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2012

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by John Peirce Aug 2012

It has been another busy year for GaLTT. Probably our most visible events are the bi-weekly trail work parties, so ably organized by Randy Young, and our table at the Farmer's Market, organized by Carol Hemrich. Also popular were the weekly summer walks through the 707 Park, led by Bob Weenks.

GaLTT's new trail map has had a long birthing process, but at last it is out and getting rave reviews. Many thanks to all who worked on it, especially Cameron Murray for the design, Judy Preston for the layout, and Barb Hague for spearheading the project. The new colour map is larger, clearer, and has many more trails and walks than previously. When the 2nd edition comes out in 2013 we will have several new trail licences to add to it, and we will consider printing some copies on tougher paper as the current maps are not as durable as they might be.

The concept of trail licences that we introduced last year is a huge success. We signed our first two trail licences last fall, and we just signed our fifth trail licence this month. We also have two other trail licences at an advanced stage of negotiation and are looking for more opportunities to connect neighbourhoods using this simple mechanism to allow public access across private property while providing the landowner with liability protection through GaLTT's insurance policy.

Considerable effort has gone into working with the American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts to develop a draft covenant/easement agreement that makes it possible for landowners in BC with US income to place covenants on their Canadian property and get a US charitable tax receipt for the value of the donation, as well as recognition in Canada of the reduced value of the covenanted property, thereby saving capital gains taxes on sale and property taxes in the near term. We are doing this with the objective of protecting a significant property on Gabriola, but also to lay the groundwork for other US landowners on Gabriola and the Gulf Islands to protect their properties and achieve very signifi-

cant tax savings in the process. If there are any US landowners interested in discussing this idea further, please contact me for more details.

As we get more involved with covenants, we need to think about the cost of maintaining covenants. There are annual inspections to be done and provision must be made for legal defence of the conservation terms on covenanted lands in the future—in fact in perpetuity! Furthermore, the cost of getting covenants in place can be significant (surveys, legal costs, endowments) and we would like to be able to offer landowners some assistance in this regard where appropriate. Therefore we are in the process of setting up a Covenant Maintenance Fund and will be looking for donations to support it.

The Big Tree Registry is under way. No visible results are available yet, but hopefully in the Fall we can publish some results for the trees that are in publicly accessible places.

GaLTT Board member, Melanie Mamoser and Jethro Baker have started a Streamkeepers group on Gabriola with the objective of perhaps getting at least one stream rehabilitated to the point where it could support salmon and/or sea-run trout spawning. GaLTT is covering costs for meeting space and has offered to be an organizational umbrella for the group if appropriate. The initial two meetings were very well attended and we look forward to seeing the group develop its objectives.

Hope to see you all on the trails this year ...

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

GaLTT's AGM was held on February 7, 2012, at The Haven's Phoenix Auditorium. The considerable achievements of the previous year included signing our first covenant agreements as well as new trail licences allowing public access across private land. At the meeting, President John Peirce signed the covenant on Elder Cedar (S'ul-hween X'pey) Nature Reserve, which is owned by the Islands Trust Fund. IT representative Giselle Rudischer witnessed John's signature.

Our new Strategic Plan for 2012 to 2017 was

AGM (continued on page 2)

AGM Report (continued from page 1)

announced. The Plan had been developed with our members in the Fall, and was finalised by the Board in December.

Long-serving directors Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley and Barbara Hague stepped down from the Board, and their extensive work for GaLTT was acknowledged with thanks. Carol Hemrich, Anne Landry, and Melanie Mamoser were elected to the Board and welcomed.

GUEST SPEAKER—PETER LAMB

Our guest speaker was Peter Lamb, author of "The Islands Trust Story". His presentation included a brief review of the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Islands Trust in 1974, its evolution since that time, and its relevance today in the face of governance challenges and economic pressures. He also discussed:

- the role of non-profit conservancies and land trusts within the Trust area and their relationship with the Islands Trust Fund
- the importance of the Islands Trust mandate in avoiding the "creative destruction" of communities.

