

joining hands across the waters...

Gulf Islands Alliance

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November 14, 2013

To: Ministry of Environment, Water Protection and Sustainability Branch

RE: A Water Sustainability Act for B.C. Legislative Proposal.

The Gulf Islands Alliance (GIA) is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to the protection of the BC Gulf Islands, their natural environments, rural nature and unique cultures.

We believe that the most significant and valuable action that the BC government can do for the Water Sustainability Act is to declare water a public trust and enshrine this concept in the legislation.

The declaration of water as a public trust ensures that:

- water is a shared common resource, first and foremost for public purposes;
- the supply of fresh, clean water is sustainable today, for future generations and for all non-human life;
- public rights to water are given priority over private, commercial uses;

Embedding the public trust doctrine in the new legislation will strengthen regulations and policies that protect water health and water use during times of scarcity, and that consider water in land use decisions.

The Public Trust Doctrine provides a renewed and inspired approach for governments to embrace their stewardship roles as trustees and places affirmative duties on government to prevent the diminishment and impairment of our shared resource.

We trust that the government's own words in the Legislative Proposal Overview that "water is our most important natural resource: without it there would be no life on Earth" becomes more than just a pretty background sentiment and are given significant legislative vitality.

Water is a public resource owned by the people of Canada and governments are obliged to maintain these assets for the benefit of all, including future generations.

Submitted on behalf of the Gulf Islands Alliance by Deborah Ferens, Board Member.