



Islands Trust Fund

# News Release

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January 7, 2010

2010-01-ITF

## PROPERTY OWNERS WHO CONSERVE LAND PAY LESS TAX

VICTORIA — Islands Trust Area property owners continue to take responsibility for conserving land using the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP). A unique program for a unique place, NAPTEP is the only program in British Columbia offering landowners an annual property tax exemption on land protected by conservation covenants.

In 2009, two island couples joined the program, bringing the total amount of land protected by NAPTEP to 60 hectares. Dr. David and June Collins donated the Westbourne NAPTEP covenant on Galiano Island. The new covenant protects maturing forest overlooking Montague Harbour.

“The 65% exemption on our property taxes was what originally enticed us to apply to the program,” said David, standing among the trees of the Collins’ heritage orchard. “But the unexpected bonus was learning how we could serve as stewards of our land. We now leave decaying trees and branches to make homes for the animals that share this land with us. Resisting the urge to ‘tidy up’ allows us to enjoy the diversity of life that appears at our doorstep.”

Joining the Collins were Sara and Richard Steil of North Pender Island. With Shelby, their canine companion leading the way, Sara and Richard have explored every nook and cranny of the property many times, and have grown to cherish its natural features since they moved to the Penders fifteen years ago.

The destruction of natural environments is a concern to Sara and Richard. “Many of the natural areas we enjoyed when we lived on the lower mainland used to look like the Penders do today – beautifully natural,” said Sara. “I’ve had to watch as the communities we loved were developed ruthlessly. That type of destruction breaks my heart.”

Learning from that experience, the Steils have cared for their property’s natural habitat and enlisted the help of the Islands Trust Fund to ensure permanent protection with a conservation covenant. The Steil’s Woods NAPTEP covenant protects a forest filled with Grand fir, western red cedar, and wild strawberry, as well as a portion of a wetland that spans several neighbouring properties and hosts amphibians and visiting Great Blue Herons. The covenant ensures that the land will remain in its natural state regardless of who owns the property next.

In the Gulf Islands, natural area conservation goals can’t be met without landowners like the Steils and Collins. With only 22% of the land base owned by the Crown, the future ecological health of the Gulf Islands relies primarily on private landowners. Landowners who register a NAPTEP conservation covenant on their land continue to own and enjoy the property and ensure it remains natural for the future, while receiving an annual 65% property tax exemption on the protected land. NAPTEP is available in the following Local Trust Areas (including associated islands):

Executive Islands  
Gabriola  
Galiano  
Gambier

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

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Mayne  
North Pender  
South Pender  
Salt Spring  
Saturna  
Thetis

To learn more about NAPTEP, please 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), or visit us online at <http://islandstrustfund.bc.ca/naptep.cfm>.

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