

Trustee Notebook *By Laura Busheikin*

Protect Your Property...And Save Money

I've found that in cities, people who meet for the first time ask each other, "What do you do?" On Denman Island, we tend to ask each other, "Where do you live?" We know each other by how we connect to the land.

And we love the land we live on. For good reason. We love the lush evergreen forests, the soaring eagles, the song of the tree frogs, the wetlands teeming with life, the sensual golden curves of arbutus trees, the rocky bluffs, and the magnificent living ocean.

With love of the land, and appreciation for its richness and value, comes a desire to see it protected, forever. To know that ecosystems won't be carved up by roads or bulldozed for development, to know that bats, butterflies, herons and other species at risk will always have a home.

Much of Denman Island is protected – 24%, one of the highest ratios in the Islands Trust Area – thanks mainly to regional and provincial parks, and the work of the Denman Conservancy Association.

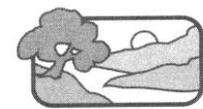
Individual landowners can also create protected areas. This is not just a nice thing to do – it's essential, because approximately 80% of land in the Islands Trust Area is in private ownership. This gives private landowners the balance of power in creating a critical mass of protected areas, and in conserving special places that otherwise would be entirely vulnerable to human interference.

Luckily, there is a way for landowners to formally protect their land without spending a lot of money or losing basic property rights, and save tax money at the same time.

What is NAPTEP?

The Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) is an innovative incentive program designed by the Islands Trust Council 15 years ago. NAPTEP provides landowners with an annual cut in property taxes of up to 65% when they permanently protect the natural features of their land.

You qualify for NAPTEP by protecting habitat with a conservation covenant. This legal tool is registered on title and binds future owners to the same promises you made. It can apply to all or a portion of your property. You still own your land, can live on the property, and can sell it at full market value whenever you want.



Islands Trust

NAPTEP is designed to protect key natural features such as relatively undisturbed woodlands, watercourses, wetlands, meadows, coastal bluffs, mature forests, habitat for rare native plants, habitat critical and to native animal's breeding, rearing and feeding, and special geologic features.

A NAPTEP covenant restricts buildings, new roads, removal of native plants, use of herbicides and pesticides, changes to streams and wetlands, and soil modification.

How does NAPTEP work?

To set up a NAPTEP covenant, you would work with staff from the Islands Trust Fund, the Islands Trust conservation organization. They would visit your property and walk the land with you, and help you with your application. The process includes the creation of a baseline report describing the ecological features of the land.

There is a \$175 application fee, and additional costs for surveying, creating the baseline report, covenant registration, and independent legal and tax advice. These costs would eventually be offset by the tax savings. Once the covenant is registered, the Islands Trust fund will visit annually to ensure the conditions are being followed. There is no charge for this.

There are approximately 25 NAPTEPs registered in the Islands Trust area, for a total of 77.5 hectares of protected land. Saving money every year is a great bonus for these environmentally-minded land-owners, but the main motivation is the heart-felt desire to know that a cherished forest, meadow or marsh will be left intact, in perpetuity.

Learn More

If you are interested in learning more about NAPTEP, contact the Islands Trust Fund at ifmail@islandstrust.bc.ca or 250-405-5186, or visit the "Protecting Private Land" section on the Islands Trust Fund website (www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/initiatives/privateconservation.aspx)

This area of the website also offers other tools for conserving your land, from making an outright donation to organizing your daily activities with care.