



Frequently Asked Questions

about the Policy Statement Amendment Project (Islands 2050)

Thank you for your interest in the Policy Statement Amendment Project. We hope this document answers your questions about the project.

Please note: This document will be a living document and will be updated as new frequently asked questions arise. If you would like to propose a question to be included, please e-mail islands2050@islandstrust.bc.ca.

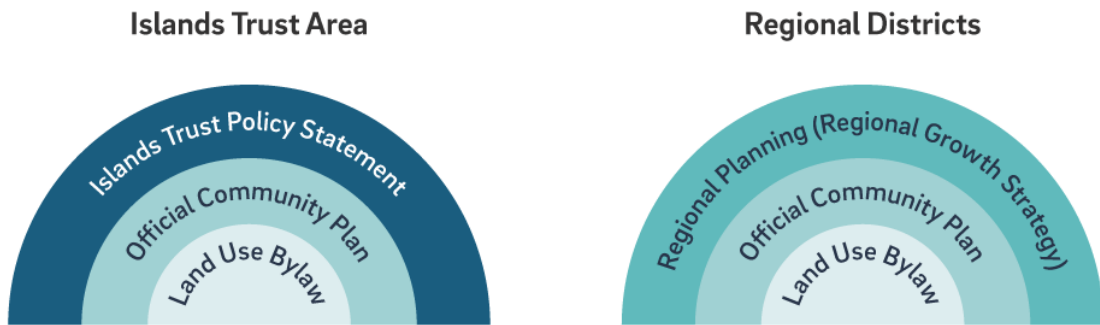
The draft new Policy Statement, which we encourage everyone to read for themselves, and background information on the project, public engagement materials, and public input received to date are available at <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/programs/islands-2050/>

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1. What is the Islands Trust Policy Statement?

The Policy Statement contains the vision, principles and policies that guide how Islands Trust Council interprets and implements its provincial mandate to preserve and protect the unique amenities and environment of the Islands Trust Area. It also guides the development of the official community plans and land use bylaws of local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality and the development of Trust Council's Strategic Plan and advocacy program. It is the heart of the preserve and protect mandate for this special region that features spectacular beauty, extensive archaeological and culturally important sites, vibrant communities, and some of the world's most endangered and biodiverse ecosystems.

Within the Islands Trust Area, regional growth strategies do not apply; instead, official community plans and land use bylaws must be consistent with the Policy Statement. The Policy Statement is approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs after the Minister is satisfied that the provincial interest and the duty to have early and meaningful consultation with First Nations have been satisfied.



2. Where can I get more information about what changes are being proposed and why?

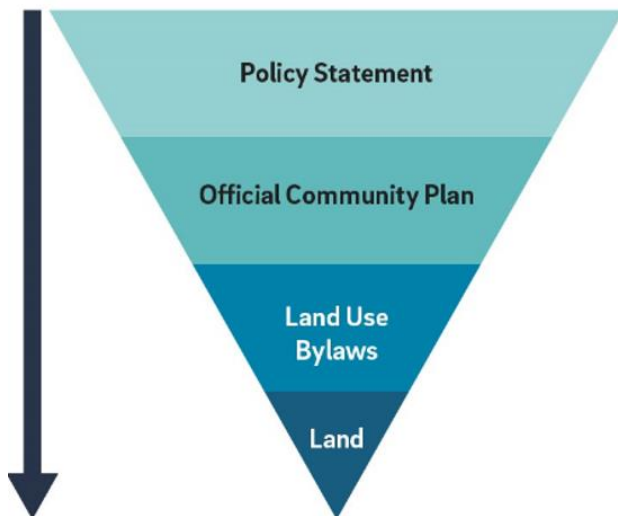
Visit the Islands 2050 webpage at: <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/programs/islands-2050/> or talk to a local trustee: <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/contact-us/contact-trustees/>

3. How would a new Policy Statement bylaw affect me or my island?

Once the new Islands Trust Policy Statement bylaw is adopted (unlikely before fall of 2022), all amendments to official community plans and all new/amended land use bylaws will be subject to approval by the Executive Committee to ensure they are not “contrary to or at variance with” the Islands Trust Policy Statement (except for Bowen Island land use bylaws, which will be reviewed between first reading and the Public Hearing). Only the directive policies in the Policy Statement affect land use planning.

The policy is not retroactive. It has no direct effect on land use. It is a guide to local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality when amending their official community plans and land use bylaws. There is a lot of room for consideration of local situations and needs.

Local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality will undertake public discussion before making any amendments to their official community plan in relation to any policy.



