

**Management Plan
for the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve
Isabella Point
Salt Spring Island, BC**



Ruby's Gate

November 21, 2002

Approved by the Trust Fund Board
(Resolution # TFB 02/529)

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A TRIBUTE TO RUBY ALTON

Ruby Alton was one of the daughters of the Lacy family who settled on Isabella Point at the start of the Depression. The Lacy farm stretched along Isabella from Hamilton's homestead to Roland Road and Ruby grew up digging clams, fishing and raising sheep and vegetables to supplement the family income. She was a quintessential islander and had that rare gift of being able to look backwards and forwards at the same time. She cherished the thrifty pragmatic values that had come out of the Depression and she was an ardent environmentalist who recognized the importance of conserving resources and protecting habitat. One of her legacies was to start the Trail and Nature Club and latterly support the starting up of the local Salt Spring conservancy.

Witnessing the loss of richness from the sea and land that had fed people on the coast for millennium was deeply distressing to her. We all thought it probably led to her illness. As a parting gift back to the earth and to the community for which she was a fierce and tenacious mother and mentor, she left 33 acres of forest, with her house, garden and sheep pastures. Her forest protects what many of us on Isabella Point call Ruby's Creek, her source of water and the water that fed the ample clam and eelgrass beds in front of her house. The garden and pastures were wonderfully productive, full of both wild and rare species from camas to King William pears that both fed her and delighted her. She also left us 26 of Saltspring's oldest trees that she saved on her family's property (now Falcon Farm) through a restrictive covenant before it was sold.

She was one of the first people in British Columbia to use covenants to save things for ecological reasons and Ruby in her own way pushed the law just that little bit more towards the sophisticated legal tools we have today. As I spent the last weeks with Ruby, she talked about her vision of what she wanted done with her land when she died. The most important thing was to keep the land wild. Her house and garden she envisioned providing the community with produce and a place to meet informally like it always had been. Whenever people visited Ruby, they swapped stories about the old times, which current campaigns to save land they were working on, the state of the water in the creek and whether to gather duck eggs or chicken eggs today. That is the kind of conversation Ruby would like to see continuing over her front door step, because as she knew those were the things that mattered most in life.

Briony Penn

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Islands Trust Fund (ITF) took title to a 1.6 hectare (4 acre) property on Isabella Point Road on Salt Spring Island in March 2002. This property consists of the former home of the late Ruby Alton, who left her house and gardens and a wooded portion of land to the ITF, with the proviso as quoted from her last will and testament: “that the said property be held, managed and preserved for its ecological environment and scenic features, and without restricting the generality of the foregoing specifically not as a recreational park, and upon the express condition that (the) residence thereon and the immediate surrounding radius of gardens and the existing driveway, shall be preserved and managed for non-profit purposes including meetings, gathering and functions”.

The purpose of this plan is to:

- provide an assessment of the current conditions of the property’s buildings, gardens and natural areas;
- recommend how the repair and maintenance requirements of the house and grounds could be implemented;
- explore various options for non-profit and community use which were brought up through the public consultation process; and
- recommend immediate, mid- and long-terms plans of action for ITF.

The Management Plan was compiled by Annschild, Anderson & Oak Environmental Services in association with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy through site visits, consultations and public consultation meetings.

The recommendations address the following management issues:

- Management group involvement
- Garden restoration and maintenance
- Building Maintenance
- Management of native ecosystems
- Financial considerations
- Options for long-term use
- Community and non-profit use of the property
- Safety issues
- Acceptable/Unacceptable Activities
- Signage
- Fire management



Figure 1. Ruby Alton's House

1.0 INTRODUCTION

“The objective of the Islands Trust is to preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the Trust area and of British Columbia generally, in co-operation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.” The role of the Islands Trust Fund (ITF) is to assist in implementing this objective by establishing nature reserves and nature sanctuaries and by working with interested landowners to protect special features and values on their lands through voluntary conservations initiatives such as conservation covenants.

The ITF took title to a 1.6 hectare (4 acre) property on Isabella Point Road on Salt Spring Island on February 15, 2002. This property consists of the former home of the late Ruby Alton, who left her house and gardens and a wooded portion of land to the ITF, with the proviso as quoted from her last will and testament: “that the said property be held, managed and preserved for its ecological environment and scenic features, and without restricting the generality of the foregoing specifically not as a recreational park, and upon the express condition that (the) residence thereon and the immediate surrounding radius of

gardens and the existing driveway, shall be preserved and managed for non-profit purposes including meetings, gathering and functions”.

This property is the first ITF reserve to include buildings, representing a new management challenge for the organization. The ITF has named the property the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve (RANR).

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to:

- provide an assessment of the current conditions of the site’s buildings, gardens and natural areas;
- recommend how the repair and maintenance requirements of the house and grounds could be implemented;
- explore various options for non-profit and community use which were brought up through the public consultation process; and
- recommend immediate, mid- and long-terms plans of action for ITF.



Figure 2. Rhododendrons along east side of house

1.2 Methods

This plan is the result of continuous and ongoing consultation between Annschild, Anderson & Oak Environmental Services, the Alton Committee of the Salt Spring Island Conservancy (SSIC), and the Islands Trust Fund. The Conservancy's ad-hoc committee currently consists of two members of the SSIC Board and two other SSIC members, three of whom were close friends of Ruby Alton's and all of whom have considerable expertise in the fields of community development and land conservation. Meetings between this committee and the consultant were held throughout the summer.

The development of this management plan took place in three phases: assessment, public consultation and recommendations.

1.2.1 Assessment

The assessment phase was carried out through on-site meetings between the consultant and various professionals and contractors as well as numerous other visits to the property between June and October 2002 (Table 1). This thorough evaluation of the condition of the buildings, forest and gardens provided the information required to involve interested groups and individuals in a public consultation process.

Table 1 List of meetings held with consultant

DATE	PARTICIPANTS
June 27th	Alton Committee Meeting
Aug. 9th	Alton Committee Meeting
Aug. 20th	Briony Penn, friend and neighbour.
Aug. 21th	Architect.
Aug. 21th	Fulford Hall manager
Aug. 22nd	Jonathan Yardley, Architect.
Aug. 28th	Dick Stubbs, CRD building inspector.
Sept. 10th	Alton Committee Meeting
Sept. 13th	Plumber.
Sept. 13th	Garden Club Historian.
Sept. 13th	Friend of Ruby's.
Sept. 16th	Alton Committee Meeting
Sept. 16th	Alton Committee of SSIC and Ardice Neudorf, ITF
Sept. 22nd	Philip Grange, Eng., Tony Meek, building contractor.
Sept. 22nd	Garden Club Executive
Sept. 22nd	Jonathan Yardley, Architect.
Sept. 19th	Public Consultation planning meeting.
Sept. 25th	1st Public Consultation Meeting – Stakeholder meeting
Sept. 30th	Alton Committee Meeting
Oct. 2nd	2nd Public Consultation Meeting - General Public
Oct. 10th	Salt Spring Archivist
Oct. 12th	Alton Committee Meeting.
Oct. 16th	Carpenter.
Oct. 22nd	Gulf Islands Centre for Environmental Learning

1.2.2 Public Consultation

Public consultation took place continuously and informally throughout the summer of 2002 through phone conversations and walkabouts of the house and gardens. A list of 19 close friends of Ruby was provided to the consultant by Briony Penn and each one of these individuals was telephoned and invited to the first public consultation meeting held on September 25, 2002. These conversations yielded a further 11 friends and neighbours who were also individually phoned and invited to this first meeting which was otherwise unadvertised. It was attended by 23 members of the community and by Ardice Neudorf, representing ITF.

All the persons attending this first meeting had relatively detailed knowledge of the property, and have watched it fall into disrepair in the four years since Ruby's death. Considerable frustration was expressed, as well as appreciation for the magnitude of the task involved in restoring the house and gardens. A good portion of the evening was spent providing information about what had caused the four year delay.



Figure 3. Public Consultation Meeting, October 2, 2002

In planning the public consultation, the Alton Committee and the consultant felt that an initial small informal meeting of friends, neighbours and relatives might

yield information which could be brought to a larger open public meeting. Thus an “official” public meeting took place the following week on October 2, 2002. It was widely advertised, through flyers posted in prominent locations throughout Ganges, Fulford and on several mailboxes along Isabella Point road, as well as in the local newspaper, the Driftwood. While fewer people attended this meeting than the previous meeting, the 11 people who came, spent a good deal of time in a brainstorming session exploring future uses of the property and what community use of the property could look like in the short term. Several individuals expressed an interest in participating in long-term planning for the property.

