

June 4, 2013

The Hon. Steve Thomson
Minister of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations
PO Box 9049 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Re: HCA 2011-343 Site Alteration Permit, and Application for Permit Amendment –
Mr Barry Slawsky, Edmonton AB – Grace Islet (DfRu-09) Salt Spring Island, BC

Dear Mr. Thomson

On May 26th over one hundred residents of Salt Spring Island attended an event at the Salt Spring Island Public Library to hear elders and representatives of the Tsartlip First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Cowichan Tribes and Halalt First Nation speak about their history and connection with Grace Islet, their concerns about an Alteration Permit granted by the Archaeology Branch for a residential development, and their unshakeable resolve that their ancestors who are buried on the islet not be disturbed.

The issue is of great concern to Salt Spring Islanders, and the local newspaper has given ongoing and extensive coverage to it since last summer when work on the site was halted after First Nations and archaeologists found that no site monitoring had taken place, in clear breach of the permit conditions. This prompted an investigation from the Ganges detachment of the RCM Police into a contravention of the Heritage Conservation Act.

Despite this, on May 7th the Archaeology Branch accepted an application from the owner for an amendment to extend the permit for three years, in order to commence construction. First Nations have been given thirty days to comment. Salt Spring Island residents also wish to comment on Grace Islet, which we understand contains history and heritage of great value.

Grace Islet is part of the larger archaeological site DfRu-09, known as the Ganges Village Site. Some archaeologists suggest the islet be considered a separate site (Heritage Inspection Permit Report 2007-041, prepared by the Bastion Group Heritage Consultants for the owner, Barry Slawsky) and record evidence that First Peoples of the area have used it as a burial islet.

Under the Heritage Conservation Act, you have the authority – indeed, the responsibility – to intervene when permit conditions are clearly breached, as stated in the Act, to wit:

Part 2, Section 12, Subsection (6)

The minister may, by order, without the concurrence of the holder of the permit,

(b) cancel a permit issued under subsection (2) (a) if the minister has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that

(ii) the holder has contravened or is in default of a requirement or condition of the permit, whether or not the holder is charged with an offence under this Act

The site requires preservation and protection from disturbance, not development. As well, First Nations must be guaranteed access for spiritual and ceremonial practices.

We strongly urge you to address immediately this threat to Grace Islet and its cultural heritage and to exercise your authority under the Act to cancel HCA 2011-343 Site Alteration Permit.

We look forward to receiving your prompt response to this request, including the steps you are taking to immediately halt this inappropriate and damaging development.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Vernon
Magda Ziegler
971 Isabella Point Road
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 1T7

Cc:

Justine Batten, Director, Archaeology Branch
Doug Glaum, Manager, Permitting and Assessment, Archaeology Branch
Adrian Dix, Leader of the Opposition
Scott Fraser, NDP Forests critic
Gary Holman, MLA for North Saanich and the Islands
Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands
Wayne Macintyre, Salt Spring Island CRD Director
Islands Trust Local Trust Council, Salt Spring Island:
Trustees George Grams, Peter Grove and Sheila Malcolmson
Linda Adams, Islands Trust Chief Administrative Officer