



Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Our Priorities for 2020

by Maxine Leichter

WPS held a Zoom AGM in June and installed a new Board of Directors. The new board then approved policy priorities that will be the backbone of our activities for the next year. To be successful at these campaigns, we're undertaking new activities to recruit additional volunteers.

Our aim is to compile a list of folks willing to occasionally write letters to our elected officials. This newsletter includes one specific request. If you send an email, please bcc us at ssiwps@gmail.com. Success in our efforts will depend on communications to our elected officials.



Photo: Stephanie Klepacki, Unsplash

Protect Our Drinking Water

by Maxine Leichter

Water supplies are threatened by new development being approved based on weak standards; tests are run for short periods and run in the winter when water is plentiful. Groundwater supplies are limited and must be allocated carefully so as not to deny supply to neighboring property owners. Water supplies are also threatened by new and proposed bylaws increasing residences and density without adequate consideration of water supplies.

What You Can Do

Write to our elected Trustees asking them to:

- Set strong standards to show adequate water for development and subdivisions to assure that neighbouring water users will not be affected.
- Abandon draft bylaw 471 that would allow increased density across the island through a Temporary Use process. Density should only be increased for affordable housing in specific areas, near public transit and where adequate water exists.

Email Peter Grove, Laura Patrick and Peter Luckham at ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca or mail to #1–500 Lower Ganges Rd. SSI V8K 2N8. See our website for sample letters: www.ssiwaterpreservationsociety.ca



Protecting Our Forests

by Maxine Leichter

Protecting our local forests is another priority for 2020. Our forests are critical to protecting our surface and groundwater supplies. Forests allow rain and snow to soak into the ground that slowly releases it into streams and water-bodies, extending supplies into the dry months when water is most needed. Under current provincial legislation, our elected Local Trust Committee (LTC) has no authority to pass a bylaw to stop or regulate tree cutting on Salt Spring Island. The LTC can pass a development permit area, but this tool is difficult to implement and enforce. We need a bylaw that will apply island-wide and can be enforced with fines.

What You Can Do

We're going to need letters to the Province asking them to allow the Islands Trust to pass bylaws to control tree cutting to protect our drinking water. Let us know if you're willing to write a letter, and when it's the right time, we'll send you the details. Email us at ssiwps@gmail.com.

On the Benchlands

by Neva Hohn

In May 2020, Maxine took me to WPS's property on the benchlands, located on the hilltop above Tripp Road. Careful to observe appropriate social distancing as we basically carved our way over fallen branches and rockfalls and through six-foot high grasses of all kinds, we were on the lookout for Garry oaks planted there several years ago by Rodney Polden, a WPS board member at that time.



Photo: Neva Hohn, 2020

Although Maxine was sure there was or at least used to be a trail, none was apparent. Instead, we followed the wild-life indications along the ridge behind the houses on Cormorant Crescent.

About halfway up, we came upon a broad grassy area and, on the right side—hidden by long weeds, daisies, and other invasive (non-native) plants—was a cage of deer fencing. Inside the fencing was a small, but stalwart Garry oak next to a post (as seen in the picture). We cleared away plant debris and weeds from around the tree. I took the picture and then realized that these were all things we want to be doing—planting Garry oaks, clearing away invasive invaders, and identifying/saving the native species that exist there.

I don't know much about Native plants, but Maxine is a wealth of information. We talked about the many other Garry oak trees and native plants that have been planted at the reserve over the years. We discussed next steps in this hopeful project.

I'd like to go up again, perhaps regularly, to inventory Native plants, take photos, and vision what the place could be like without the orchard grass, Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry and daphne. I invite anyone who would like to join us to get in touch. Who knows what we could discover?! Email us at ssiwps@gmail.com or call me at 250-931-5551.



WPS Outreach Campaign: “Water Talks” Event Held

by Maxine Leichter and Neva Hohn

This summer, we held two public events to recruit new members and volunteers. In June, we invited folks to meet us in The Meadow park in Ganges. Only one member came, but he has since become a valuable volunteer, giving his time to help improve signage at the WPS reserve.