GALTT'S NEW COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

To facilitate our new Strategic Plan, GaLTT has reorganized its committee structure this year. The Executive Committee is chaired by John Peirce and is responsible for strategic planning, planning for succession, and the day-to-day operation of the Society. It is also responsible for liaison with all levels of Government. For the "heavy lifting" GaLTT has the Trails and Parks Management Committee, chaired by Randy Young, which plans and executes regular work bees to build and maintain trails on public land, through road right-of-ways, and on other legal, approved routes. The Acquisitions and Trail Routes Committee, chaired by Colin Masson, reviews all matters relating to the acquisition of land for public use and/or for environmental protection. Its Covenants Sub-committee, coordinated by Norm Harburn, manages negotiations of covenants and trail licences with private landowners. The Community Engagement Committee is chaired by Duane West, interacting with Gabriolans through streamkeeper activities, guided walks, workshops, and a big tree registry, with Carol Hemrich having responsibility for display tables at community events such as the Summer Market. Carol also coordinates with the Communications Committee, which is chaired by Jenni Gehlbach, and is responsible for our website, newspaper announcements, brochures, newsletters, and email communications with GaLTT members.



A GaLTT work-party constructs a boardwalk on the swampy section of Sally Robinson's licensed trail between Cooper and Islands View. [Photo by Barb Hague]

RANDY'S WORK PARTIES

GaLTT board member Randy Young continued to lead his twice-monthly work parties throughout the year clearing and maintaining public trails all around the island. In March they also built a new boardwalk to allow year-round use of the newly licensed trail from Islands View Road to Cooper across Sally Robinson's land (which lies between Thompson and Cooper Roads). This trail goes through some low land, and is very wet and muddy in the winter. Randy says they had to: "...haul in concrete blocks, stringer frames, and decking." They used portable electric drills to assemble the boardwalk from wood salvaged from Don and Mary But's old deck by another work party a few months earlier. After the early Spring's heavy rains, Randy reported that the boardwalk behind the Commons was working very well with water sluicing underneath a long section. Unfortunately it only went halfway across the wet area, diverting to higher ground on the right of way, and eventually to Redwood Road. This means that wheelbarrow access to some Commons garden plots was cut off during the wet season. GaLTT had been storing donated decking in the Goat Barn, and slowly converting it into frames that could be used to extend the walkway, so on April Fools' Day, the work group did some more sawing and then transported the frames and decking by trailers around to the Redwood Road access to the garden. At this point rubber boots and wheelbarrows were useful, as well as the portable electric drills.

OUR NEW TRAIL MAP AND GUIDED WALKS



Designer Cameron Murray (left) and layout artist Judy Preston celebrate the launch of GaLTT's new trail map with Tom Cameron, Barb Hague, and Jenni Gehlbach at Silva Bay.

GaLTT has produced a beautiful new trail map, which shows all the legal public-access trails on the island, including that confusing network in 707-acre Park. This lovely, big, coloured map was designed and drawn by Cameron Murray. The neatly folded brochure, which was laid out by Judy Preston, includes 17 photos (taken by GaLTT members) of our beaches and trails and 25 detailed trail-walk descriptions refer-

enced to the map overleaf. It includes information about some new trails across private land, which have been licensed by GaLTT for public access. You can buy the maps for \$3 each from our display table at community events, or from Artworks, North Road Outdoor Clothing Store, Mid-island Co-Op, The Haven, Descanso Bay campsite, the Visitor's Information Centre at Twin Beaches, Silva Bay pub, and Page's Marina. Board member Bob Weenk led another successful series of guided walks this summer in 707-acre Park. At this point the many confusing trail loops were still unmarked, so our new trail map was very useful in orienting walkers. Each week Bob started out from a different park entry, exploring the trail loops in that area.

Trail markers are in the process of being installed in 707-acre Park by the RDN and GaLTT volunteers, which is a relief to Randy Young who's been storing the posts in his garage for months!

COVENANTS AND TRAIL LICENCES:

A Short History of GaLTT's Trail Licences and Covenants by Norm Harburn, Covenant Coordinator for GaLTT

Many trails have been around for decades and used regularly by locals, and some are considered part of the history of the island. However, as Gabriola gets more crowded and as bigger lots are subdivided and sold, access to these "historic trails" can become problematic or impossible. GaLTT introduced the concept of trail licences to try to formalize trail access across private property and make such licensed trails known to the hiking public via our new trail map and our web site. A trail licence between GaLTT and a private landowner allows for public use of the trail (as marked on GaLTT's trail map) with no liability to the landowner because GaLTT carries insurance for public use on licensed trails.

