



# News Release

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## PRIVATE LANDOWNERS HELP MAP HOWE SOUND ECOSYSTEM

VICTORIA — Howe Sound residents are playing an important role in mapping their island ecosystems. This summer ecologists working for the Islands Trust Fund are contacting landowners for permission to visit their property to verify air photo information. This ecosystem mapping project identifies natural island habitats needed by at-risk species. The site visits help community members, planners and decision-makers plan for the future of the islands and gives landowners an opportunity to learn more about their properties.

“The site visits are necessary to confirm our data, to ensure consistency and to meet the provincial standard for ecosystem mapping,” said Kate Emmings, Ecosystem Protection Specialist with the Islands Trust Fund. “Without the help of private landowners who allow scientists to come onto their land to conduct field checks, the final maps would be merely an interpretation of air photos and would lack the accuracy that can only be confirmed on the ground. We are grateful to all the landowners who choose to contribute to this project and hope they enjoy knowing more about the special features on their property.”

The Islands Trust Fund started the Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping project in the Howe Sound in early 2009, using existing data and air photos to identify the variety of ecosystems across the Howe Sound landscape. With funding from the Islands Trust and the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the Islands Trust Fund contracted Madrone Environmental Services to incorporate data collected through site visits into the maps.

Typically, a two-person crew from Madrone visits a site to identify natural vegetation, and, in some cases, examine the soil structure. Each visit is between ten to thirty minutes at a time convenient to the resident. Any landowners in the Howe Sound islands willing to have the ecologists explore the ecosystems of their property are encouraged to contact Anna Wilkerson of Madrone Environmental Services at (250) 746-5545.

Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping uses information about geology, soil, site characteristics and vegetation to describe the type of ecosystem found in an area. As well as identifying forest, riparian and shoreline habitats, terrestrial ecosystem maps recognize human habitats, allowing communities and land use planners to identify ecosystems not recommended for development.

After the on-site checks are complete, the Islands Trust Fund will contact local community groups and agencies for feedback on the accuracy of the maps. The Islands Trust Fund plans to finalize the ecosystem mapping for Howe Sound by the end of the year. When complete, the data will be used to create a Regional Conservation Plan that will prioritize habitats and areas for voluntary conservation activities. The mapping will also be shared with local and regional government for land use planning purposes.

For more information on the ecosystem mapping activities in the Howe Sound, or the upcoming Regional Conservation Plan, 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 online at [www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca](http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca).

The Islands Trust Fund is a regional land trust established in 1990 to help preserve and protect the unique character and environment of the islands in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound. The Islands Trust Fund

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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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protects natural areas through voluntary land donations, conservation covenants, land purchase and stewardship education programs. With the generous support of island communities and landowners, the Islands Trust Fund has protected more than 975 hectares of natural and cultural values on 75 properties.

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