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File No.: 11-5420-30

Via email: [livingwatersmart@gov.bc.ca](mailto:livingwatersmart@gov.bc.ca)

Water Protection and Sustainability Branch  
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
PO Box 9362 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria B.C. V8W 9M2

To Whom It May Concern:

**Re: Feedback on Watershed Security Strategy and Fund Discussion Paper**

On behalf of Islands Trust Council, I am writing to provide feedback on the the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund Discussion Paper.

To ensure that the freshwater partnership between the Province and Islands Trust is strengthened, we request that the Province consider early collaboration with Trust Council and Islands Trust staff in the development of the strategy to facilitate harmonization with the *Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy*.

This letter provides general support for the *Watershed Security Strategy and Fund*. All of the outcomes of the *Watershed Security Strategy and Fund* discussion paper have relevance to the Islands Trust Object. While addressing watershed resilience and freshwater sustainability is a top priority of the Islands Trust, it will require us to go above and beyond our day-to-day business. We will need coordinated efforts and funding to help us effectively gather and update data, undertake risk and vulnerability assessments and integrate adaptation strategies into our policies and regulations.

In relation to outcome five [*Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning*], preserving healthy and diverse communities require an equitable distribution of water resources; therefore, we recommend identification of opportunities to work with Islands Trust to develop land use planning tools that ensure equitable human use of water resources.

The Islands Trust Area is a mosaic of public and private ownership with legislation and regulations from all levels of government including First Nations, regional governments, provincial ministries, and federal jurisdiction that all have contributing roles to watershed health. Treaties and agreements with First Nations, land-use plans, and other legal commitments in watersheds of the Islands Trust, all require harmonization strategies to mitigate the climate emergency and honour the Islands Trust's Reconciliation Action Plan.

Watersheds of the Islands Trust Area are unique amenities that intricately supports Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. With respect to the natural environment, we are deeply concerned about increasing pressures on watershed ecosystems and species at risk. The loss of habitat and migration of

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***Preserving and protecting over 450 islands and surrounding waters in the Salish Sea***

Bowen Denman Hornby Gabriola Galiano Gambier Lasqueti Mayne North Pender Salt Spring Saturna South Pender Thetis

species at risk to new changing environments will likely create greater loss of those listed species and add many more flora, fauna, marine species and terrestrial wildlife to the already significant list of lost species.

The *Watershed Security Strategy and Fund* could provide an avenue for collaboration and sustainable long-term funding to local government watershed resilience initiatives. For example, a case example of the *Watershed Security Strategy and Fund* is the *Healthy Watershed Initiative*, which funded the development of the *Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy* in 2021. This included federation-wide governance actions, supported Indigenous led freshwater heritage projects, and facilitated local island water champion organizations to undertake watershed resilience projects. The effective and timely development of the *Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy* demonstrates that the Islands Trust has organizational capacity and commitment to engage provincial funding for the protection of watersheds and preservation of freshwater in a meaningful way that addresses the Islands Trust's Climate Emergency and First Nations Reconciliation Declaration.

The Islands Trust is an important partner in freshwater sustainability for the Province. Our conservation and land-use planning informed by our preserve and protect mandate that is a model for watershed governance. In collaboration with partner agencies, we are currently engaged in a study of the water quantity and quality on a number of islands in an effort to inform land use decisions around watershed protection, water collection, storage, and use. The Islands Trust wants to continue to work in cooperation with the Province to develop and implement land use planning tools, conservation planning, and education/stewardship initiatives to support the Water Sustainability Act on rural islands.

As demonstrated through the Healthy Watershed Initiative and the development of the *Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy*, it is beneficial when funding is directed at solutions-centered work emerging from communities themselves.

The Islands Trust looks forward to working with the Province to strengthen our collective climate resilience by cooperatively developing the *Watershed Security Strategy and Fund*.

Thank you for considering this input,

Yours sincerely,



Peter Luckham

Chair, Islands Trust Council

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cc: Bowen Island Municipal Council  
Islands Trust Council  
Islands Trust website