

# Gabriola Commons Baseline Report Overview

## August 2026

### Table of Contents

|                                                                      |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction and Acknowledgements.....</b>                     | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>2. Contact Information .....</b>                                  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>3. Property Description .....</b>                                 | <b>2</b>  |
| 3.1 Legal Description .....                                          | 2         |
| 3.2 Zoning.....                                                      | 3         |
| 3.3 Location .....                                                   | 3         |
| <b>4. Significance of Land and Amenities .....</b>                   | <b>3</b>  |
| 4.1 Agricultural Significance .....                                  | 4         |
| 4.2 Ecological Significance .....                                    | 4         |
| 4.3 Significance of Multi-purpose Uses of the Land .....             | 5         |
| <b>5. Land and Use.....</b>                                          | <b>5</b>  |
| 5.1 History of Property .....                                        | 5         |
| 5.2 Current Use .....                                                | 6         |
| 5.3 Stewardship Goals .....                                          | 6         |
| 5.4 Description of the Right of Access to the Land .....             | 7         |
| <b>6. Physical Features .....</b>                                    | <b>7</b>  |
| 6.1 Topography: Geology and Soils .....                              | 7         |
| 6.2 Hydrology, Climate and Agriculture .....                         | 8         |
| <b>7. Agricultural Features .....</b>                                | <b>9</b>  |
| 7.1 Current Agricultural Use of the Land .....                       | 9         |
| 7.2 Agricultural Spaces and Structures .....                         | 10        |
| <b>8. Inventory of Natural (Ecological) Features .....</b>           | <b>10</b> |
| 8.1 Assessment Procedures .....                                      | 10        |
| 8.2 Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory .....                              | 11        |
| 8.3 Endangered/Rare and Invasive Species .....                       | 12        |
| <b>9. Inventory of Buildings, Structures and Modifications .....</b> | <b>12</b> |
| 9.1 General Buildings and Structures .....                           | 12        |
| 9.2 Modifications to the Land: Roads and Trails .....                | 14        |
| 9.3 Utilities .....                                                  | 15        |
| 9.4 Excavations and Soil Removal .....                               | 15        |
| 9.5 Contaminants, Garbage and Pollution Sources .....                | 15        |
| 9.6 Vegetation Modification and Removal .....                        | 15        |
| <b>10. Gabriola Commons Land Use: Permitted Accessory Uses .....</b> | <b>15</b> |
| <b>11. List of Appendices .....</b>                                  | <b>16</b> |
| <b>1.0 Introduction and Acknowledgements</b>                         |           |

This report describes the physical and biological conditions of the Land and Amenities as of the 15th day of August, 2026. It will be used as a baseline inventory to ensure the property is stewarded in accordance with the terms and conditions of its attached Covenant.

The area to which the Covenant will be applied is the entirety of the Land. The term *survey* used in this report is in reference to a baseline inventory survey not a legal land survey.

The Legal Owner and the Covenant Holder hereby acknowledge and agree that the following is an accurate description of the Land and Amenities as of the reference date of this Agreement.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of the Legal Owner, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day

of \_\_\_\_\_, 2027: \_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

and

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of the Covenant Holder, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day

Of \_\_\_\_\_, 2027: \_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

## 2.0 Contact Information

Legal Owner:

Gabriola Commons Foundation, PO Box 94, 675 North Road, Gabriola Island, BC, V0R 1X0  
E.mail: [info@gabriolacommons.ca](mailto:info@gabriolacommons.ca).

Covenant Holder:

Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee, 200 -1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8R 1H8  
E.mail: [northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca)

## 3.0 Property Description, Zoning and Location

The Gabriola Commons is located within the Village area of Gabriola Island, near the elementary school, shopping and other community amenities such as bank machines, and eating establishments (see Appendix A, Location of Gabriola Commons).

