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Gulf Islanders preserve their properties and receive tax savings

The natural features of most of Little D'Arcy Island and two forest properties, one on Galiano Island and the other on Bowen Island, are now protected from development, in part because Gulf Island landowners are taking advantage of tax incentives that help them protect natural areas.

Now in its third year, the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program is available in Islands Trust areas within the Capital Regional District and the Sunshine Coast Regional District. Seven landowners have entered NAPTEP, each now saving between \$1,300 and \$3,700 annually on their property taxes. The 2007 deadline to apply is April 1.

Little D'Arcy Island

The owners of Little D'Arcy Island, located south of Sidney Island and east of Central Saanich, and the owners of a property on Galiano Island have recently placed conservation covenants on their land to protect natural features. In return, they are receiving a 65% on-going property tax reduction on the portion of the land protected through the Islands Trust's Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP).

The newly protected Little D'Arcy Island is one of the most pristine and biologically diverse islands in the region. It also has an interesting history as a former holding facility for Chinese immigrants afflicted with leprosy from 1907 to 1912. Donors Phil and Mary Middleton chose to protect 95% of their eight hectare (20 acre) island in perpetuity, allowing for only two small building sites. The donors have protected the island's rare and endangered plant species from damage by deer grazing and development. In addition to property tax savings

through NAPTEP, the Middletons are also able to take advantage of special income tax incentives available to both individual and corporate landowners through Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program.

Galiano Island

On Galiano Island, Jim and Christina Barrineau entered NAPTEP to preserve 1.76 hectares (4.4 acres) of young forest and a creek on their property, now part of a protected area network on the Island.

'We chose to protect our land because we wanted to preserve it as a legacy for our family in as unspoiled a way as possible. We felt like we were also helping to preserve the beauty of Galiano and the Gulf Islands in general for future generations,' says donor Jim Barrineau.

Bowen Island

On Bowen Island, donors Neil Boyd and Isabel Otter donated three hectares (7.4 acres) of forested land to the Islands Trust Fund as part of a neighbourhood rezoning and subdivision process. Their donation qualified as an Ecological Gift. The donated land is named the David Otter Nature Reserve, after their son.

'Incentives to protect natural areas are becoming an important part of the conservation tool box in the Gulf Islands,' says Islands Trust Fund Chair Sheila Malcolmson. 'By promoting incentive programs we are trying to tip the financial balance towards nature protection, away from development and logging. It seems to be working.' ✍

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