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Partial advocacy success

Ottawa announces new system to improve marine vessel traffic flow in Southern British Columbia

Lək̓ʷəŋən, METULIYE/Victoria, B.C. - After more than 15 years advocating for Ottawa to reduce and ultimately eliminate 33 freighter anchorages, Islands Trust learned today that Transport Canada and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority will be working with partners to design a ' new system to improve marine vessel traffic movement.

"Over the years, Islands Trust has voiced concerns about the potential oil spill and other risks freighters pose to the marine environment and marine species, and the negative noise and light impacts to local communities ," shared Peter Luckham, Islands Trust Council Chair. "We have been to Ottawa to meet with the Minister of Transport and written dozens of letters. We were happy to learn about today's announcement but feel more needs to be done. We will continue to advocate for complete elimination of anchorages in the fragile ecosystems of the Gulf Islands."

Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and Transport Canada aim to complete the new system by March 31, 2022. During the process, they will engage a variety of partners including, Indigenous groups and local organizations and consider potential regulatory changes that would support the development of this new system.

"We look forward to participating in this consultation," said Peter Luckham. "Working in partnership to address concerns and find solutions is a welcome approach."

The new system, proposed by the federal government and Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, will manage marine vessel traffic and optimize the supply chain flow. Once implemented, this system is intended to:

- Strengthen maritime safety by reducing congestion;
- Reduce environmental impacts, including noise impacts in Southern Resident killer whale habitat, by limiting vessel movements; and
- Reduce negative social impacts (like ambient noise and light pollution) by reducing overall anchorage use and implementing a code of conduct for vessels at anchorage.

Islands Trust has been one of many voices calling for an end to anchorages in Southern B.C. We have worked alongside First Nations, communities, conservation protection groups, other governments, and individuals. Today, we are pleased to know these voices were heard, but we will continue to advocate for the complete elimination of commercial freighter anchorages in the Trust Area.

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About Islands Trust

Islands Trust is a federation of special-purpose government bodies representing 26,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area and another 10,000 non-resident property owners. The Islands Trust Area is located within Coast Salish territory and is the homeland to over 28,000 Coast Salish Peoples who have called this place home since time immemorial. Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the Islands Trust Area's unique environment and amenities by planning and regulating land use, development management, education, cooperation with other agencies, and land conservation. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major islands and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5,200 square kilometres.

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