



Land Use, Conservation, Participation in British Columbia's Gulf Islands

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Outline

- Regional planning context
- Gulf Islands and SSI
- The SSI challenge
- The Pursuit of (Self-)Governance
- Implications and opportunities
- Conclusions



Regional Planning Challenges

Balancing development/conservation
Divergent interests

Multiple institutions, stakeholders, actors

Fragmented responsibilities

Growing confrontation and debate

Distrust/dislike of government

Conflict between governments

Institutional cost-cutting, efficiency

Complex, changing environment

Decision-making knowledge base

Role of technology, science



Gulf Islands & SSI

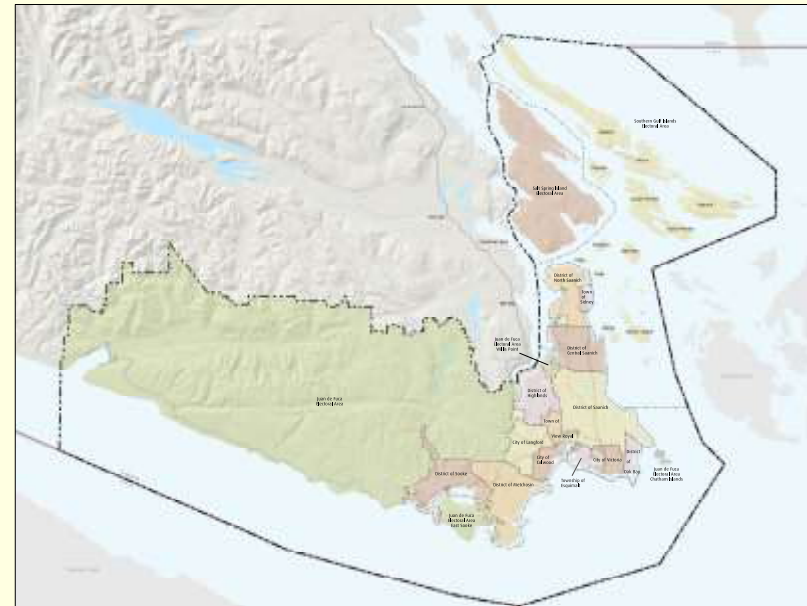


- Southern Gulf Islands; 400 km²; SSI half that
- Population in 2016: 10,500 SSI; almost 5000 the rest
- Ferry access to Tsawwassen, Sidney, Duncan
- 150 year European history
- Much longer indigenous history of Coast Salish, Hul'qumi'num peoples
- Rare ecozone, unique and significant ecozone and species
- Early agricultural, forestry history
- Tourism, arts, and recreation
- Historically growing populations
- Currently slow to flat population growth; has been faster in past due to retirement, recreation, amenities



Regional Governance

- Capital Regional District (CRD)
- Islands Trust
- BC Parks
- Fire and Water Local Improvement Districts
- Provincial and federal agencies; e.g. DFO, CCG
- Parks Canada: Gulf Islands NPR, est. 2003+ ; PMP 2011-13+



Capital Regional District

- SSI and other southern Gulf Islands are rural unincorporated electoral areas under CRD
- SSI elects one director to CRD board (24 members)
- SSI administrative office
- Serves as the local government for these areas
- Service delivery includes: Parks & Recreation, Transit and Transportation, Drinking Water, Waste & Recycling, Building Inspections, Bylaws & Enforcement, Economic Development
- A range of functional commissions and committees with local representatives, e.g. planning and recreation

