

June 24, 2008

File Number: PG/06-3

The Honourable Barry Penner  
Minister of Environment  
P.O. Box 9047 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Penner:

**Re: Living Water Smart**

At its quarterly meeting last week, the Islands Trust Council passed a resolution in support of the commitments expressed in your ministry's new Living Water Smart plan. In particular we would like to express our support for the identification of the Gulf Islands as a priority area for the regulation of groundwater use.

Due to the limited supply of water in the Trust Area, groundwater quality and quantity issues have been of significant concern to the Islands Trust Council for many years. The Islands Trust Policy Statement, adopted in 1994, encourages "the Provincial government to adopt legislation that protects the sustainability and quality of the groundwater of the Trust Area."

In the absence of provincial regulation, we have taken a variety of approaches over the years to address groundwater concerns. Some recent initiatives include:

- a rainwater catchment demonstration project on Salt Spring Island;
- partnering with the Hornby Island community to protect groundwater;
- participating in the annual workshops held by the Mayne Island Integrated Water Systems Society;
- developing aquifer vulnerability mapping in partnership with federal and provincial government agencies;
- developing a water conservation education poster for display on ferries and other public areas;
- funding Simon Fraser University research on groundwater quality in the southern Gulf Islands and;
- using zoning and subdivision regulations, where possible, to regulate large groundwater withdrawals and mitigate the impacts of new development on existing drinking water wells.

Despite these initiatives, we are aware that the provincial regulation of groundwater use would address many of the concerns raised by our communities in a more comprehensive manner. For example, we have been particularly concerned recently by the inadequacy of zoning regulations to address community concerns regarding bulk water withdrawals on Gabriola Island.

We would appreciate the opportunity to provide information and advice as you develop groundwater regulations in the Gulf Islands. Our staff contact for this purpose is Lisa Dunn, our Director of Trust Area Services, who can be reached at 405-5174.

Yours truly,

Kim Benson  
Chair, Islands Trust Council

pc: Islands Trust Council  
Islands Trust Website