In July, we held a “Water Talks” gathering at the SSI Conservancy native plant garden. Maxine and Neva arrived early and arranged the benches. It was warm but pleasant in the late afternoon shade in back of the Conservancy building. We brought water and disposable cups.

We sat Covid-distanced and introduced ourselves, several times, as more people arrived; seven in all. We started with questions. It turned out that one couple had come seeking information on rainwater harvesting. Several attendees had information to share, and we discussed the pros and cons of various approaches. We were also able to refer to the upcoming SSI-specific Rainwater Harvesting Guide that will be available online through SSI Watershed Protection Alliance (SSIWPA)—the interagency water activities coordinating group of which WPS is a member. We also got some new ideas for expanding our outreach for new volunteers. Some attendees were interested in further volunteer activities with WPS. Hooray, more volunteers!

Volunteer Activities

by Maxine Leichter

Native Plant Restoration

You know broom: beautiful invasive weed. When it’s tiny, we pull it; when it’s big, we cut it down.

Either way, we’re trying to get rid of it from WPS-owned nature reserve watershed lands above St. Mary Lake!

We have the tools; we know where the broom is, but we just need your help. If you like the open bush, you’ll love this.

Tuesdays for 2 to 3 hours in the late afternoon, we meet, trek up the trail, and settle in a broom removal site. You’ll need a hat, long sleeves, and some sunscreen. Simple and fun!

We also remove other invasive species, plant Garry oak trees, and learn about native plants. Come join us!

No experience necessary.

Call Neva (250-537-6426) for time and meeting location.

MailChimp Coordinator

Do you have MailChimp experience?

We need a volunteer to produce our MailChimp newsletter.

You set it up and add new names that come along.

Do you love Facebook?

Post weekly (or more often) to our WPS Facebook page.

WPS provides the content = the perfect volunteer experience.

Email us at ssiwps@gmail.com for either exciting opportunity.

More Volunteer Opportunities!

- The FreshWater Catalogue can always use more help. Get in touch with John Millson (jamssiwater@gmail.com) if you would like to collect and test water samples at local creeks and waterbodies.
- We need high quality pictures of the reserve and volunteer activities. Anyone with a digital camera or high quality new phone camera could help.
- Writers need to send letters to Driftwood, SS Exchange, and Victoria newspapers on advocacy issues.



News Update

by Maxine Leichter



The SSI WPS FreshWater Catalogue project has received a second grant from the SSI Foundation. This is allowing us to purchase more equipment and supplies to support water monitoring.

We were also the recipient of an “honorarium” from the CRD for work that is ongoing in the Weston Creek watershed area. These funds are being used to support a graduate student from Simon Fraser University in a review of our data. This SFU study is to determine if there are chemistry correlations between freshwater from ground and surface sources. The information will help determine how and where our aquifers’ groundwater influences our surface creek flow(s) and how this relates back to the quantity (and quality) and availability of water in our aquifers. Kudos to John Millson for bringing in funding for this program!

If you want to participate, contact John Millson at jamssiwat@gmail.com.

Left: Biologist Carrina Maslovat conducting the annual monitoring of the conservation covenant that protects the WPS-owned, 272-acre nature reserve above St. Mary Lake. Photo: Neva Hohn, 2020

MEMBERSHIP

\$15 for individuals or \$30 for a family/couple.

Additional donations are very gratefully received and help to keep WPS active, effective, and working hard to protect our island waters. Tax Receipts are issued.

Current Members: Mail membership fee to:
Ganges PO Box 555
SSI, BC V8K 2W3

New members: Request an application form to fill out and return.

When you become a member, you become part of a supportive group of people who collectively care for and about Salt Spring's freshwater and groundwater sources.

We'll keep you updated on local water-related programs, projects and events.

OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Maxine Leichter
Vice President	Chris Drake
Secretary	Neva Hohn
Treasurer	Judy McLennan
Directors-at-Large	John Millson
	Ian Peace
	Jean Wilkinson

CONTACT US

E-mail: ssiwps@gmail.com

Online: ssiwatpreservationsociety.ca

COUNTRY GROCER TAPES

Please put your tapes in Box **#73**

THRIFTY FOODS

Request a Smile Card to donate when making purchases