1.2.3 Recommendations

The recommendations are based on information gathered in the assessment and public consultation phases and were developed by the Alton Committee in conjunction with the consultant.

2.0 BACKGROUND

This property was in probate for the four year period which elapsed between Ruby Alton’s death and the ITF taking title to the property in March 2002. Throughout this period, ITF had no legal access to the property, and though some minimal maintenance was carried out by the Estate (see Appendix A, Previous Expenditures) the house and gardens have fallen into disrepair.

Because little information was publicly available through this period, frustration and anger has built up in the community about the condition of the property. Both ITF and the SSIC have been targets of this frustration, as various individuals in the community believe these organizations to be in a position to do something about the condition of the property. This however was not the case.

The SSIC has been in dialogue with the ITF throughout the process of settling Ruby Alton’s estate. Several active members of the SSIC were closely connected to Ruby throughout her life, and there is great interest on the part of the SSIC to ensure that Ruby’s vision is carried out.

Familiarity with both the history and current situation of the Alton property, including acting as interim property managers, combined with years of involvement with island communities placed the SSIC in a good position to develop a management plan for this property. In June 2002, ITF retained Robin Annschild, of Annschild, Anderson & Oak Ecological Services to prepare this management plan in partnership with SSIC.

2.1 Overall Goals

As indicated in the last will and testament of Ruby Alton, the overall goals for the property are as follows:

1. That the property be held, managed and preserved for its ecological environment and scenic features, but not as a recreational park.
2. The residence, gardens and existing driveway, shall be preserved and managed for non-profit purposes.

2.2 Management Objectives

To achieve the overall goals, the following management objectives have been established by ITF:

1. To allow natural processes to occur in the wooded portions of the site with little or no intervention;
2. To maintain the scenic character of the site; and
3. To allow the site and/or house to be used for non-profit purposes consistent with the Overall Goals as set out above and at the discretion of the Trust Fund Board.

2.3 General Site Description

The property consists of a 1.6 hectare (4 acre) farm on Fulford Harbour, located at 661 Isabella Point Road, 2.9km south of the junction of Isabella Point Road and the Fulford-Ganges Road. The northern part of the property is a small sheep pasture, giving way to the gardens, outbuildings and orchard surrounding Ruby Alton's 1½ storey house. A creek runs through the southern end of the property, which is forested and relatively undisturbed. The east and west boundaries of the property consist of Fulford Harbour and Isabella Point Road, and the property is fenced along the north and south boundaries.

2.4 Legal Description

The property is legally described as follows:

That part of the NW ¼ Section of Section 41, South Salt Spring Island, Cowichan District, as shown on Plan DD18480F except Parcel A (1934491). The parcel identifier (PID) is 009-742-883. The local address is 661 Isabella Point Road, Salt Spring Island.

2.5 Zoning

According to the current Official Community Plan, the property is zoned rural (R). This zoning permits agriculture, residential single-family dwellings, community halls and schools.

2.6 History of the Property

The house is approximately 70 years old. Mr. Alton and his first wife purchased the property with the existing house on it. Ruby Lacy originally came to the property to nurse the first Mrs. Alton, who was bedridden. Ruby eventually married Mr. Alton after his first wife's death. The Alton's built a 10 foot addition onto the north side of the house sometime in the 1960's, increasing the size of the north bedroom and creating the existing kitchen and breakfast nook.

Mary Davidson, archivist for the Salt Spring Historical Society is currently cataloguing Ruby Alton's archives which were left to the society. The Historical Society has offered to put together a display of selected items in the house as a tribute to Ruby Alton. Further details of the history of the property will be available from the archives in the future.

2.7 Regional and Local Context

The Ruby Alton Nature Reserve is situated in a rural area of Salt Spring Island which consists of houses and farms dotted along winding Isabella Point Road. The property has both ecological and cultural value. Protection of the forested area helps assure continued protection for the creek whose upstream course flows through the 13.3 hectare (33 acre) parcel left by Ruby to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Given the possibility of long-term protection of the house and gardens, the cultural value of this site can be maintained for generations to come.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

This assessment focuses on those parts of the property which have remained in a relatively natural state: the portion of the property on the south side of the creek, a 10m buffer strip which runs along Isabella Point Road from the creek north towards the garden gate, and the vegetation on the bank above the beach. An old domestic garbage dump was located in the forested area south of the creek, consisting of a collection of bottles and cans spanning many years.

3.1 Topography

The property slopes at 10% to the East from Isabella Point Road to the top of the bank. The bank slopes steeply (53%) to the beach of Fulford Harbour below. Elevation ranges for this property are from sea level to approximately 25m.

3.2 Soils

According to Report N°43 of the British Columbia Soil Survey, the property is dominated by the Mexicana/Trincomali map unit. A narrow band of the property to the east of Isabella point road falls within the St-Mary/Mexicana map unit which consists of 50-75% imperfectly drained St. Mary soils and 25-50% moderately well-drained Mexicana soils. The Mexicana-Trincomali map unit is

dominated by moderately well-drained Mexicana soils (50-65%) with inclusions of Trincomali soils (35-50%).

Mexicana soils:

Mexicana soils have developed on gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loam morainal deposits over deep, compact, unweathered till within 100cm of the surface. Coarse fragments make up 15 to 20%. Parent material generally consists of less than 20% clay and usually occurs at a depth of 80cm. Moderately well drained, these soils often support perched water conditions on the compact till during the wet months.

Trincomali soils:

Trincomali soils have developed on shallow deposits of gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loamy sand textured marine, fluvial, or glaciofluvial materials. Parent material for Trincomali soils is compact, unweathered till (within 100cm) whose texture consists of gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loam. The soils are developed on shallow deposits of gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loamy sand textured marine, fluvial, or glaciofluvial materials consisting of 15 to 20% gravels. In these moderately well-drained soils, perched water table conditions can exist on top of the compact till for short periods of time. However during the dry season these soils are very droughty. Trincomali soils are strongly acidic (pH 4.6-5.5) and have a low inherent fertility.

St. Mary soils:

The imperfectly drained St. Mary soils consist of 3 layers: a 30-70cm cap of marine deposits of loamy-sand to sandy-loam over a 20 to 50cm deep marine and usually stone free sandy clay loam to silty clay loam marine deposit over gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loam compact unweathered till within 100cm. Downward water movement may be restricted by the fine texture subsoil, creating perched water table conditions. Most of the St. Mary's soils of Salt Spring island have been cleared of their original vegetation for agricultural uses.

3.3 Hydrology

A creek known locally as Ruby's Creek but formally described as Forsen Brook, crosses the southern portion of the property and flows east towards Fulford Harbour. Though its flow is significantly reduced during the dry season, it flows year round, and supplies water to both Ruby Alton's house and to the immediate neighbour to the north.

While part of the watershed is forested and protected with a conservation covenant (this is the 13.3 hectare (33 acre) parcel Ruby Alton willed to the Nature Conservancy of Canada), there has been considerable development in the watershed upstream from this in recent years.



Figure 4. Bridge over Ruby's Creek (Forsen Brook)

3.4 Vegetation Communities

Salt Spring Island lies within the Southern Gulf Islands Ecoregion and this lower elevation site is within the moist maritime sub zone of the Coastal Douglas-Fir Biogeoclimatic Zone (CDFmm).

The RANR consists of a rich moist east facing slope dominated by 45% Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), interspersed with Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* 20%), Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata* 15%), 10% Red alder (*Alnus rubra*) and occasional arbutus (*Arbutus menziesii*). The shrub layer is dominated by 10% trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), with 5% red elder (*Sambucus*

racemosa), 2% English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), 2% dull Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), 2% Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) and Western redcedar (*Thuja plicata* 2%). The herb layer is dominated by luxuriant sword fern (*Polystichum munitum* 60%), with 10% vanilla leaf (*Achlys triphylla*), 10% stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and some mosses. A spring time vegetation inventory will reveal a number of spring ephemerals, some of which may have been introduced to the site by Ruby Alton. There are small localized infestations of holly in the forested portion of the property. Various varieties of ivy are climbing the walls of the main residence and there is a significant but localized infestation of ivy at the base of the southernmost trail to the beach. Vegetation data was collected on September 5, 2002.

