



# News Release

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## TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM REWARDS LANDOWNERS PROTECTING NATURAL LANDSCAPES

VICTORIA — Landowners in British Columbia's Gulf Islands can save sensitive ecosystems and save money at the same time, thanks to the Islands Trust's innovative property tax exemption program. Interested landowners may apply to the program at any time, but they must apply by April 1, 2009 to receive a tax exemption in 2010.

The Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) is a voluntary program that rewards conservation-minded landowners with an annual 65% property tax reduction on the portion of their land protected by a conservation covenant. The program works well for people who own ecologically significant land and who want to protect and preserve the natural beauty of the Howe Sound and Gulf Islands. NAPTEP gives landowners the opportunity to leave a significant natural legacy while lessening their financial burden.

This past year, the program saw more landowners than ever applying to the program. Keith and Sylvia Pincott of North Pender Island received a Natural Area Exemption Certificate this past fall in exchange for placing a conservation covenant on their property. The Pincotts have always recognized the importance of caring for wildlife habitat at home; they carefully tend their island property, watching over this sensitive habitat where more than 20 bird species are known to nest.

"While we knew that we would care for our land in our lifetime, we realized that without a covenant there was no guarantee as to what may happen to our cherished forest and Garry oak meadow after we are gone," said Sylvia, recent donor of the Woodwinds NAPTEP covenant. "With a NAPTEP covenant, it is comforting to know that habitat will remain on this property in perpetuity. And with the special encouragement of a reduction in property taxes, it is a win/win arrangement".

So far, NAPTEP has helped islanders protect more than 50 hectares of sensitive ecosystems in the Islands Trust Area. NAPTEP participants report saving \$600 to \$3,700 annually on their property taxes, while protecting areas ranging in size from one to 23 hectares.

"It's in part because of foresight of individuals like the Pincotts and other NAPTEP covenant donors that the islands will continue to have intact natural spaces that also provide our communities with essential ecosystem services," said Christine Torgrimson, Chair of the Trust Fund Board. "I hope 2009 will mark an even more successful year for conservation as the program expands to new regional districts."

In 2009, NAPTEP is available to Islands Trust Area landowners in the Capital Regional District, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, the Regional District of Nanaimo and the Sunshine Coast Regional District. The Islands Trust is working to expand the program to remaining districts in the Gulf Islands in the next two years. To learn more, contact the Islands Trust Fund at 250.405.5186 (Victoria) or toll free through Enquiry BC at 1.800.663.7867 (604.660.2421 in Vancouver), visit us online at <http://islandstrustfund.bc.ca/naptep.cfm>, or email us at [itfmail@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:itfmail@islandstrust.bc.ca).

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