4. Where did the proposed changes come from? Who suggested them?

Trust Council set the priorities for the Policy Statement review through its Strategic Plan. They also reflect Trust Council’s Reconciliation Declaration (2019) and its Climate Emergency Declaration (2019).

The specific policy changes were developed through Trust Programs Committee and Executive Committee who were informed by Trust Council discussions and resolutions, public engagement since 2019, a discussion paper prepared by staff, and staff advice which was informed by engagement with First Nations. There were many discussions in public meetings through 2020 and 2021 on proposed policies and policy changes.

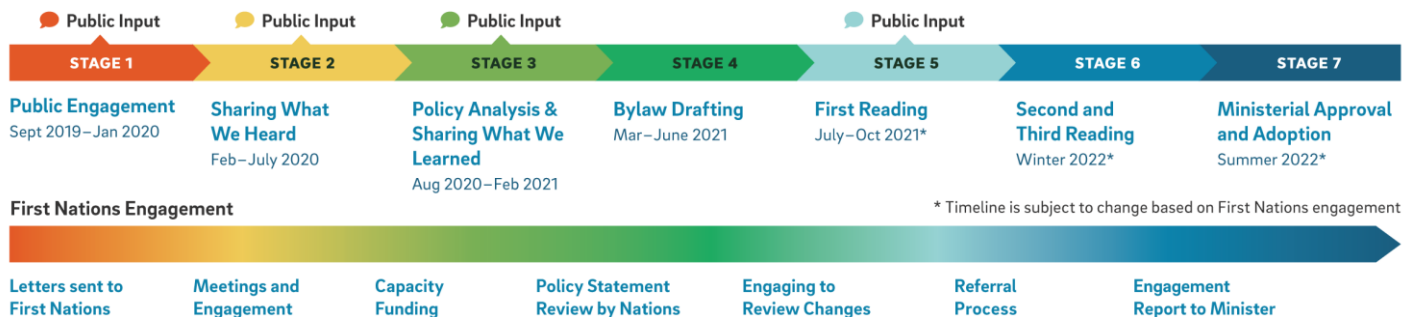
5. Why isn't there community consultation on the draft planned before first reading?

Trust Council adopted a process that has been public for the last 18 months and undertook early engagement to gather feedback on issues and policy directions. The results of the engagements have been publicized and made available to the public throughout the project.

With 26 trustees representing a diversity of islands, there is a desire to know that Trust Council is comfortable with the draft document before asking people to dedicate their time and effort to giving feedback on it. On June 23, 2021 the Islands Trust Executive Committee amended the draft, requested staff to develop policy options regarding docks for Trust Council to consider, and forwarded it to Trust Council for consideration of first reading. It is common for public interest to spike once there are specific draft policies to reflect on and trustees and staff are looking forward to welcoming feedback and ideas from the community.

First reading marks the start of the next phase of public engagement. Trust Council has planned and budgeted for three to five months of public engagement between first reading and second reading. First reading is just the introduction of the document - it is anticipated that Trust Council will change the document based on feedback. After first reading, there will be a Trust-wide engagement process, and local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality can host local engagement events if they wish. Trust Council can also amend its project timeline if it wishes. Details of the engagement opportunities will be published on the Islands 2050 webpage at: <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/programs/islands-2050/>

Note: there is no legal requirement for public engagement before first reading for any bylaw in British Columbia.



6. Why is there a parallel First Nations engagement process?

Trust Council is seeking to address the years in which it did not address reconciliation and engagement with First Nations. This is a historic time in which we have, in collaboration with First Nations, engaged on changing the offensive language that was contained in the past version of the Policy Statement, and in which we have worked closely with First Nations to align the new Policy Statement with the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Prior to the Minister of Municipal Affairs signing the Policy Statement bylaw the Crown duty to consult must be satisfied.

To provide context, you may be interested to read the “Truth Precedes Reconciliation” section (page 8-12) of the [discussion paper](#) related to this project that was prepared for Trust Council in March 2021.

7. How much could a draft Policy Statement bylaw change after first reading?

The bylaw can change as much as Trust Council wants it to. We expect to get substantial feedback from the public, First Nations and many referral agencies in the months following first reading. Trust Council committees will study and consider all this feedback when changing the document for second reading. Trust Council itself may also propose amendments at second reading. There is flexibility built into the bylaw approval process throughout.