3.5 Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

The property provides habitat for moisture loving amphibians such as roughskin newts (*Taricha granulosa*), pacific treefrogs (*Hyla regilla*) and many species of birds. A red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*) was observed on the property. The red-legged frog is considered a species at risk, and has been Blue-listed by the Conservation Data Center of British Columbia. The property is also extensively used by black tailed deer.

Low tides expose the rich mud flats of Fulford Harbour and the ample clam and eelgrass beds supported by the creek. The lush vegetation along the high tide mark provides cover and connectivity between the marine and forest habitats.

3.6 Fish and Fish Habitat

Anecdotal evidence from Ruby Alton suggests that there was at one time an annual run of 30 to 40 salmon in the creek. No recent evidence of this exists.

4.0 GARDENS ASSESSMENT

Ruby dearly loved her gardens and many members of the community consider the gardens to have an unusual collection of specimens. They contain one of the few Oregon white ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*) growing on the island, an historic King William pear, planted in 1890, and numerous other interesting plants as described on Briony's map (Figure 5).

4.1 *Inventory of historic garden features*

Because Ruby Alton's garden is considered to be primarily a spring garden, a thorough evaluation must be conducted next season to document spring ephemerals. Mary Davidson of the Salt Spring Archives has provided an album of photos of the garden taken over several years by Ruby. These photos provide invaluable reference material for any garden restoration.

4.2 *Rare and unique varieties*

The garden could be classified as a "country woman's garden", created through Ruby's friendships with other island gardeners and her participation as president of the Chrysanthemum Society in 1965 and as first president of the Garden Club in 1966. Friends of Ruby's have said of her that they don't believe she ever went to a nursery, rather, she took cuttings and slips from friends' gardens when she saw something she liked. While the garden represents a snapshot of island gardens during the latter half of the 20th century, Garden Club members do not consider it a highly significant island garden from a heritage point of view.



Figure 6. Ruby's house and garden in the mid-90's

4.3 *Restoration and maintenance needs*

Although friends and neighbours maintain that the charm of Ruby's garden was always a wild one, the garden is obviously suffering from neglect, and significant inputs of labour and amendments will be required for it to thrive again. Possibilities for collaboration with the Garden Club and community volunteers have been discussed. Briony Penn has volunteered to spend some time with a garden volunteer coordinator or caretaker to pass on additional information about the way Ruby managed the gardens.

5.0 BUILDINGS ASSESSMENT

The building assessment is based on multiple site visits and on-site meetings, as well as the building inspection report produced by Grange Engineering Associates at the request of ITF in September of 1999. Figure 7 indicates the location of the buildings on the property and the major vegetation types.

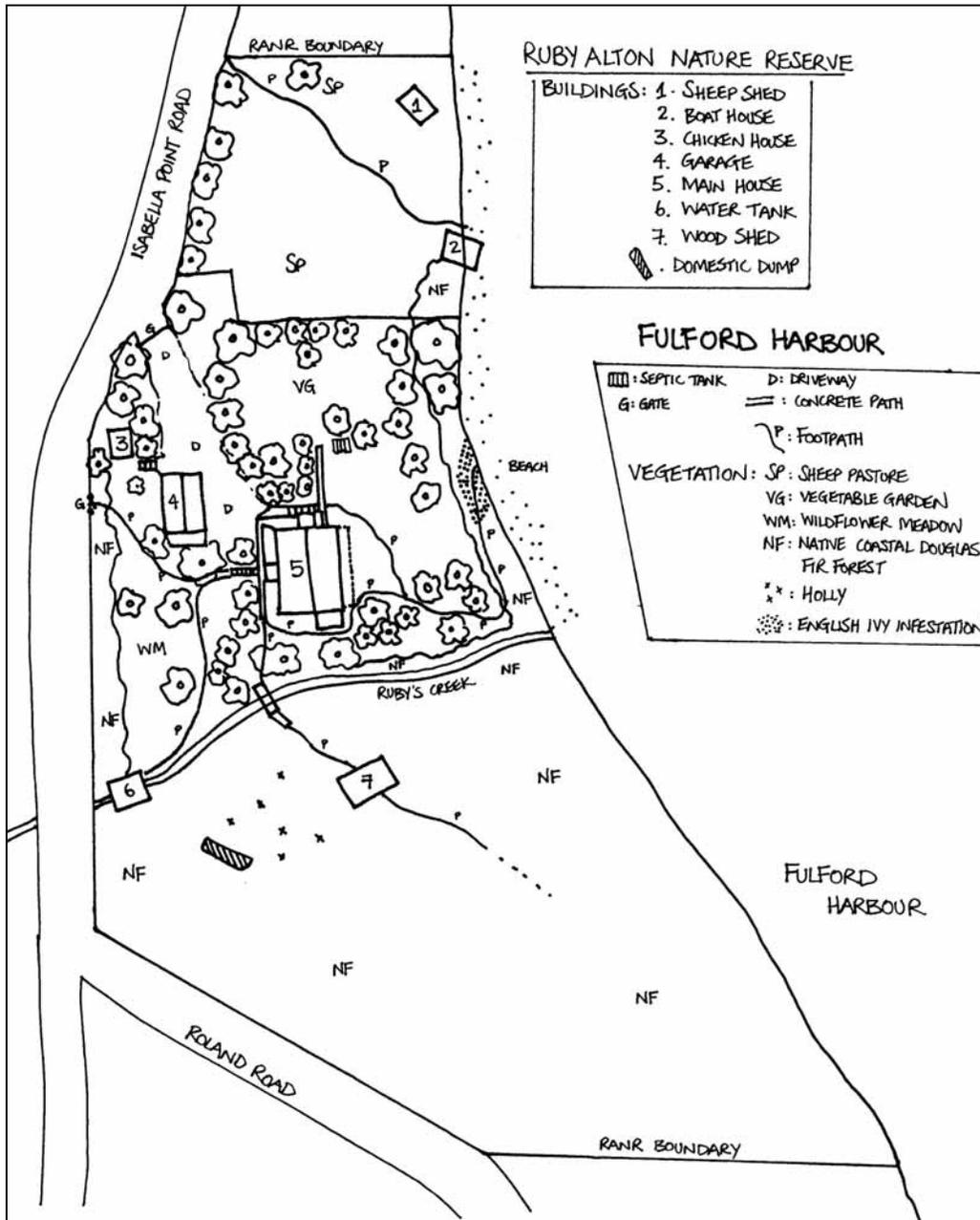


Figure 7. Map of Vegetation and Building Locations

5.1 Cultural Heritage Value

Jonathan Yardley, a local architect with considerable expertise in the care and restoration of heritage structures, volunteered his time to inspect the house and outbuildings. He prepared the attached Heritage Character Statement (see Appendix 1), from which the following Statement of Significance and Character Defining Elements are extracted.



Figure 8. Ruby's house before the addition was added in the 1960s. (Salt Spring Archives)

5.1.1 Statement of Significance

“The significance of this property is based on the integrity of all its elements. That is to say, the originality of the house, the existence of the structures used for the running of the property and the development of the land into a working garden and orchard. Because of the existence of all these elements an historic picture is provided of how Ruby Alton lived and worked on her property. The whole presents a significant cultural and heritage landscape.”

“The house presents itself as a typical single cell gable roofed building of the 1930s. The 1960s addition was carried out in sympathy to the original.”

“The range of outbuildings and development of the grounds is very consistent with a property of this period.”

Character Defining Elements

- An intact rural house and garden developed from the 1930s to the 1960s by one owner.
- A typical 1930s 1½ storey house.
- A collection of original outbuildings for the use of the property.
- A complete cultural and historic landscape.

5.2 Main Residence

The single family residence is a 1½ storey building with a partial basement. It has a simple gabled roof with relatively new asphalt shingles. It is of wood frame construction clad with 1" x 10" painted bevel siding. The main floor is supported with a post and beam structure with a perimeter wall of concrete and concrete block.

The majority of the original wood vertical sliding sash windows have been replaced with aluminum between 1989 and 1992. In approximately 1960 a 10' wide addition was added to the north side of the building to provide a larger kitchen, breakfast area, side entry and access to the partial basement. To the east side there is a wide covered veranda, which is glassed in at the north and south ends. It appears that the main structure of the building dates from the 1930s.

A thorough building inspection was completed by Grange Engineering Associates in September 1999 at the request of the ITF (see Appendix 2). Building contractor Tony Meek further prepared an itemized list of estimated prices for the completion of the work (see Appendix 2). Both of these professionals were invited to revisit the property in fall of 2002 to assess any changes in the building's condition over the 3 year interval. No major differences were identified from the original assessment, which describes the building as being in "generally in good condition with some areas of deterioration requiring attention to extend building life". It should be noted however that evidence of both rats and mice was seen in the house during the 2002 inspections.

