



## News Release

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### **Discover an underwater hero in your own backyard: eelgrass From the Islands Trust climate action speaker series**

*Lək'wəḡən*, METULIYE/Victoria, B.C. – Islands Trust invites the public to their upcoming Eelgrass: A Climate Hero webinar, free to all on the evening of November 24. Presenters Aimee McGowan and Victoria Postlethwaite, both graduates of Simon Fraser University's Resource and Environmental Management master's program, and Nikki Wright, Executive Director of SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, will guide participants through the vital relevance of eelgrass to the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust Area is comprised of 13 major islands and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5,200 square kilometres in the Salish Sea.

Webinar attendees will learn about the benefits of *Zostera marina* – which include commercial benefits to our fisheries and tourism sectors among many others. The presentation will also cover how best to care for eelgrass meadows in local communities, so that those benefits are not lost.

Specifically, attendees will close the evening with a deeper understanding of:

- Top benefits that eelgrass, the little-known hero plant, provides to the marine ecosystem
- Blue carbon and the role it plays in climate change mitigation strategies
- Simple things that Trust Area community members and others can do to restore and protect eelgrass meadows

“This is the third webinar offered in our climate action speaker series, and we hope everyone will enjoy it,” said Islands Trust Council Chair and cold-water scuba diver Peter Luckham. “I can tell you first hand that eelgrass is fascinating, from its role sequestering blue carbon to acting as a nursery for countless sea stars, nudibranchs, and fish within the Trust Area and in coastal communities around the world.”

The webinar will take place online via Zoom Videoconferencing on Tuesday, November 24, from 6:30 – 8:00 pm; to register, go to <https://bit.ly/3IPzjNK>

#### **Two other webinars in the climate action speaker series are:**

Rainwater Harvesting – watch the recording at <https://bit.ly/3iFNB0y>

Ecosystem-based Adaptation – watch the recording at <https://bit.ly/3kgOTzZ>

For more information on the climate action speaker series program, go to <https://bit.ly/2EGkRX8>

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## About the Presenters

### Nikki Wright

Nikki has served as the Executive Director of SeaChange Marine Conservation Society since 1998 and as Co-Chair of the Seagrass Conservation Working Group since 2001. Eelgrass mapping, restoration, and conservation are part of the working agenda of SeaChange (eelgrass maps for all islands within the Islands Trust Area can be found at <http://www.islandstrustconservancy.ca/initiatives/marineconservation/eelgrass-mapping/>). Ms. Wright is the Project Coordinator for the Salish Sea Nearshore Habitat Recovery Project and is author of two articles: *Eelgrass as Teacher* and *First Nations Science*.

### Victoria Postlethwaite

Victoria graduated from SFU's Masters in Resource and Environmental Management program, with a research focus on measuring carbon storage in seagrass ecosystems in Clayoquot Sound, B.C. This work was completed in collaboration with Parks Canada and the tri-national Commission for Environmental Cooperation and published and presented internationally with her research partner, Aimee McGowan. Victoria has worked in fishery management and ecological restoration and currently works as a Sustainability Coordinator for Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

### Aimee McGowan

Aimee graduated from SFU's Masters in Resource and Environmental Management program, with a research focus on assessing the extent, density, and above-and below ground biomass carbon of eelgrass meadows in Clayoquot Sound, B.C. This work was completed in collaboration with Parks Canada and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Her research was published and presented internationally with her research partner, Victoria Postlethwaite. Aimee has worked in marine ecology and entomology and currently works as a Land Use Planner at the Agricultural Land Commission, where she contributes to managing agricultural land on Vancouver Island.

- 30 -

The Islands Trust is a federation of special-purpose local government bodies representing 26,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area and another 10,000 non-resident property owners. The Islands Trust Area is located within Coast Salish territory and is the homeland to over 28,000 Coast Salish Peoples who have called this place home since time immemorial. The Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the Islands Trust Area's unique environment and amenities by 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 islands and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5,200 square kilometres.

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