



Gabriola Land & Trails Trust

Newsletter #2 Oct 2005

Conserving and connecting the natural areas and neighbourhoods of Gabriola Island

GaLTT's Vision

"Achieve a system of interconnecting parks and trails from Descanso to Drumbeg by 2010"

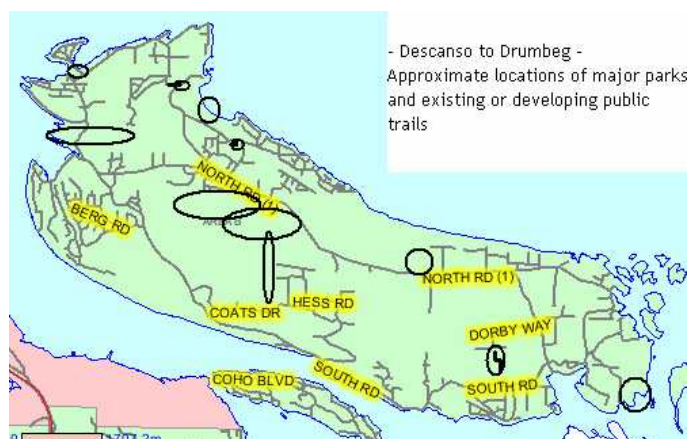
Two New Parks in 2005

In 2005 Gabriola's protected land inventory increased from 70 ha (less than 2% of the land base) to 421 ha (approximately 9% of the land base) with the addition of 2 new large land holdings.

In March the former 160 acre (64.7 ha) mature forest block on North Road known as the "UREP" lands was established through a crown land grant to the Islands Trust Fund as a nature reserve.

In September a development density transfer re-zoning application was approved that transferred 707 acres (286 ha) of "young" forest land to the Regional District to be held as a community park wilderness recreation area.

These incredible accomplishments have occurred with the foresight, hard work and dedication of many, many individuals and groups in the community including GaLTT members, and the support of our local and provincial governments. Willing and determined land owners made it possible. Park management plans will eventually be developed for both new acquisitions with the community's input. Watch for more information as these processes get underway.



The "UREP" Nature Reserve (a temporary name) is located on North Rd across from Degnen Rd. The main trail runs northerly to connect with an old forest service road, and then runs easterly and southerly to connect to an undeveloped road access off the end of Windecker Drive. The trail has several windfalls down at the moment, a stream crossing and some significant wet areas in winter but is generally passable on foot. Please take care to stay on the trail to minimize impacts to tree roots.

The "707 Central Park" or "700 Acre Wood" (both temporary names) is accessible from the end of Rickie Rd, Fisher Rd, off North Rd in the tunnel, and off Coats Rd. A new trail is planned along the undeveloped road access across from Tin Can Alley will lead into the north westerly corner of the park in the future. The existing network of trails is complex and it's easy to get lost in this large area of the island. Mapping has recently begun and hopefully a draft will be available for distribution soon. The RDN will be engaged in basic property management tasks until such time as a community management plan is developed and

approved. This expensive process may not take place until 2006 or 2007, but meanwhile basic trails planning, an ecological inventory process, vehicle access management, basic signage and broom removal will all get underway, along with just plain enjoying this large and lovely area.

Parks and Trails Planning Objectives

The importance of land preservation, parks and trails to Gabriolans is well documented in the Official Community Plan (OCP) and most recently in the Islands Trust Fund Regional Conservation Plan (2005).

At the time of ratifying the OCP (1998) less than one percent of Gabriola's land base was in public park use. The OCP notes a number of desirable strategic trails connections on pg 23, noting 8 important trails entry points. In 2005, 3 of the original 8 entry points have been secured and the Potlatch Ventures proposal provides for an additional 2 entry points. The OCP encourages the establishment of new sites through the Provincial government, the RDN, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways, giving priority to regionally significant waterfront sites, upland woodland sites of substantial size, and strategic trails connections in subdivision developments. Find the OCP and Land use bylaws at www.islandstrust.bc.ca.

The Islands Trust Fund Conservation Plan 2005 – 2010 provides an overview of gulf island ecosystems using air photography technology along with statistics on natural, modified, and protected ecosystems by major island in the Trust area. The plan is available to download in the conservation planning section of the ITF website at www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca. The Islands Trust Fund (ITF) sets a number of 5 year objectives including working with partners to protect at least 15% of the total area of each local trust area. Gabriola has the second lowest remaining natural ecosystem area (15%) and the lowest amount of protected area (2.5% - not including our two new acquisitions) in the Trust area. As a result Gabriola is one of the ITF's focus areas over the next five years.

Membership Update

From the inaugural meeting in November 2004 to October 2005 an incredible 140 individual, family and corporate members have joined GaLTT. Welcome and thank you from the GaLTT Board of Directors! As GaLTT's first year anniversary approaches we have much to celebrate!

If you join GaLTT now (or since September), your membership runs until Dec 2006. And for those who joined GaLTT between Nov 2004 and September 2005, please don't forget to renew your membership before Dec 31 2005.

