

Denman Islander Submission
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Denman Conservancy: An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Denman Island is blessed with many wild places where plants and creatures can still flourish, and humans can visit to appreciate the beauty and abundance of life here. There are still so many such spots on the island that we'd hardly think of ourselves as being in a "wildland crisis".

And yet, a crisis is exactly what we're facing. Consider: 97% of the island is available for "development": -- clearcut logging, subdivision etc. A mere 3% of the land base is permanently protected as parkland at Fillongley and Boyle Point parks. If we add all the vacant crown land to the parks total, we'd have 8% -- but the provincial government has been moving steadily in the direction of selling off our crown lands, so their status is anything but secure.

Following upon the Bruntland Report, it is now generally recognized that about 12% of a given area should be "set aside" to preserve natural values and features. Here on the "Undiscovered Islands", where tourists pour in by the thousands, the figure should be higher to accommodate visitor needs.

Any way you slice it, we have a large problem in the making. As logging companies and individuals continue flattening more and more of the forest, as subdivisions fill up and as large landholdings are broken up, the amount of land left as wild habitat keeps shrinking. Abundance and diversity of plants and

animals diminishes. The environment is impoverished. And we are all the poorer for it.

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In response to this scenario, islanders have recently formed the Denman Conservancy Association. Now in the process of becoming a registered non-profit society, the Association has as its chief purpose obtaining available pieces of property to be set aside in perpetuity as reserved wild lands. In doing so, Denman joins a growing conservancy movement across North America.

The Conservancy Association has initiated its activities with two specific pieces of property which it hopes to help preserve. One is 25 acres on Pickles Road -- some logged, some not -- surrounding the existing 56 acre nature reserve. Owned by Raven Forest Products of Campbell River, the 25 acres are available for purchase until August 31 for approximately \$65,000.

This property has been targeted by the Conservancy because Raven has made it available for community purchase and because, if not purchased, it will be clearcut in September.

If obtained, the acreage will be donated to the Islands Trust Fund to expand the existing nature reserve and connect it to 160 acres of crown land, which we hope to have designated nature reserve as well, creating a total reserve of 240 acres in one of the island's most significant wetland and wildlife areas. The Pickles Road Nature Reserve Project is a joint undertaking of the Conservancy and the Ratepayers and Residents Association.

A second project involves the Lindsay-Dickson property on East Road. Comprising 144 acres of forestland, this is the last large piece of wild land on the east side of the island between Fillongley Park and Gravelly Bay. It includes undeveloped waterfront, significant timber stands, a great blue heron rookery, eagle nests and other wildlife features. The purchase price is approximately \$375,000. This property has been chosen because an offer of purchase has already been made on it by an independent logger which could result in the area being clearcut.

The Conservancy is not limiting itself to these two properties, but considers the imminent threat of development warrants giving them immediate priority.

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At present, about 10 volunteers are doing the work of the conservancy group. If it's to be successful, the undertaking needs your support and active involvement. What can you do?

- * Join the Association! Membership forms are available from Susan-Marie Yoshihara, 335-0253.

- * Make a donation! Susan-Marie also has pledge forms, and donations are tax-deductible.

- * Create a fund-raiser! Several islanders have already come forward with funding ideas they're willing to organize.

In the weeks ahead, we'll be organizing an information and fund-raising drive in all island neighbourhoods. Your help is needed!

Working together, pooling our ingenuity and resourcefulness, we can make a tremendous difference towards the future of wild lands on the island. Let's do it!