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Islands Trust Council Approves 2020/21 Climate-Focused Budget

Lekwungen, METULIYE/Victoria, BC, BC—The Islands Trust Council approved a climate-focused budget of \$8.3 million for 2020/21.

"We had a great deal of help with this year's budget," said Peter Luckham, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "In total, 751 people provided input through an online survey or by sending emails. This fiscal year, the budget has a climate-action focus and based on survey comments, we understand climate is a shared priority across the Trust Area. Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. Your input was heard and taken into consideration when we finalized the budget."

The 2020/21 budget shows a 5.0% increase in planned expenditures from the 2019/20 budget to fund general operations and the implementation of climate-action Strategic Plan priorities. Listed in order of importance, determined by budget 2020/21 survey participant responses, projects funded in the approved budget include:

- Development of a regional freshwater strategy,
- Review of foreshore policies and bylaws, and development of a model policy,
- Development of climate change, demographic, and environmental indicator data sets,
- Continuation of Coastal Douglas-fir protection work by select local trust committees,
- Development and implementation of a climate change-focused stewardship education program
- Mapping the extent of eelgrass throughout the Trust Area,
- Continuation of the Policy Statement Amendment Project, which includes consideration of climate change-related policies,
- Testing and developing the potential to broadcast public meetings.

In addition to property tax revenues of \$6,917,075 from local trust areas and \$312,887 from Bowen Island Municipality, a draw from accumulated surplus of \$501,150 has been approved to fund these strategic initiatives and subsidize operations of the Islands Trust Council, local trust committees, and the Islands Trust Conservancy Board. These tax figures represent a 2.0% general property tax increase to property owners from local trust areas plus a 1.3% increase from new development, and a 5.1% tax decrease to Bowen Island residents. Bowen Island Municipality contributes a proportional share of the operating costs of trust-wide services, which includes the work of Trust Council and the Islands Trust Conservancy. Each year, Islands Trust uses the formula established by provincial legislation and Trust Council policy to calculate the amount that is requisitioned from Bowen Island Municipality.

The approved budget also includes a Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area special property tax requisition of \$75,500 to fund continued coordination of watershed management in that Local Trust Area.

In addition to supporting the work of local trust committees, Trust Council, and Islands Trust Conservancy projects, the approved budget funds a 2.0% wage increase for all union staff, as required by the BCGEU Collective Agreement; an estimated up-to 3.75% effective salary increase for non-union staff, as guided by the Public Service Agency Management Classification and Compensation Framework rules; and a 3.1% increase to trustee remuneration (per Trust Council's policy on Trustee Remuneration).

Details of the approved 2020/21 budget are available on the Islands Trust website.

The Trust Area, located in Coast Salish territory, is the homeland of over 28,000 Coast Salish Peoples who have called this Area home since time immemorial. Covering 5,200 square kilometres of land and water, the Trust Area has 26,000 residents and 10,000 non-resident property owners. The region features spectacular beauty, extensive archaeological and culturally significant sites, and some of the world's most endangered and precious ecosystems.

The Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the unique environment and amenities of the Islands Trust Area through planning and regulating land use, development management, education, co-operation with other agencies, and land conservation. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major islands and more than 450 smaller islands.

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