Memberships and donations demonstrate our community's commitment to public land conservation and recreation which is critical for successful grant applications, essential to help pay for basic operations not covered by project grants (such as liability insurance) and helps to build our land acquisition fund for the future. Your contribution and participation makes it possible for GaLTT to function, grow and flourish.

Communications and Member Services

General administrative activities are running smoothly thanks to the skilled support and efforts of Richard Welsh, our treasurer and membership database manager. Marylyn Beaubien ensures that meeting minutes and correspondence records are accurate and in order. The Nanaimo Area Land Trust continues to support us with the issuance of tax receipts where requested by members. We have a website, thanks to Nigel Hart. You can check it out at www.galitt.ca and tell us what you think at info@galitt.ca.

Acquisitions and Fundraising

A GaLTT Acquisition background plan is established. Grants research is well underway, along with our application to establish Charitable Tax status for GaLTT.

Watch for GaLTT Stuff!

A great selection T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, water bottles, cards and memberships will be for sale at Christmas craft sales Nov19-20 at the Community Hall and Dec 3 at the school. Or contact Carol Boyce for individual sales after Dec 3 (250-247-

Projects and Grants Progress

With the generous assistance of the Gabriola Recreation Society our first map brochure showing Gabriola's Parks and Trails was produced in the spring of 2005. 2000 copies were distributed free to residents with community newspaper delivery. An additional 500 copies have been distributed through the Visitors Information Center, Pages Marina and Board members at the cost of a \$1 donation to GaLTT.

Work is still underway through a \$5,000 grant from the Shell Environmental Fund for restoration, trails work and interpretive signage in Cox Community Park.

The Gabriola Recreation Society has generously approved a Grant in Aid once again for new map brochure production and distribution to the community. An improved version is planned for 2006.

Trails Committee

The Trails Committee is our centre of practical action. Trails work in Cox Community Park has been the main focus in the latter part of 2005. GaLTT volunteers teamed with RDN staff and POSAC members completed the YOGI Trail in the spring, connecting the entrance near McConvey Rd. with the main trail heading to River Place. Significant work is underway on the boardwalk crossing the wetland and the connector trail to River Place, aiming to complete this section by Christmas 2005.

Continuing work is planned in the Petroglyph Trail Community Park for spring 2006. A number of equally interesting and important trails projects are on the list, and only require a volunteer project leader to get underway.

Trail workers are needed to complete the Petroglyph Trail between Petroglyph Heritage Park area (near the United Church) and Petroglyph Way which was begun in early 2005. Work parties can take place on different days of the week, depending on volunteer availability. Work party sessions are generally 2 to 3 hours at a time and it would be helpful if people could commit to attending at least 2 or 3 work parties to really make a difference.

Guidelines for trails projects on undeveloped road accesses have been developed, detailing the important steps in undertaking a neighborhood project.

Interested in researching undeveloped road accesses in your neighbourhood as possible connector trails? Check out the Regional District of Nanaimo's website and RDNMAP, at the following web link:
<http://www.rdn.bc.ca>

If you have some time and energy for trail work, contact Paula Maddison (250-247-8635 or madongab@shaw.ca) or Em Gavin (250-247-8376 or em_gavin@shaw.ca) for work party information. Every hour of volunteer time makes a difference on the ground and its good family fun, healthy and social too!

Community Process Input

The GaLTT Board and many members have been active through 2005 providing input to density transfer plans that have the potential to significantly increase trails and community lands on Gabriola. The Centre Stage Holdings Ltd. application was approved in September, resulting in a 700+ acre block of regenerating forest land in the heart of the island re-zoned to wilderness recreation area.

Potlatch Ventures Ltd. proposes, as the result of density transfers, to create a waterfront park near the ferry, connecting trails to Descanso Regional Park, 60 acres of wilderness recreation area with important strategic trails connections from Spruce Road area through to the Village Center area. The status of this proposal and potential impacts to the Official Community Plan are unclear at this time.

Meeting Schedule

The Board of Directors meets monthly, generally on the second Tuesday. Meeting dates are: November 8, December 13, January 10 at the Women's Institute Hall 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Observers and pre-arranged delegations are welcome. Our 2nd Annual General Meeting will be held Saturday Feb 25 at the Community Hall.

Time to Volunteer?

Whatever your volunteer skills or interests, they have a niche, or can be developed; at GaLTT (including communications, acquiring parks, fund raising, and trail building). If you love parks and trails, care about the environment, want to leave a legacy, or simply like to do interesting activities with creative people, GaLTT has a place for you.

Thanks to Our Supporters

Special thanks to all of you, our members, who provide moral, financial and material support to GaLTT's purpose, and as well to many community businesses and individuals who have generously contributed services, materials, tools and expertise to projects.

Officers

Kerry Marcus, Colin Masson, Marylyn Beaubien, Richard Welsh

Board Members

Carol Boyce, Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley, Em Gavin, Nigel Hart, Ron Holmes, Bart Jessup, Paula Maddison

For more information contact us by phone at 250-247-8066, or by email at info@galitt.ca