8. Why am I only hearing about this process now?

The project has been in the public domain since 2019: there has been advertising in local papers about previous Islands 2050 engagement; the project has been mentioned in all Trust Council and Trust Program Committee agendas in the past two years; and some trustees have been writing about the project in local newspapers. However, it is common that people get more deeply interested and community conversations are sparked when there are specific policy proposals to consider.

The Islands Trust is planning for a multi-month public engagement period after first reading so there will be time to learn more about the proposed changes and share your views.

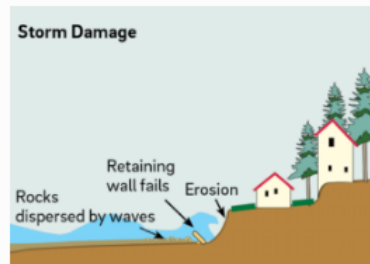
9. The draft Policy Statement includes a proposed policy that would prohibit the use of new seawalls and other hard shoreline armoring in the Trust Area. If the Islands Trust isn't going to allow new seawalls how am I supposed to protect my property from erosion?

There are many soft shoreline engineering solutions available that present a win-win for property owners and nature. The graphic below from the Islands Trust's [Marine Shorelines webpage](#) offers some background and there are resources on that webpage that may be of interest.

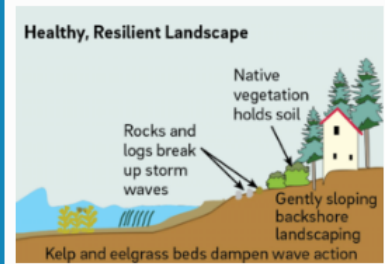
1. Climate change in our region is resulting in more frequent and more severe winter storms, plus slowly rising sea levels. Recently, this has resulted in significant new erosion of beaches and shorelines. Scientists predict the trend will continue in the future.



2. Some homeowners have built hard structures to hold back the sea from homes and properties when trying to protect shorelines in low-lying areas. Scientific studies show these measures do not work and increase erosion and negatively impact nearshore, beach, and sea life.



3. Many landowners successfully protect their shoreline properties using natural materials, slopes, and plantings. For more see the publication [Your Marine Waterfront: A Guide to Protecting your Property while Promoting Healthy Shorelines](#) (11931KB) [\[PDF\]](#).



10. Can the Trust actually regulate desalination plants?

Yes. The local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality can specify uses that are permitted in zones. So they could, for example prohibit desalination plants as a use in a utility zone (this would cover large scale plants usually operated by regional districts or improvement districts), and could prohibit them generally in all zones. Local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality could also prohibit desalination as proof of potable water at time of subdivision and at time of issuance of a building permit. If Trust Council were to adopt a new policy that restricts new desalination plants, and if a local trust committee or island municipality decided to amend its official community plan and amend its land use bylaw to prohibit individual desalination plants, then no new desalination plants would be permitted. Any existing desalination plants that meet requirements established by other levels of government, would be protected as legal non-conforming and could continue to be used.

Apart from concerns over the energy demands of desalination, there are concerns over the adverse impacts of desalination on sensitive nearshore ecosystems and/or terrestrial environments in the Trust Area at discharge points of a salty brine generated by the desalination process. This can intensify vulnerabilities of sensitive ecosystems that are already subject to the impacts of climate change.

The most common disposal method for brine is to discharge it directly into seawater through injection points. The effects of the desalination discharge brine on an ecosystem depend on the sensitivity of the ecosystem and the volume, salinity, and speed of dilution of the brine plume, among other coastal factors.

The concern with this practice is that the higher salinity of brine causes it to be denser than the ambient seawater, so when it is discharged into oceans it can form "brine underflows," where layers of hypersaline solution spread across the seafloor and can have harmful impacts to flora such as eelgrass and fauna such as forage fish. With time, brine underflows can deplete dissolved oxygen in the ocean. The high salinity and reduced dissolved oxygen levels cause habitat degradation which can lead to a reduction in the numbers of benthic bacteria, phytoplankton, invertebrates, and fish communities.

11. If a new policy were to go through restricting new docks for properties that are boat access only what does that mean for my existing dock... or if I am already zoned for a dock, what does that mean?

If Trust Council were to adopt a new policy that restricted new docks and if a local trust committee or island municipality decided to amend its official community plan and amend its land use bylaw to prohibit individual docks, then no new individual docks would be permitted. Any existing docks would be protected as legal non-conforming and could continue to be used.

Note: Boat access includes all properties on islands not accessible by private automobile car ferries.

Note: On June 23, 2021 the Islands Trust Executive Committee asked staff to prepare options for different policies for Trust Council to consider about dock regulation.