5.2.1 Foundation

The main floor is supported by a post and beam system to which hollow, ungrouted concrete block perimeter walls have been added. These walls are not based on a concrete footing. Only slight evidence of movement was found on the south side of the building. Friends have reported that otters have been residents of the basement and crawlspace in years past. No evidence of their presence was seen, but access points for animals need to be addressed.

The engineer's building inspection revealed the presence of powder post beetle in some of the posts, and it is recommended that they be replaced, although they are not structurally weak. Controlling the existing high level of humidity in the crawlspace (see 5.2.3) will help break the life cycle of the powder post beetles, thus reducing further damage.

5.2.2 Roof

The roof on the house and garage are of asphalt shingles, installed in the 90's. On the house, they were installed over existing wooden cedar shingles. The rafters are two by fours, with no insulation. The roof is considered to be in good shape with a remaining life span of at least 10-15 years.

5.2.3 Drainage

Significant surface and/or subsurface drainage occurs on this slope throughout the year. Friends of Ruby's report a stream flowing through the crawlspace in the winter time. Lowering groundwater level by an external upslope French drain, connecting all downspouts into solid pipes and sealing the crawlspace against moisture are priorities for building stabilization and for alleviating the winter flow under the house.

5.2.4 Main Floor

Poor drainage and downspout discharge has caused some rot in the floor support beam in the southwest corner of the house and some joists show signs of crushing in some places.

5.2.5 Insulation

The roof is completely un-insulated and a thin layer of perlite in the loft floor provides a very low standard of insulation to the house. Not all windows are double-glazed, which will contribute to significant heat loss.

5.2.6 Heat

Ruby heated the house as a whole very minimally using the oil furnace, and kept the kitchen warm with her cook stove. The house has been kept above freezing for the last four years using the oil furnace. The oil tank is currently lying on its side on the earth in the crawlspace under the north bedroom and thus at risk of corrosion and eventually leaking. John Cottrell, who has maintained the oil furnace over the past four years estimates it to be approximately 40 years old, with a life expectancy of 5 to 8 more years.

5.2.7 Electricity

BC Hydro disconnected power to the house at the end of July 2002. At the consultant's request, power was reconnected so that an electrical inspection could be carried out. The inspection was carried out on September 19th, 2002 by S.S. Island Electric, detailing the existing deficiencies to the current electrical code as could be visually determined (see Appendix 3). This report indicated that there is some exposed wiring, there are insufficient circuits in both the kitchen and bedroom, and that the polarity will need to be reversed in those circuits that do exist. All receptacles in the older section of the house will need to be replaced and grounded. This report went on to conclude that the general condition of wiring in the house is unsafe

5.2.8 Fresh water

Both the Alton house and the neighbour to the north, use surface water from the stream that crosses the property. The two houses are fed from a reservoir constructed of concrete with a capacity of approximately 11,000 litres (Figure 9). It has a wooden roof and sides with an access door on the downstream side. Water is gravity fed through $\frac{3}{4}$ " tubing to the Alton and neighbour houses.



Figure 9. Concrete tile on adjacent NCC property, and the water reservoir visible from Isabella Point Road.

The Alton home has de facto precedence on the water supply because the neighbour to the north's inlet is located higher on the tank than is the Alton inlet. Distance from the reservoir to the Alton home is approximately 60m.

The reservoir is filled from a point west of Isabella Point Road, on the land now owned by Nature Conservancy of Canada. A 1.2m diameter concrete tile (capped, with access port) sits in a silted-in pool dammed with stacked cinder blocks. There is an access point to this site from Isabella Point Road directly opposite Roland Road. The tile is located 20m from Isabella Point Road. The first 10m of the rough road surface appears solid, whereas the last 10m are on soft, black organic soils. The tile itself is filled from a point 1.5m' upstream through black plastic $\frac{3}{4}$ " I.D. semi-flexible tubing. This intake must be monitored regularly as it tends to clog. On October 17th, 2002, the intake was sucking air and water from the surface of a very shallow pool over black organic sediment. Water is distributed by gravity generally along the stream through $\frac{3}{4}$ " tubing beneath the Isabella Point Road through a culvert and into the reservoir below.

5.2.9 Septic System

Mr. Philip Grange of Grange Engineering and Associates volunteered his time to investigate the septic field, which appears to be functioning adequately. The tank

was last pumped by Gulf Island Septic in 1996 and would have had little or no use since then.

5.2.10 Greenhouse

The greenhouse is attached to the east end of the south wall and is currently completely covered with an evergreen clematis. The sills are rotten.

5.3 Out Buildings

5.3.1 Garage

The garage is approximately 15 feet x 7 feet of simple stud construction resting either directly on the ground or on concrete blocks. It is clad with 1" x 12" horizontal boards and roofed with asphalt shingles. The windows are wood and appear to have been re-used from a previous building. The sill plate and bottom of the studs on the East side are rotten but the building is in relatively good condition overall.



Figure 10. The garage

5.3.2 Chicken House

The chicken house is approximately 10 feet by 8 feet of simple frame construction. It has an exterior accessed nesting box and two opening wood windows. This building could readily be made functional again.

5.3.3 Sheep Shed

The two part sheep shed uses a large fir tree as a major support.



Figure 11. Sheep Shed (October, 2002)

5.3.4 Wood Shed

There is a woodshed on the south side of the creek, where Ruby used to slaughter sheep. It is of simple construction, and contains some firewood.

5.3.5 Boat House

The 16'x 24' boat house is a simple frame building clad with galvanized corrugated iron on the walls and aluminum on the roof (Figure 12). The windows are re-used vertical sash units. It faces onto a concrete and rock slipway down below the high water mark. Adjacent to the slipway is a concrete and rock terrace with steps up the side of the boat house. The sills of this building are rotten, as is the floor.



Figure 12. Boat House (October 2002)

6.0 PUBLIC INPUT

Public input was sought from individuals as well as from non-profit societies who might have a particular interest in the property or desire to take on or assist in a management role for the property.



Figure 13. Public Consultation Meeting, September 25, 2002

6.1 *Public Comments*

Input from individuals was collected publicly at the two consultation meetings, as well as individually through a great number of phone conversations with friends, neighbours and others who chose to phone to make their views known if they couldn't attend the meetings. Brainstorming sessions yielded a number of interesting points about the possibilities and potential limitations of the property. The comments have been organized into the following categories:

6.1.1 Immediate Issues

- Record Kathleen Rathwell's observations/knowledge of the property and garden
- Property needs caretaker who likes garden, likes people, and is handy
- Water system can easily be overtaxed and requires regular maintenance

6.1.2 Potential Uses on the Long Term

- Interpretive center
- Museum, with heritage furniture, and heritage garden
- Combination museum and interpretive center – how can this be sustained financially?
- Beware of formal heritage designation – many legal restrictions may make things more complex
- Parking will limit use – could field be converted to parking?
- Network with Historical Society to develop long-term vision
- Ruby though the house could be a meeting place for clubs, but it is in a very inconvenient location
- Could be a community garden for a food bank
- Organic gardening
- Organic gardening education center
- Composting demonstration garden
- Library space
- Environmental centre of some kind
- School board partnership – marine biology lab
- Use house for residence and have garden only as public access

6.1.3 Community and Non-Profit Uses

- Property available to the neighbourhood (i.e. bench to sit on, picnics in garden, beach access)
- Develop a path specifically for pedestrian access to beach which is away from house to balance community use with caretaker privacy
- Have access to gardens for local people while respecting privacy of house and inhabitant

6.1.4 Inappropriate Uses

- Drunken parties on the beach – this can be controlled by not allowing car access, or having no parking
- Property should not appear on tourist maps

6.1.5 Opinions

- The house and buildings should be raised because the site is so wet
- This is not a house that anyone would want to live in
- Ruby would have liked to have someone to live there and care for the property

6.1.6 Fundraising Ideas

- Use Ruby's historical photos for postcards/cards to sell
- Make a calendar

- Contact location manager for Victoria or Vancouver about using the property for films. BC Film Commission would have further information, or Mort Ransen.
- Partnership with school board which is seeking an environmental education center
- Establish a “Friend of Ruby Alton’s House” society to manage property and do fundraising

6.2 Non-Profit Societies’ Comments

The Alton Committee and the consultant sought the input of organizations and groups on the island who might be willing to participate in or take on a “management group” role for the property.

