on the lake. He led the Water Preservation Society all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada in order to enforce the "electronic motor only" regulation under the *Canada Shipping Act* on St. Mary Lake. As a result of this victory, this little known federal environmental protection law was strengthened throughout Canada.

Tom also worked to protect the critical watershed surrounding Maxwell Lake from logging and other infringements. Tom helped to enforce the covenant to protect the watershed of St. Mary Lake when it was threatened by trespass logging in the lands that were eventually transferred to the Society in 2003. This injunction application was the crucial moment in asserting the public interest in the watershed. He led the successful campaign to secure, unlogged, the secondary watershed of Maxwell Lake in 2002, having earlier succeeded in moving the Islands Trust to place the primary watershed of Maxwell Lake in a 20-acre lot size zone.

Tom Gossett stands out as an individual whose footsteps we can only hope to follow. He has drawn attention to the topic of watershed health and fresh water shortages long before it seemed to be a realistic issue for islanders. He was able to stand up against many foes in the battle to maintain clean drinking water for the island residents. Tom has been the Society's foremost volunteer throughout its life – maintaining the vision and vigilance needed for water protection – and building a track record of integrity and commitment to protecting environmental values. Tom is also a hands-on person, whether the need is fighting forest fires, forcing closure of a garbage dump, or conducting research and litigation.

Sustaining the Islands – Community Stewardship Awards Program

This record of accomplishment is impressive. More important, however, is Tom Gossett's character as he took up the challenge of community service. Tom is an inspiration, a gentleman, an optimist, and a self-effacing leader who respects what others think, do, and offer. He thinks beyond the obvious, beyond the moment; a hundred times he has pointed the way – then buckled down to work to achieve the vision.