



PO Box 56
Gabriola, BC V0R 1X0
www.galtt.ca

**** Sent via electronic mail to tosborne@rdn.bc.ca ****

October 28, 2021

Dr. Tom Osborne
General Manager, Recreation & Parks
Regional District of Nanaimo
6300 Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6N2

Re: Coats Marsh Regional Park Weir Repair/Replacement

Dear Mr. Osborne:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of Gabriola Land and Trails Trust (GaLTT) to express our support for the motion being brought to the November 2, 2021 meeting of the Regional Parks & Trails committee by Vanessa Craig (RDN Director, Electoral Area B) to advance the planning for assessing weir repair or replacement options at Coats Marsh Regional Park. If approved, the motion will amend the Five-year Financial Plan for Regional Parks so that planning for the weir project will begin in 2022 followed by necessary repair/replacement work in 2023. The motion also asks that the planning phase also explore the feasibility of expanding the weir to enable increased water storage capacity of the marsh.

I have previously voiced GaLTT's concerns about the recent manual drawdown of water levels in Coats Marsh Regional Park to both the RDN (Yann Gagnon, Manager Parks Services) and the Nature Trust of BC (Dr. Jasper Lament, Chief Executive Officer). We've been told the drawdown is necessary to mitigate apparent liability and damage concerns posed by the elevated marsh water levels caused by beaver activity in recent years. We've also been assured the work is being guided by an environmental plan prepared for the project and supervised by a professional biologist. However, while they may have successfully mitigated liability, we remain concerned the engineering assessments and remedial actions taken to date have not properly prioritized the high ecological values of the marsh and the effects lower water levels will have on the important wildlife habitat it provides.

The Coats Marsh property was acquired by the RDN and the Nature Trust of BC in 2008 for its conservation values. We believe the preservation or enhancement of those conservation values should form the basis of all management decisions.

Gabriola Island has very few large wetland ecosystems, so the responsible stewardship of Coats Marsh is especially important. The beavers have done a masterful job of improving wildlife habitat at Coats Marsh in recent years and it is disheartening to see these gains being reversed by the manually lowering of marsh levels in recent months. Therefore, it is imperative that planning to assess repair/replacement/expansion options be expedited so that water levels may be safely managed at levels which protect or enhance conservation values.

Finally, the public concerns raised about the recent water drawdown at Coats Marsh underscores the importance of expediting a thorough review of the current Management Plan (2011-2021) for Coats Marsh Regional Park. Ideally, the weir repair/replacement planning should be done within the context of a full Management Plan review.

GaLTT is a charitable, non-profit society focused on protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, providing opportunities and resources for landholders and the public to explore and learn about the natural environment, establishing and maintaining a network of trails, and encouraging responsible land and water stewardship practices. We have built a respectful working relationship with the RDN, Islands Trust Conservancy, and BC Parks on a range of conservation and trail issues.

Please ensure this letter is included as correspondence on the Regional Parks and Trails Select Committee agenda scheduled for November 2nd.

Sincerely,



Robert Brockley
President, Gabriola Land and Trails Trust

cc: Vanessa Craig, RDN Director, Electoral Area 'B'
Tom Reid, Nature Trust of BC, West Coast Conservation Land Manager
Kees Langereis, Islands Trust Trustee, Gabriola
Scott Colbourne, Islands Trust Trustee, Gabriola