6.2.3 Isabella Point Residents Association

Spokespersons for the Isabella Point Residents Association were unable to attend either of the public meetings. They explained that the Isabella Point Residents Association was originally formed to address a specific situation which has been resolved. The Association is not active at the present time.

6.2.4 Salmon Enhancement Society

Kathy Reimer, biologist, has expressed an interest in hiking the creek to assess its habitat suitability for fish once her schedule permits. She had also heard anecdotal evidence from Ruby about fish in the stream, but has no corroborating evidence. A friend of Ruby’s has related that Ruby said she used to see 30 to 40 salmon running in the creek.

6.2.5 Abbeyfield Seniors Society

Representative of the Abbeyfield Society were invited to attend the public meetings, to explore the possibility of Ruby’s House being used as an Abbeyfield residence. The location, size of the house and topography are not suitable for an Abbeyfield residence.

6.2.6 Waldorf School Society

The Waldorf School Society expressed interest in the property for several reasons. They are currently looking for a long-term space to house their expanding school. In addition, they have a hands-on, participatory learning curriculum, and have expressed interest in doing some school projects on the property, which could involve trail building and maintenance, as well as perhaps repairing the bridge over the creek.

6.2.7 SSI Historical Society

As keepers of Ruby Alton’s archives, the Historical Society have suggested the possibility of creating a display about Ruby Alton’s life that could be set up in the house eventually. The Historical Society have offered the use of Ruby’s photographs, and provided a number of historical photographs of the gardens which will provide invaluable reference material for garden restoration.

6.2.8 SSI Garden Club

Ruby Alton had a long association with the Garden Club. Current members have offered expertise in assisting with the continued documentation of the garden, as well as with garden maintenance.

6.2.9 Gulf Island Center for Ecological Learning

The Gulf Island Center for Ecological Learning is associated with the local school district and is seeking to establish environmental education centers on all five of the southern gulf islands. They are currently fundraising towards this goal. They have no intention to build, but rather are looking for existing buildings that could be renovated and retrofitted from an ecological perspective. Representatives from GICEL visited the RANR in October 2002 but no report is currently available indicating if they think RANR would be suitable.

6.2.10 SSI Conservancy

The SSIC "Alton Committee" invested over 250 volunteer hours into the preparation of this management plan. SSIC is currently considering options for future involvement with the RANR and will be in contact with the ITF directly regarding their interest in the property.

7.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

Management plans are used to provide long-term direction and guidance for the management of values and features of significance on properties owned by the ITF. They also establish priorities for management actions to ensure the goals and objectives of the reserve are being met. Typically, ITF outlines a management plan for its properties, and then works with a local management group to implement the plan. Usually, long-term (25 year) agreements are negotiated with a management group who take on the implementation of the management plan and day to day maintenance issues associated with the property. ITF has a small operating budget to assist with the development of management plans and their implementation. In the case of the RANR, an endowment established by Ruby will provide additional small amount from the interest that is accumulated each year. Beyond this, special fundraising initiatives are required to take on specific management actions.

The Ruby Alton Nature Reserve is unique among the properties owned by ITF in that it contains a number of buildings and gardens, and in having a mandate which is distinct from that of all other properties. This property is to be managed not only for its ecological values, but also for its cultural values. Thus the approach to management of this property is necessarily less straightforward than that which is practiced on other properties. It is necessary for ITF staff to cooperate with various non-profit societies to ensure adequate management. In the case of the RANR, however the challenge posed by the condition of the buildings, coupled with the mandate to maintain both the house and the gardens, represents a huge undertaking for most volunteer organization. In this case, one

or two-year renewable agreements between ITF and a local volunteer organization may be required over the short-term until the house and grounds have been brought to a better level of maintenance and repair.

The management issues identified for the RANR have been laid out as immediate, short term and long-term based on the degree of attention that is required to appropriately manage this site. Note that financial issues are discussed in Section 8.0 as it is an issue that will influence decisions from the immediate to the long-term.

7.1 Management Issues – Immediate

Management issues that need to be addressed immediately include: Management Group; Safety Concerns; House Maintenance; Rodents; Heating and Electrical. These issues should be addressed as soon as possible, preferably within two months of the management plan being approved.

7.1.1 Management Group

Due to the existence of buildings on-site that require maintenance the need for a local management group is high. It is harder for the ITF to oversee on-site work, than it would be for a group or individual based on-island. A Management Group or individual Manager will coordinate the implementation of all necessary management actions. Currently, the Salt Spring Island Conservancy is acting as Interim Management Group. The Management Agreement with SSIC continues for 60 days following approval of the Management Plan.

Several organizations have expressed support and interest in various aspects of the property. However to date, no local groups have expressed a desire to take on a comprehensive responsibility for the property over the long-term without knowing the extent of ITF's financial commitment to the RANR. The SSIC may consider a short term (1-2 years) agreement.

Any group that takes on the management responsibilities will require lots of volunteer or staff time to undertake this role. Assuming a volunteer group is interested, the amount of time that might be spent simply negotiating a suitable management agreement could be extensive. Legal work required around the agreement and implementation of the Plan may be beyond the reach of a small volunteer organization.

It is important that ITF be very clear about what ITF's expectations of the Management Group would be, how much authority it will have, required processes for decision-making and how a management agreement will be negotiated.

Suggested Action: ITF should prepare a Terms of Reference for the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve Management Group (or Manager) that clearly outlines the expectations, roles and responsibilities.

Suggested Action: ITF should meet with SSIC to discuss the option of SSIC acting as the management group for a one or two year term, if an acceptable management agreement can be negotiated.

7.1.2 Safety Concerns

There are a variety of safety issues, both on the property and in the house, that have been noted and require attention. These include:

- The lid to the septic tank currently consists of four heavy 2"x10" loose boards.
- The railings on the bridge over Ruby's creek are loose.
- The steps in the south trail to the beach are slippery or in some cases have failed and the railing is loose.
- The mossy concrete walkways and steps and the sloping, uneven nature of the land make walking on-site somewhat hazardous.
- The lack of stability and rough construction of the outbuildings are potentially dangerous.
- The north trail to the beach by the boat house needs maintenance if it is to be made a public access trail.
- Electrical issues in the house need immediate attention.
- No smoke detectors exist in the house.

If the house is to be used, upgrading is necessary. Similarly, the ITF should address public safety issues on-site to the best of its ability.

Suggested Actions: ITF and the Management Group should work together immediately to ensure the septic tank lid is secure and obvious, that the bridge is barricaded until its railings and footings can be stabilized, that steps and walkways are improved (leveled and moss removed); that outbuildings are stabilized, removed or clearly marked as hazardous/areas for caution, any trails for public use are identified and adequately cleared, and that electrical needs, including smoke detectors, are addressed before use of the house occurs.

7.1.3 House Maintenance

The main issue around building maintenance is the immediate need for capital investment because the house has been vacant for four years. Through the building inspection a clear identification of needs has been established. Critical items include:

- foundation stability and drainage issues
- heating system improvements
- water and plumbing issues
- rodent control
- general interior cleaning

This Plan outlines anticipated costs associated with immediate house maintenance items (and safety issues) considered of an immediate nature (see section 9.1).

Although it is highly probable that the community will contribute to fundraising efforts to support the development of various long-term visions for the property, ITF will likely need to make an initial investment to the immediate maintenance issues.

Suggested Action: ITF and the Management Group should undertake, as soon as possible, those items listed in the budget entitled “Immediate Maintenance”.

Further, in terms of on-going house maintenance and up-keep, the suggestion of a live-in caretaker (Manager). The caretaker could be in addition to or instead of a Management Group for the site. Options exist in terms of arrangements that might be set up with a Caretaker/Manager, such as reduced rent in exchange for management responsibilities. An on-site care/taker/manager would have an additional vested interest in maintaining the house and grounds. However, the requirement for non-profit uses to occur at the Nature Reserve would need to be made clear to any potential Manager and agreement as to how such uses would occur would be needed.

Suggested Action: ITF should clarify its abilities and responsibilities regarding leasing or renting the house for a live-in Caretaker/Manager.

Suggested Action: The Management Group, in conjunction with Islands Trust Fund, should develop a general “Caretaker Job Description” and prepare a more detailed Five Year Terms of Reference for Management Responsibilities at the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve and subsequently seek out interested individuals in the community for consideration.

Suggested Action: Based on personal recommendations, the job description and Terms of Reference, the Management Group will recommend a caretaker and the Islands Trust Fund will undertake the legal requirements to contract the live-in Caretaker/Manager.

