

**From:** Misty MacDuffee \*\*\*PERSONAL IDENTIFIERS REMOVED\*\*\*

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2011 9:03 AM

**To:** Living Water Smart ENV:EX

**Subject:** submission from GIA on Water Act Modernization

Please accept this letter from the Gulf Islands Alliance on the Water Act  
Modernization  
thank you

Misty MacDuffee  
Chair  
Gulf Islands Alliance

joining hands across the waters ...

## Gulf Islands Alliance

P.O. Box 795 Ganges, BC V8K 2W3  
[www.gulfislandsalliance.ca](http://www.gulfislandsalliance.ca)

March 6, 2011

Water Act Modernization  
Water Protection and Sustainability Branch  
Ministry of Environment  
PO Box 9362 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9M2

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. GIA supports the Islands Trust federation in achieving its legislated object.

We are writing in response to your request for further comments on the Water Act Modernization policy. We submitted a letter expressing concerns about unregulated hydrofracturing and the danger of saltwater intrusion in the Gulf Islands during the initial review of the Water Act several years ago.

We are pleased that the ministry recognizes the importance of regulating groundwater extraction in order to protect declining groundwater levels and aquifer sustainability. And we are also pleased that the ministry has recognized the need for the designation of special areas such as the southern Gulf Islands that will allow for proactive planning. We urge you to implement these policy changes as quickly as possible because island wells continue to be destroyed by bad drilling practices and hydrofracturing, and more residents are forced to pay for trucking in water at a cost of \$650 or more for 3,000 gallons because their wells have high levels of chloride. Because many private wells are in close proximity to one another and situated near saltwater, we support a policy of banning hydrofracturing entirely from the southern Gulf Islands and a policy of regulating the volume of water drawn from private wells.

We also draw your attention to another potential threat to our island groundwater resources from unregulated installation and maintenance of geothermal heat exchange systems. Closed loop geothermal heat exchange systems might be considered for installation in existing water wells, in direct contact with the drinking water resource. The use of antifreeze liquids in closed loop systems must be addressed by effective regulation to preclude any risk of groundwater contamination.

We also urge the Province to consider measures to protect surface drinking water supplies in the Trust area on Crown and private land, including Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL). As you know, local governments have no jurisdiction whatsoever on PMFL lands, leaving them unable to protect community drinking water sources.

On non-PMFL private lands, local governments do have some tools such as development permit areas. However, they are difficult to enforce, often occurring after the fact and requiring very costly recourse to the courts. Changes in provincial legislation should be considered to require local governments to protect all drinking water sources and to support and facilitate enforcement (e.g., by designating local water management plans as “drinking water plans” under provincial legislation and by giving local governments the ability to levy ticket fines in development permit areas).

The most significant threat to surface drinking water supplies is nutrient loading from activities such as land clearing and septic runoff. This nutrient loading has led to regular occurrences of algal blooms, which too frequently have turned toxic, rendering drinking water unsafe. We urge the Province to designate nutrients that promote algal blooms as potential drinking water contaminants that could merit appropriate legal sanctions and status under drinking water plans.

We look forward to government action in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Misty MacDuffee", written in a cursive style.

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Misty MacDuffee  
Chair, Gulf Islands Alliance

cc: Islands Trust  
Mayne Island Integrated Water Systems Society