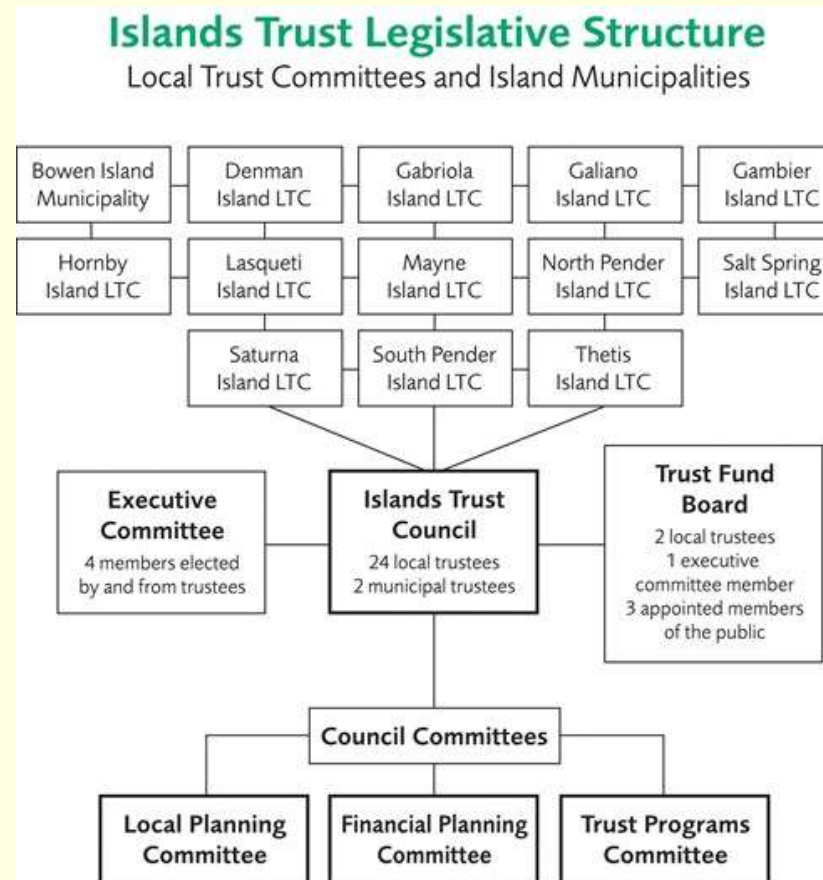
Islands Trust I

- Created in 1974; Act amended numerous times over the years.
- Recognized the Gulf Islands as “a unique area threatened by over-development”; and “to preserve and protect the environment and unique nature of the islands”. For benefit of all BC people, not just residents.
- Is “a unique federation of local governments, including Bowen Island Municipality (1999), which plan land use and regulate development in the Trust Area”.
- Separates land use planning from service delivery.



Islands Trust II

- SSI LTA elects two trustees via LTC to Islands Trust Council
- LTCs have the two local trustees, and an appointed chair from the Executive Committee
- The LTC is responsible for land use decisions and develops land use plans with input from the community, other government agencies and FNs.
- The Islands Trust Fund (1990), works with landowners and communities to permanently protect places of natural or cultural significance.



Gulf Islands Challenges

- Water quantity and quality
- Ecosystem protection: land, freshwater, marine
- Economic opportunities
- Tourism and recreation
- Real estate, housing, health
- Transportation: land and water
- Planning, regulation, development



Governance Challenges

- Largest unincorporated BC community
- Local services, e.g. sewers, roads, ferries
- Local control – from both development and preservation perspectives
- 2016 ISC study identified a lack of co-ordination between the agencies providing services to SSI, and many local services administered from Victoria.
 - Also identified fiscally complex governance with high demands on a small number of locally elected officials.
 - Long history of governance discussions, first in the 1960s, then 80s, and again in 90s, originally driven by sewerage concerns



Self- Governance

- A 2002 restructuring report lead to a vote: 70% against incorporation
- Most recent process began in 2011 with a community group inviting Islands Trust to answer governance questions in a public meeting
- Led to studies, including an Impact Analysis, and in 2015 a nine member Incorporation Study Committee
- 2016 Salt Spring Island Incorporation Study Committee (ISC) recommended another vote
- Transitional funding of \$20M was promised by BC gov't for roads, policing, etc. and about \$1M annually for largely recreation facilities
- Defeated with 62% against in a September 2017 vote

Exploring process and participation

- Wide participation and discussion
- A few key players and advocates
- Two main groups organised campaigns and websites “YeSS! Yes Empowers Salt Spring” & “Positively No”
- Many articles, letters, comments in local and Victoria papers
- On-line discussions, websites, Facebook
- Series of public meetings
- Strong voter interest with 6400 votes cast
- One might think “Old” versus “New” residents, or strict “Development” versus “Preservation”
- Two visions: natural enclave, “Guardians”, versus “Community”, diverse amenities with strong economy

(Wright 17)

Governance Implications

- Favouring flexibility over rigidity of municipal system
- Favouring protection
- Concern over costs of incorporation
- Continuing to explore, maybe with momentum, other governance options
- Divisions were created, but will fade – past experience
- Some conflict may continue
- Service provision
- Simplicity is a key issue
- Communication and clarity necessary, but maybe not sufficient



Conclusions

- Recurring issues; arguments have become broader and more sophisticated in last decade
- Strong local/regional government here – issue is coordination, interaction, goals
- Examining fit of old and new institutions with new land and resource management needs – sustainability versus preservation, social/cultural goals?
- More support for local pursuit of economic development, self-sufficiency, local services
- Exploring stronger roles for Indigenous People
- More intersection of large and small-scale land & resource management initiatives, e.g. in forestry, LUP, agriculture, coastal

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