7.1.4 Rodents

During the management planning process, Gulf Islands Pest Control Services (PCS) visited the house and identified the presence of both rats and mice in the building. They indicated that fumigation is not a viable option for rodent control. Although fumigation may kill the rodents that are present at the time (and leave them dead in the walls) it does nothing to address new rodents. PCS’s standard treatment is to begin by requesting that all access points be blocked, at which point they will place bait in the crawlspace. They will monitor the bait for several

months, but do not remove dead rodents. It generally takes two or three months to address the problem.

This issue needs to be addressed as soon as possible or the infestation could increase over the winter months.

7.1.5 Heating

It has been noted that there is little insulation in the house. It is envisioned that a live-in caretaker/manager will be found as soon as possible and heating must be addressed before a caretaker moves in. The house has been heated by oil and wood in the past, however, at present the heating system is non-functioning and the oil tank is a potential hazard. Options assessed during the planning process included oil heating, electric heating, woodstove heating and combinations of these. Oil heating is the least costly from a structural perspective (oil costs could be bourn by the caretaker/manager as a living expense). Electric heating is less desirable on the islands because of regular winter power outages. It is also the most costly option. Woodstove heating is in between cost-wise and is often considered by islands in combination with oil heating. Appendix 4 outlines the detailed costs associated with these options.

Suggested action: The ITF should organize immediate removal of the old oil tank and purchase and installation of a new oil tank outside the house. In addition, annual maintenance should be done on the furnace (including cleaning or replacement as a precaution against the Hantavirus).

Suggested action: As a second heating option, subject to available funds, the installation of a wood heating device, either as a stand alone airtight wood stove installed in the dining area, an insert into the livingroom fireplace, or a small wood stove in the kitchen should be considered. The later option would involve repairing the chimney in the kitchen.

7.1.6 Electrical

Electrical safety is often of concern in older homes. A visual inspection of the premises and the electrical panel and subpanels was conducted to provide a general overview of the quality of the electrical system. Approximately 90% of the electrical system is not visible but some obvious deficiencies were noted. There is a need to provide 100 amp, overhead service and grounding to code. Appendix 3 details the needed improvements.

7.2 Management Issues – Short Term (years 1-2)

7.2.1 House Maintenance

Over the next two years, additional significant repairs and maintenance are needed on the house to ensure its long-term stability and up-keep. These include: curtain drain around the house, replacing necessary joists and beams, and removal or repair of chimneys. The drainage and structural repairs are needed for stability and improved long-term safety of the house. The issues can be dealt with by digging around the house foundation and laying appropriate drain pipes, replacing decayed studs, beams, and joists in the crawlspace/basement area and removing the top of one chimney and strapping the chimney to the wall to ensure safety. Detailed costs are outlined in the proposed five year maintenance budget in Appendix 4.

Suggested Action: ITF and the Management Group should organize who will take the lead in contracting the additional repairs to the house, once funds have been secured for the work.

7.2.1 Fresh Water System

Ruby and her neighbour to the north used to clean the cistern system every year. However, the neighbour has had no access to the reservoir for the last four years, while the estate has been dealt with. In order to accurately assess water quality and contamination levels, the cistern requires draining and cleaning.

Agricultural uses of the watershed and test results from nearby surface wells, indicate a high likelihood of coliform bacteria contamination and elevated background bacterial counts in the water. If this is found to be the situation at the RANR a coarse filter and UV light point of entry system could be installed to address it. The potential for mineral contamination or heavy metal contamination from run-off from the road surface is also present and the situation is currently unknown. If, after cleaning this type of contamination is found an activated carbon filter would be necessary in order to bring the water to drinking-water standards. Depending on the outcome of the testing, another option would be to consider the water unfit for drinking and import bottled water to the property.

First, the water system should be shocked with chlorine and flushed to allow a more representative sample of water quality to be taken. Initially, it was suggested that this shocking take place in the fall of 2002, however the neighbour indicated that this cleaning should be conducted during the rainy season when the tank will fill up rapidly after being drained. Thus the test is recommended to be done in the winter 2002, or in a worst case, before major cleaning and improvement of the tank is undertaken.

As noted in section 5.2.8, the reservoir fills from a tile on the property west of the RANR now owned by Nature Conservancy of Canada. Consultation with Doug Macdonald, Ruby's nephew who has maintained the system for many years, yielded the following suggestions about water supply options:

- A well could be dug with a back-hoe at the edge of the stream, adjacent to the present upstream inlet (land now held by Nature Conservancy of Canada) but on the bank, made 3 tiles deep (each ~30") and draw water from the bank side wet area rather than from the stream proper, which remains wet year-round and would presumably supply the well.
- Water would then be piped down much as it is now, using the same tubing.
- Work to re-dig the well will have to await the appropriate fisheries window which begins in July each year.

With respect to maintenance work on the in-stream reservoir, the Provincial water licensing branch has indicated that any major in-stream work to maintain the reservoir must be done in between mid-July and mid-October, when water levels are naturally low. Further they note that the landowner is responsible to maintain downstream water quality and appropriate measures should be taken to ensure this occurs.

Improvements to the water system could be cost-shared with the neighbour to the north if prior agreement is sought.

Suggested Action: Subject to funding, the Management Group, in consultation with the Islands Trust Fund, should have the water system shocked with chlorine and flushed and appropriate water quality testing should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified individual.

Suggested Action: Based on water quality test results the Trust Fund Board and Management Group should discuss the most practical course of action (identify water as unfit and require use of bottled water only, install a coarse filter, install a UV filter) and design a necessary action plan.

Suggested Action: The ITF should consult with the Nature Conservancy of Canada regarding the possibility of future work on its property to improve the water supply to the water reservoir on the RANR. If NCC is open to such work, and based on the decision regarding a course of action regarding water quality, water quantity issues should be addressed further by the Islands Trust Fund and Management Group.

7.2.2 Garden Clean Up and Inventory

In recent years, the gardens and shrubs have become quite overgrown, and vegetation close by the house is limiting air circulation and contributing to its decline (Figure 14). In addition, digging on the west side of the house will be necessary to install a curtain drain will impact several garden beds.

Salt Spring Island boasts a wealth of gardening expertise, both among members of the Garden Club and professional gardeners. A number of people have already expressed an interest in assisting with the tasks of inventory and restoration. A combination of garden volunteers and a caretaker could weed the many beds and conduct an inventory of the vegetation in spring.

A preliminary garden plan could be developed by volunteers to identify first year priority needs to bring the gardens into shape and an action plan (e.g., pruning, relocation of shrubs for circulation, bulb to be split, and timing of activities). The main challenge will be to coordinate this process.



Figure 14. West side of the house in 2002 (left) and in mid 90's (right)

Daphne Taylor, professional gardener with expertise in heritage gardens, has volunteered to coordinate a fall 2002 garden clean-up. She is familiar with the garden and has known it over many years. Volunteers are being directed to contact her.

Gillian Kidd, who is an executive member of the garden club, has volunteered to write an article about Ruby's garden for the Grapevine, the Garden Club newsletter in order to seek volunteer support for a garden clean up project.

Suggested Action: The Management Group should support Ms. Taylor's efforts in coordinating a fall garden clean-up and seek her assistance in organizing a spring weeding, garden assessment, and first year priorities plan.

Suggested Action: The Management Group will work with the Garden Club, over time, to organize volunteer opportunities and garden restoration projects.

7.2.3 Management of Native Ecosystems

Many friends of Ruby's have expressed concern about the fate of the forested part of the property and the creek. Ruby tended and perhaps introduced some of the spring wildflowers in that area. It is recommended that this area be protected from trampling, especially during the spring time. As time and energy allows, the Management Group may wish to formalize one of the deer trails running through this section of the property to allow pedestrian access from the Roland Road area.

It is recommended that the ITF place a conservation covenant on at least this portion of the property to reassure the community that this undeveloped area that Ruby loved so much will remain natural and will be protected. Additionally, this would provide a high profile locally covenanted area and an opportunity to provide public education about the values of conservation covenants.

There are invasive exotic species, both ivy and holly, on the property. Removal of these species while they are still manageable is preferable. The ivy infestation at the base of the south trail will require several large work parties, while the holly in the forest, south of the creek is still relatively sparse. If invasive species are not removed they further threaten the native vegetation's survival.

In addition, the domestic dumpsite south of the creek should be removed to allow native vegetation to come back in this location.