The first few trail licences occurred at GaLTT's initiative, but now we are blessed with private landowners approaching GaLTT for licences for trails across their land. Our first trail licence (signed in Fall, 2011) is for a long-standing trail connecting Barrett Road to Rollo Park. Another "historic" trail runs from Clarendon Road to the Surf Lodge and Pub on Berry Point Road, and this was added to our list of trail licences in 2012. To date four trail licences are in place and several more are being pursued. The four in place are:

- Barrett Road to Rollo Park
- Yogi Trail to Bruce Lynn Drive
- Robinson Woods Trails connecting Thompson Road to Cooper Road and Island View Drive
- Clarendon Road to Berry Point Road

A new trail licence is being drawn up as this article is being written that will provide another access from Thompson Road to the Robinson Woods Trails and through to Cooper Road. Two more trail licences are at an advanced stage of discussion and we hope to be able to announce them this Fall.

CONSERVATION COVENANTS:

Conservation covenants are legal agreements that private landowners can use to restrict development on their property in perpetuity, and thereby reduce property taxes and perhaps reduce capital gains taxes due when the property is sold or inherited. Private covenants do not normally grant public access to covenanted lands, so privacy is preserved. In special cases, the Canadian Ecological Gifts Program can provide charitable donation receipts at the time of the covenant being placed. Covenants can take several forms, depending on the needs of the landowners, and they can range from very small (as little as 1 acre) to very large.

Covenant holders are land trust organizations certified by the Surveyor General to hold covenants in BC. Usually covenants are held by two such organizations so that one can back up the other, both in terms of logistics and cost of annual inspections, as well as if one of the covenant-holding groups folds. Organizations that hold conservation covenants on Gabriola include the Islands Trust Fund, GaLTT, and the Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT). To date, GaLTT is co-holder of two covenants on Gabriola—one with NALT on the Elder Cedar Nature Reserve (S'ul-hween X'pey), and the other with ITF on a privately owned forested tract of land on Brickyard Hill.

GaLTT is currently working with the American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts (AFoCLT) to get them approved to hold a specific conservation covenant on Gabriola. This covenant will afford the US landowner a charitable tax receipt in the US for application against their US income tax, as well as recognition by the Canada Revenue Agency of the reduced value of the covenanted land, thus saving current property taxes and future capital gains tax. This approach has been successful in three other provinces to date, and we look forward to making this sort of covenant available to US landowners in BC, and on Gabriola in particular. One covenant in the local news is for the Gabriola Commons. GaLTT and The Land Conservancy in Victoria are in the process of reviewing the second draft of this covenant, which is unique in that it is attempting to go beyond the bounds of a normal conservation covenant.

Anyone interested in a trail licence for their land or a covenant for its environment pro-

tection should contact me or any other member of the GaLTT Board, or send an email to info@gallt.ca asking for more detailed information relevant to your particular situation.

CONTROLLING INVASIVE PLANTS

Work has continued all year pulling Scotch broom, especially in Drumbeg Park and in the school grounds, and encouraging islanders to control it elsewhere. It's an ongoing task because the seeds scatter so widely and remain viable in the soil for decades. The broom matures quickly and makes the surrounding soil unsuitable for native plants like Camas and Spring gold. Last year's massive effort by volunteer Nick Doe to remove Tansy ragwort, which is toxic to livestock and makes hay worthless, paid off this year, with fewer visible plants along the main roadsides, but isolated clumps still needed to be removed.

The next big challenge for Gabriolans is Daphne laureola, an attractive but invasive evergreen that is taking over the understory in our forests. The Commons team has done sterling work removing Daphne from their land, some of it really large and tough to extract. But they've discovered an added problem—horizontal branches can put down new roots and then send up a new shoot.

Visit our website at www.gallt.ca to discover how to control invasive plants on your own land, or pick up a brochure from our display table at the market and other community events. You can borrow one of GaLTT's special tools called an Extractigator™ to help pull large Daphne and Scotch broom plants. Call Randy Young at 250-247-8541.

DOGGY-DOO DISPENSERS

Despite our recent focus on strategic planning, covenants and trail licences, GaLTT remains a hands-on group with a strongly practical focus. We have arranged to pay for regular year-round pick-up and disposal of doggy-doo bags from bins at Twin Beaches (Gabriola Sands), Drumbeg, and Sandwell Parks. The old doggy-doo dispensers have been replaced with new roller style units and local volunteers keep the dispensers supplied with bio-degradable bags. This has had a significant impact on Gabriola dog-owners, reminding them of their obligation to pick up after their dogs. In an attempt to cut down on littering and encourage people to carry all their personal trash away with them, Nanaimo BC Parks Manager David Forman has moved the bins and bag dispensers to be near the public buffies at Twin Beaches and Drumbeg, away from the parking lots and picnic tables.