### 3.1 Legal Description

- Lot 1, Section 19, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District, Plan 27281 (PID 002600994)
- Latitude: 49.172346, Longitude: -123.841431
- There are no existing rights-of-way, easements or covenants attached to the Title. Water rights are registered to the Gabriola Commons Foundation.
- The entire property of 26.51 acres (10.72 hectares) is to be protected by Covenant (see Appendix B Gabriola Commons Cadastral Map)

### 3.2 Zoning

The property is currently zoned "Gabriola Commons Comprehensive Development Zone" as shown in the Gabriola Island Official Community Plan Land Use and Zoning Bylaws (1997) and is in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a British Columbia provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized

as the priority use. Commons Agriculture and Commons Institutional uses are supported for this property, and zoning that specifies agricultural and institutional uses as accessory uses is supported by this Plan (see Section 10 below, p. 15).

### **3.3 Location**

The property known as the Gabriola Commons is located on Gabriola Island, one of the Gulf Islands in the Islands Trust Area, lying within Area B of the Regional District of Nanaimo. It is acknowledged to be on the unceded land of the traditional Snuneymuxw First Nation territory.

The Land is located at 675 North Road, one of the main roadways of the island, and borders the Village Core Centre (as designated in the Islands Trust Official Community Plan). It is across the street from the Gabriola Elementary School and the local Highways Yard and is adjacent to the Rollo Seniors Centre to the east, Huxley Park to the west and a residential area to the south. Appendix A shows the location of the Gabriola Commons as shown on the map of Gabriola Island.

### **4.0 Significance of the Land and Amenities**

Gabriola Island lies within British Columbia's rare Coastal Douglas Fir moist maritime (CDF mm) biogeoclimatic zone. The Gabriola Commons is a unique and distinct property on Gabriola. Stewarded as a community commons, it is a place where agriculture, ecological sustainability and community meet. The Official Community Plan of Gabriola recognizes that the Commons is "intended to exist in perpetuity for the benefit of the community" (Gabriola OCP 2010, Bylaw 258, Schedule A, p. 1). It is in the public interest to protect, preserve and steward the Land as a community commons.

The Land is in the Agricultural Land Reserve which exists to preserve agricultural land and to encourage farming in the Province of British Columbia (BC). The OCP highlights the importance of agricultural activities to the Gabriola community as they "contribute to the local economy, the Island's rural character, and provide a visual open space benefit." Agricultural objectives in the Official Community Plan (OCP) include preserving land with agricultural potential, protecting and encouraging agriculture conducted in conformity with recognized standards and codes of practice and acknowledging the importance of locally grown food.

The Covenant area slopes down from surface sandstone bedrock in the north to clay-based marshland in the south. Running diagonally through the Covenant area, the seasonal Goodhue Creek and its riparian area nourish a large man-made pond and contributes to the largest watershed area on the island (Hogan Lake). Land use over the past century left clearings along North Road and several farm buildings are concentrated in the north-east corner of the property. The west half of the property has remained a largely untouched forest of diverse ecosystems reflecting the underlying nature of the soils and natural water systems. The Covenant area consists of the entirety of the Land.

#### **4.1 Agricultural Significance of the Land**

With particular reference to the Land, an OCP objective recognizes and encourages involvement in community agriculture and supports a range of uses related to agriculture on the Commons. Described as Commons Agriculture in the rezoning of the Land, these potential uses include harvesting and selling agricultural crops, raising livestock, processing and selling agricultural products and storing farm equipment. Further permitted agricultural uses of the Land include research gardens, community allotment gardens, a marketplace supporting local farmers, agricultural fairs and an approved community kitchen where community members can process locally grown produce. Specifically excluded is Industrial Agriculture, characterized by monocropping and dependent on the unsustainable use of artificial amendments, pesticides and herbicides.

An extensive soil survey of the Land in 2005 (see map, Appendix C) revealed two primary soil conditions: arid, infertile sand over bedrock (see Appendix D: Photo through typical vertical soil section) and deep clay over bedrock with a seasonal high-water table hostile to most permanent planting. The results of the survey were unexpected, since the adjacent property to the south of the Land consists of extensive depths of peat and is being commercially farmed as a market garden. Late Spring and early Autumn frosts in the wetland area are a further challenge. In the face of these geophysical and climatic limitations, the principles of permaculture design, based on sustainable land use, encourage creative solutions in developing the agricultural potential of the Land.