Suggested Action: The Management Group should organize volunteer work parties for the removal of invasive species on-site.

Suggested Action: The Management Group will organize work parties for garbage removal from the domestic dump site south of the creek.

Suggested Action: The ITF should place a conservation covenant over the forested section of this property or all of the property, as appropriate.

7.2.4 Signage

ITF has a sign policy that indicates that all Trust Fund Board properties will have a site identification sign with the site name approved by the Board being used on the sign. Additionally, safety signs and management signs will be used as necessary to describe permitted uses, dangerous conditions, and specific information about the property as deemed appropriate. It is a general policy of the Trust Fund Board that public uses of its nature reserves be limited to day use and pedestrian uses only. Further, the restrictions of the Will require that the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve not to be used as a recreational park.

It is recommended that the RANR not be included on tourist maps of the island, in the short term and that efforts be made to ensure it does not become a party

destination with the local population. An on-site caretaker will be the best way to ensure the site is used appropriately.

In the short term, small signs should be installed on the gate and at the trail head to the beach, identifying the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve and stating permitted uses and hours of access. Over the long term, depending on the planned use of the grounds, interpretive and informative signs might be added to describe the history, cultural and ecological importance of the site.

Signage should also reflect use of the site is at ones own risk and appropriate fire regulations for public users of the property.

Suggested actions: The Management Group and the Islands Trust Fund should work together to design a RANR sign for the gate and necessary caution signs for areas of concern on site. Upon agreement of the design, the Management Group should have the signs created on-island out of natural materials and install the signs.

7.2.5 Community and Non-Profit Use of the Property

Feedback from individuals attending public consultation meetings suggests that over the past four years, neighbours and local residents have been made to feel very unwelcome on the property. However, because there is such widespread interest in the property's fate, little that happens or fails to happen on the property goes unnoticed for long. Locals wish to be included in the restoration of the property and need to be made to feel welcome again.

While the mandate of providing non-profit use of the property could be achieved by holding one function there a year, it seems more in keeping with the vision of Ruby Alton to allow the property to become a place where neighbours may walk to the beach, enjoy the gardens, and meet informally. There are two existing trails to the beach, one of which goes through the pasture and down by the boat house. Once repaired, this trail could be designated as a community pedestrian access trail, providing access to the beach while respecting the privacy of a potential caretaker in the house. This trail could eventually be connected to a walkway through the gardens, with a sitting area for garden volunteers and the public.

Through the Will, Patty Barden received grazing rights on the sheep pasture for "as long as she may wish". At the public consultation meeting Ms Barden expressed mild interest in repairing the fence in order to be able to use the pasture to graze her sheep in the spring. Any plans for a trail through the pasture would have to be made in consultation with Patty.

Suggested Action: The Management Group will maintain contact with Ms Barden regarding her potential use of the sheep pasture.

Suggested Action: The Management Group, working with the caretaker/manager, should establish and sign a public pedestrian path through the pasture. In the longer term, the path to the garden will be improved and a seating area will be established for day-time public use (ensuring adequate privacy for the caretaker/manager is maintained).

7.3 Management Issues – Long Term

7.3.1 Long Term Use of the House

The house has been in continuous use as a residence, and therefore it has not been subject to building code changes over time. However, if the use changes from residential to something different, the full force of the current building code will apply.

Options for use of the house for non-profit purposes vary. One option is to rent the house out (tenant) for residential uses and use the rent for property management (so as not to generate profit). Another option is to have a live-in caretaker/manager and require (by lease or other suitable agreement) the caretaker to permit non-profit use of parts of the house (e.g., livingroom, dining room, porch). Further, the house could be used for offices for non-profit societies or as a community hall and rented for public functions. Another would be to establish a partnership with one of the non-profit groups noted in section (e.g., the Waldorf School Society or the Gulf Island Centre for Ecological Studies). Lastly, long term use could be a live-in caretaker/manager and limit public use to the grounds.

The local building inspector made several helpful suggestions regarding building code issues that would be raised if the space was divided between a residential use (caretaker/tenant) and some form of non-profit, public use. Such a divided space would require a one hour fire separation between the residential and non-residential area. This is typically achieved by doubling up on drywall, or by installing a sprinkler system. The potential cost of this is restrictive as a short-term option for non-profit use of the building.

Modifications required to make the house suitable for uses other than residential (office, community hall) would require considerable financial resources, which may be marshaled gradually, over time to achieve such an objective but would not work as a short term solution. In addition, if the house was to be used as office space, zoning changes may be required.

For the first five years the Islands Trust Fund should focus on getting a live-in caretaker, making needed improvements to the house and grounds, establishing public use opportunities (trail to beach, sitting area) on the grounds and making

further contact with the Waldorf School and the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Studies to determine their interest in a possible partnership.

Suggested Action: Islands Trust Fund should follow up with the Waldorf School Society and the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Studies to determine their interest in a possible partnership at the RANR.

Suggested Action: Once immediate maintenance and management needs are completed, the Trust Fund Board and the Management Group should discuss long term options for use of the house in more detail, including the associated costs of all options and the community benefits that would accrue.

7.3.2 Insulation

The house is practically speaking, un-insulated. While various options for insulating the house exist, it is premature to consider investing in insulating the house while the long-term plans for the building are still unknown.

Blown-in insulation will allow the house walls and ceiling to be insulated at a cost of roughly \$1.25/square foot for the walls, and roughly \$0.85/square foot for the ceilings. This would total approximately \$5000.00 for insulating the first floor of the building only. However should long-term use of the building include use of the upstairs bedrooms as living or office space, additional investment would be required to insulate the roof at that time.

Insulation needs should be considered in discussions regarding the long term use of the house.

7.3.3 Garden Restoration

Although the garden's immediate needs are quite obvious and straightforward, and include weeding, mowing lawns and pruning. There needs to be more thought given to the long-term objective for the garden.

Historical photographs of the house show that the whole slope around it was at one time almost completely bare. It is obvious from the many horticultural magazines that were at the house when Ruby passed away that she had actively worked on the gardens over the years. In recent years, the gardens and shrubs have become quite overgrown.

The Trust Fund Board has indicated that it does not plan to restore the house and property to any one “period” of history. The gardens are recognized as part of Ruby’s legacy and as being of importance to Ruby. Based on that, work should be done over the longer term to plan how best to protect and manage the gardens, shrubbery and fruit trees on site.

Suggested Action Item: The Management Group should work with the Garden Club and other horticulturalists to develop a garden plan for the next 5 years. The Plan should be approved by the ITF Board.

7.3.4 Outbuilding Maintenance

The outbuildings represent an important part of the cultural value of the property, as outlined in Jonathan Yardley’s Heritage Character Statement (Appendix 1). Though they are all in various conditions of disrepair, they may constitute a valuable resource for the property in the future. The garage can be used as is for storing firewood for the caretaker or tools for garden volunteers where they can access them without entering the house. The boathouse could eventually be repaired and used for storing kayaks or other small watercraft should the property be used for educational purposes in a partnership with the Gulf Island Center for Environmental Learning or the Waldorf School Society.

The ITF is not obligated to maintain the outbuildings based on the terms of the Will, however, unless considerable public safety issues exist with respect to the outbuildings, it would be unfortunate to spend money removing buildings which could later become an asset. Should ITF and the Management Group eventually decide that the outbuildings are not needed, it would be beneficial to donate the buildings to someone in the community willing to tear them apart and take them away for the use of the materials.

If safety risk is a concern, particularly of the boathouse or the sheep shed, which are close to the proposed pedestrian public beach access, these two buildings could be barricaded and signed to warn the public not to enter them.

8.0 Recommended Management Strategy

Management actions for the RANR have been listed in order of priority. The issues addressed in Section 7 may be dealt with in one or more actions. All actions with financial implications will only be undertaken when adequate funds have been secured. The organization of the management strategy below allows for easy implementation of the Management Plan.

Immediate Actions

Action Item 1: The Islands Trust Fund will develop a Terms of Reference for the Management Group for the RANR.

Action Item 2: The Trust Fund Board and its staff will meet with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy Board and its staff to discuss the possibility of SSIC acting as the Management Group for the short term (1-2 years).

Action Item 3: The Islands Trust Fund and the Management Group will work together immediately to ensure adequate measures are taken to identify and/or remove on-site safety concerns, as identified in Section 7.1.2.

Action Item 4: ITF and the Management Group will undertake, as soon as possible, those items identified as "Immediate Maintenance" in Section 7.1.