GaLTT has a registry to list the biggest trees on Gabriola. We hope that Gabriolans will measure their favourite large trees, and tell us where they are located. You can email the details to GaLTT at info@galtt.ca, or send them to GaLTT board member David Boehm at dfboehm@shaw.ca, or bring them to our display table at community events. GaLTT will confirm the sizes and locations of the trees and list them in our registry. Big trees on private land will be publicized only with the landowner's permission.

The recognized measure of a tree is its DBH (diameter at breast height) and in Canada this is measured about 1.3 metres above the ground for native trees. You can simply measure the circumference of the tree at that height and we'll do the DBH calculation for you. Remember to take string, tape measure, pencil and paper to record your measurements. Be respectful of the environment—don't trample the tree roots or surrounding plants.

Professional foresters classify Gabriola's forests as CDF--Coastal Douglas Fir, the premiere species of our forest. But our forests also contain western red cedar, western hemlock, grand fir (balsam), Pacific yew, juniper, shore pine, western white pine, dogwood, willows, red alder, Garry oak, arbutus, western big leaf maple, trembling aspen, cascara, bitter cherry, Oregon plum and perhaps a few others. These are Gabriola's native trees, but many other tree species have been introduced, such as California redwood, yellow cedar, Sitka spruce, silver birch, yellow or ponderosa pine, English walnut, Lombardy poplar, and no doubt a few more species that we will discover as we build our registry. David Boehm writes:

"There are several large veteran Douglas firs in Sandwell Provincial Park, the largest on the steep hillside above the public toilets. The steepness and the enormity of its trunk posed a problem for measuring, but a rough measure of its circumference at breast height was 6.73 metres. Several other excellent Douglas firs exist up Hague road off Berry Point Road, at the corner of the ferry line up, and along the Coats cliffs opposite Harmac mill. An interesting challenge is provided by species with multiple trunks or boles. Professional foresters measure the largest bole only, which skews the significance of the measure when there are numerous stems, as in big leaf maples, juniper, arbutus, fig, willow, and hazelnut. An excellent example of a huge multiple stem maple is in the field on the right going up Fern road from south road—its circumference is 6.71 metres just below the multiple stems.

Up the streambed inland from Coats' water hydrant on South Road, in Coats Marsh Reserve, we have located a cottonwood with circumference 4.34 metres. The largest western red cedar on Gabriola appears to be in Elder Cedar Reserve. Its diameter is 6.93 metres, but this includes a large cavity between the two halves of the veteran.

The largest Cascara and bitter cherry we have found so far are in the 1.8- to 2.4-metre range. The largest yew tree found was 2.06 metres around; the biggest dogwood only 0.91 metres; and the



"This beautiful big-leaf maple is on Betty Abrams property between South Road and El Verano Drive. Its circumference at breast height just before the main trunk divides is 5.74 metres. [Photos by Nick Doe]"

biggest Oregon plum, only 0.42 metres. Can you beat these? So far, we have not recorded a large Grand fir or Garry oak and have yet to locate outstanding examples of Western white or shore pine. There is a very large Larch (unmeasured) opposite the boat launch at Descanso Bay."

Call David Boehm at 250-247-8698 if you'd like to help locate and measure Gabriola's biggest trees. He would particularly like help from someone with GPS skills.

GABRIOLA STREAMKEEPERS

The Gabriola Streamkeepers are members of our community volunteering their time to preserve and enhance our local waterways. Development of the Streamkeepers Program began in 1993 as an initiative of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, to support and encourage communities to monitor and evaluate stream conditions and educate the community about good watershed practices and the importance of protecting our streams.

Since 1996, thousands of British Columbia residents have been trained using the Streamkeepers methodology. The methodology empowers local residents to gather science-based information about their watersheds that can then be used by government agencies and form the basis for restoration and enhancement projects. The Gabriola Streamkeepers had their inaugural meeting on July

26, 2012. Since then we have identified three streams for our short-term focus: Mallett Creek (just East of the ferry terminal), Descanso Creek (west of the ferry terminal) and Wagg Brook (flows into Degnen Bay). This fall we will be hosting a course on Gabriola to train members on the Streamkeepers methodology. Gabriola Island Lands and Trails Trust support the Gabriola Streamkeepers. The land and streams are interdependent and efforts to protect one will protect the other.