The rationale for including such a policy in the Policy Statement is to minimize the cumulative impacts associated with a proliferation of docks on sensitive marine ecosystems and aquatic species at risk, eelgrass, kelp, and clam beds, forage fish spawning areas, as well as First Nations' cultural, archaeological, and traditional harvesting sites. The Policy Statement has always encouraged the sharing of facilities such as docks, wharves, floats, jetties, boat houses, board walks, and causeways, and continues to do so in the new draft. Moving towards shared community docks is one of the measures island communities can take to protect the critical habitat necessary for the survival or recovery of species at risk in the Trust Area, including but not limited to the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale. Minimizing the impacts of docks is also critical to the rights and interests of First Nations who are adversely impacted by the cumulative effects of docks in the Trust Area.

12. I've heard that the new Policy Statement would result in centralization to more regionally-based land use planning, a reduction in local trust committee discretion, and elimination of the uniqueness of each island. Is this true?

This is false. The document does not encourage, or suggest centralization to more regionally-based land use planning, reduction in local trust committee discretion and elimination of the uniqueness of each island. It proposes the opposite:

The draft new Policy Statement states in the preamble to the Regional Governance section:

***Regional and localized approaches:** Underpinning the Islands Trust regional governance approach is a strong acknowledgment that a degree of local autonomy supports effective governance in the Trust Area. Each island within the Trust Area has unique characteristics and has developed in its own unique way over the years. While the preeminent duty of all locally elected officials is to uphold the Islands Trust Object and regional mandate in all aspects of local planning and decision-making, they are to do so in a way that is sensitive and suitable to local circumstances, and guided by open, consultative public participation.*

The new Policy Statement updates the existing Policy Statement by amending the language and content to reflect Trust Council's commitment to reconciliation, and to address climate change and affordable housing; all of which are absent in the existing Policy Statement that was last substantially updated over 25 years ago.

Like the existing Policy Statement, the draft new Policy Statement includes direction to local trust committees/island municipalities to include policies in their official community plans and land use bylaws. These policies would be developed by the local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality using the usual engagement processes once a local trust committee or Bowen Island Municipality chose to update its official community plan or land use bylaw. The decisions on local policy and land uses will still lie with the local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality.

Many of the proposed policies respond to public calls for the Islands Trust to respond to the climate emergency, to better protect heritage, and to support the provision of safe, secure and affordable housing.

13. I've heard that the new Policy Statement supports the removal of residents, local economy and community health and well-being as planning considerations on the Islands.

This is false. The draft of the new Policy Statement specifies "Trust Council understands its preserve and protect mandate is strengthened by healthy and inclusive communities that are dependent on sustainable, energy efficient, and appropriately located housing, transportation, and infrastructure."

A specific goal of the draft new Policy Statement is: To Foster Sustainable and Resilient Communities in the Trust Area. See Part 6 of the new draft.

14. Is it true that a new Policy Statement will result in potential rezoning of private property into a new category, including existing residential and commercial?

Yes but not as a direct result of the draft new Policy Statement. This is always a possibility in any local government. It is possible that changes to the Policy Statement could influence local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality to consider rezonings to support the goals of the Policy Statement such as fostering safe, secure and affordable housing and protected area networks. However, local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality can amend their zoning regardless of whether there is a new Policy Statement. Local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality would undertake usual public engagement processes prior to any rezonings.

15. What are the implications to land use planning of removal of the statements “Trust Council recognizes that agriculture is a traditional and valuable activity in the Trust Area” and “Trust Council recognizes that forestry is a traditional and valuable activity in the Trust Area.”

None. The draft new Policy Statement proposes to remove two values statements about forestry and agriculture being “traditional and valuable” that are in the current version of the Policy Statement. These value statements have no effect on land use planning. Removal of the term “traditional” is to ensure the Policy Statement aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action.

Note: The Island Trust Policy Statement policies cannot override anything in the Farm Practices Protection (Right to farm) Act, or the Agricultural Land Commission Act, or the Private Managed Forest Land Act, and changes to the Policy Statement do not give the Islands Trust additional powers to manage tree cutting, although it indicates Trust Council is making that request of the Province. When a new Policy Statement is approved, the Agricultural Land Commission will continue to be the agency that considers approval of inclusion of land into the Agricultural Land Reserve. Local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality will continue to have a say on exclusion and non-farm use applications in their area. Removal of the values statements will have no effect on this.

If you would like to propose a question to be included in this living document please e-mail islands2050@islandstrust.bc.ca.