Action Item 5: ITF will seek professional legal advice regarding its abilities and responsibilities relating to leasing or renting the house for a live-in Caretaker/Manager and will assess the financial viability of having such a Caretaker/Manager.

Action Item 6: The Management Group, in conjunction with Islands Trust Fund, will develop a general "Caretaker Job Description" and prepare a more detailed Five Year Terms of Reference for Management Responsibilities at the Ruby Alton Nature Reserve and, will subsequently, seek out interested individuals in the community for consideration.

Action Item 7: Based on a candidate assessment, the job description and Terms of Reference and personal references, the Management Group will recommend a caretaker and the Islands Trust Fund will undertake the legal requirements to contract the live-in Caretaker/Manager.

Action Item 8: The ITF, or Management Group, will organize immediate removal of the old oil tank and purchase and installation of a new oil tank outside the house. In addition, annual maintenance will be contracted for the furnace (including filter cleaning or replacement).

Action Item 9: As a second heating option, subject to available funds, the installation of a wood heating device, either as a stand alone airtight wood stove installed in the dining area, an insert into the livingroom fireplace, or a small wood stove in the kitchen should be considered. The later option would involve repairing the chimney in the kitchen. This action may be moved to the short or long term actions if funds are not available.

Short Term Actions (Targeted for Years 1-2)

Action Item 10: Islands Trust Fund will follow up with the Waldorf School Society and the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Studies to determine their interest in a possible partnership at the RANR.

Action Item 11: ITF and the Management Group will establish who will take the lead in contracting the additional repairs to the house.

Action Item 12: The Management Group, in consultation with the Islands Trust Fund, should have the water system shocked with chlorine and flushed and appropriate water quality testing should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified individual.

Action Item 13: Based on water quality test results the Trust Fund Board and Management Group will discuss the most practical course of action (identify water as unfit and require use of bottled water only, install a coarse filter, install a UV filter) and design a necessary action plan.

Action Item 14: The ITF will consult with the Nature Conservancy of Canada regarding the possibility of future work on its property to improve the water supply to the water reservoir on the RANR. If NCC is open to such work, and based on the decision regarding a course of action regarding water quality, water quantity issues should be addressed further by the Islands Trust Fund and Management Group.

Action Item 15: The Management Group will support garden clean-ups and will seek assistance in organizing a weeding, garden assessment, and first year priorities plan.

Action Item 16: The Management Group will organize volunteer work parties for the removal of invasive species on-site.

Action Item 17: The Management Group will organize work parties for garbage removal from the domestic dump site south of the creek.

Action Item 18: The ITF will take steps to place a conservation covenant over the forested section of this property or all of the property, as appropriate.

Action Item 19: The Management Group and the Islands Trust Fund will work together to design a RANR sign for the gate and necessary caution signs for areas of concern on site. Upon agreement of the design, the Management Group should have the signs created on-island out of natural materials and install the signs.

Action Item 20: The Management Group will maintain contact with Ms Barden regarding her potential use of the sheep pasture.

Action Item 21: The Management Group, working with the caretaker/manager, will establish and sign a public pedestrian path through the pasture. Later, the path from the beach to the garden will be improved for public use and a seating area will be established for day-time public use (ensuring adequate privacy for the caretaker/manager is maintained) to create a loop trail opportunity.

Long Term Actions (Years 3-5)

Action Item 22: The Management Group will work with the Garden Club and other horticultural professionals to develop a garden plan for the next 5 years. The Plan should be approved by the ITF Board.

Action Item 23: The Management Group will work with the Garden Club, over time, to organize volunteer opportunities and garden restoration projects.

Action Item 24: The Trust Fund Board and the Management Group will discuss long term options for use of the house in more detail, including the associated costs of all options and the community benefits that would accrue.

9.0 Financial Considerations

Financial considerations are a significant management issue for the RANR because of the need to maintain the house and the property.

During the four years that the house was being maintained by the executors the following expenses were incurred and covered by the Estate.

Previous Expenditures (from Nov. 21, 1998 to February 2002)	
Heating Oil	\$2,715.72
Furnace Repair	\$173.00
Hired Cleaners	\$1,232.38
Garbage Collection	\$1,487.70
Gardens and Yard	\$3,821.50
Insurance	\$2,429.00
Surveyors	\$1,454.90
Property Taxes	\$10,513.28
Water License	\$77.43
TOTAL	\$23,904.91

Ruby Alton provided an endowment of \$88,000 to the Islands Trust Fund to support the on-going maintenance of the property. As is standard with endowments, only the annual interest is available for use. In the first year approximately \$2,000 was generated. This was reinvested in order to grow the endowment. Additional fundraising will be necessary to continue to build the endowment and grow the available funds. The more ITF can contribute to the endowment and to the capital costs of property over the next five years, the more likely it is that local non-profits will be willing to take on fundraising activities to complement the investment by ITF.

It is unlikely that any local non-profits will be able to take on the Management Group role for the property as the burden would be too great for a local non-profit society unless there is a strong commitment on the part of ITF to cover financial costs associated with the RANR.

Potential sources of funding for the RANR could include:

- partnerships with other organizations, such as the non-profits that have an interest in the property (see section 6.2) that may raise funds,
- grants from foundations, government bodies or philanthropists
- general community and individual fundraising.

9.1 Immediate Maintenance Budget

An immediate budget which addresses the most pressing maintenance issues is itemized below. Further detail, including options that were addressed, is included in Appendix 4.

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Issue	Approximate Cost	Actions Covered in the Cost
Foundation & Drainage	\$900.00	Clean gutters, attach downspouts, repair beam and joists in SW corner of basement
Safety Issues	\$2,000.00	Rodent control, repair to path to water, repair septic lid, repair bridge, smoke detectors, caution signs
Heating System	\$3,550.00	Install new oil tank, inspect furnace, dispose of old oil tank, insert flue liner in chimney, airtight wood stove (purchase/installation).
Water & Plumbing	\$1,000.00	Change filter, replace corroded pipes, pressure pump in kitchen and

		bathroom, septic system improvement to prevent clogging.
Electrical	\$2000	Upgrading to ensure adequate and safe electrical system
General Cleaning (house)	\$375	Materials & labour
TOTAL	\$9,825.00	

Other maintenance and upgrading needs as identified in Philip Grange's original house inspection conducted in 1999 and priced in the quote provided by the building contractor Tony Meek are addressed in a proposed five year maintenance budget (see Appendix 4). The long-term budget is based on 1999 estimates plus 15%, and can be considered only as a rough guideline, since many other items requiring attention may surface within this five year period. The costs are estimates, and new quotes will have to be provided when the work is considered, since the costs do not factor inflation over the next five years. However the value of this budget is in illustrating the very minimum expenditures required over this time period. Given the vintage of the house, it is reasonable to add 15 to 20% to the total value of the budget to cover additional, unforeseen expenses. For instance, repairs to the hole in the southwest corner of the building may uncover more rot which is presently invisible.

9.2 Volunteer Contributions

There is potential for significant volunteer involvement in all aspects of the restoration and maintenance of the RANR, which may considerably reduce the costs as outlined in the immediate and 5 year budgets (Appendix B, C). At the public meetings, several people volunteered to help in various aspects of property management. The table below indicates the number of people who volunteered for each area of activity.

Ruby Alton Nature Reserve Volunteering Options	# of volunteers
Participate in long-term management planning	4
Grounds maintenance	9
Garden Inventory	3
Raise Funds	3
Donate Funds	1
Writing	1
House Maintenance	4

The Waldorf School has volunteered to do some trail maintenance and perhaps repair the bridge over the creek, and local gardeners have volunteered to begin a

fall cleanup of the garden. Many others have expressed their interest informally to various members of the Alton Committee of SSIC.

While there is a tremendous potential for volunteer participation in a project such as this, volunteer contributions must be nurtured and coordinated to be effective over the long term.

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Ruby Alton Nature Reserve holds a special place in the hearts of many Salt Spring Islanders and Islands Trust Fund will work closely with many islanders and island groups to ensure the long-term upkeep of this property. The Ruby Alton Nature Reserve is unique as an Islands Trust Fund property because it has a number of buildings and gardens on-site, and the bequest requires the Trust Fund Board to use and maintain the house and gardens for non-profit uses such as meetings and gatherings. This represents a more complex management responsibility for both the Islands Trust Fund and the local management group and innovative ways to address these complex responsibilities will need to be developed and implemented from the outset.

Related Maps and Schedules available (hard copy) from Islands Trust Fund.