#### 4.2 Ecological Significance of the Land

The Covenant area lies within the overall bio-geoclimatic descriptor: Coastal Douglas Fir moist maritime (CDF mm) zone. This zone, one of the rarest of BC's 16 bio-geoclimatic zones, occurs only on the East Coast of Southern Vancouver Island, islands of the Salish Sea and small areas of the mainland of British Columbia (Islands Trust Conservancy, 2026).

The Islands Trust defines an ecosystem as a system of living species interacting with their non-living environment. Some ecosystems, identified as sensitive, rely on a delicate mix of species and conditions that are easily affected by human activities. "Sensitive ecosystems are rich in biodiversity and often rare. The islands in our region hold a disproportionate number of these sensitive ecosystems, due to the high density of especially rare species that seek sanctuary here and the challenges associated with residential development" (Islands Trust Conservancy, 2010, p. 1).

It is significant that the Land lies adjacent to the commercial centre of the island, with residential development to the south and institutional development to the north. The Land links a band of Douglas fir forests to the east and west and displays a diversity of ecosystems which have evolved with changing geological and climatic conditions, including occasional agricultural clearing over the past century. The need to protect the forested zone is recognized as vital to the area as a whole, not only as a part of the landscape, but also as a wildlife corridor and habitat for plant and animal species which regulate climate, clean water, generate and clean soils, recycle nutrients and pollinate crops. It also offers opportunities for social well-being through recreation, education and research.

Within the Covenant area two sensitive primary ecosystems, Mature Forest and Wetland, have been identified by the Islands Trust Conservancy as offering specific benefits to the environment and requiring protection. They are contiguous, providing ecological integrity to the Land.

- **Mature Forest** promotes connectivity across the landscape and acts as a buffer for adjacent sensitive areas. The biodiversity values of Mature Forests increase with their age, meaning they can sustain rich communities of plants and animals that are dependent on their unique environment. Mycorrhizal fungi, forming symbiotic relationships with many forest plants, are considered to be the keystone of coastal Douglas fir forests.
- **Wetland** ecosystems exhibit high biodiversity, supporting fragile species with their specialized habitat, functions and connectivity. The Commons' freshwater pond provides a habitat for a broad range of organisms including aquatic plants, invertebrates, dragonflies, frogs, newts and stickleback fish. Resident beavers maintain the structure of the pond's clay walls. Surveys of the pond also reveal a population of racoons, muskrat, deer and a multitude of resident and migrating birds including Red-winged Blackbirds, Violet-green and Barn Swallows, Mallards, Bufflehead ducks and Great Blue Herons. There are occasional exotic visitors such as the Virginia Rail and Trumpeter swan.

It is essential to protect this rich biodiversity by preserving the integrity of multiple ecosystems on the Land. An awareness of this richness brings a corollary responsibility to take an active role in protecting it.

#### **4.3 Significance of Multi-purpose Uses of the Land**

While the development of the agricultural potential of the Land is recognized as a primary land use, the Agricultural Land Commission has recognized the existence of geophysical and climatic factors which affect the agricultural capacity of the property and has approved specified non-agricultural uses of the Land in distinct areas. These non-agricultural uses (further described in the zoning) include a diversity of Commons Institutional uses of benefit to the residents of Gabriola, creating opportunities for human interaction through cultural, recreational and educational activities, public assembly, indoor and outdoor gatherings, meetings and events. Use of space is also permitted for the stewardship and direction of activities on the Land and the provision of administrative space supporting other non-profit or not for profit enterprises. The amenities described in Section 9 are essential to the institutional multi-purpose use of the Land.

### **5.0 Land Use**

#### **5.1 History of Property**

Gabriola Island lies in the traditional unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw People. There is no evidence that the Land contains any archeological sites, but petroglyphs and middens elsewhere on the Island attest to both seasonal and prolonged First Nations habitation, possibly over several thousand years. By the mid 1850s, European settlers had cleared land on the Island for forestry, farming and residential uses. Little is known of non-agricultural uses of the Land, beyond a small diatomaceous earth industry which flourished in the 1930s. Later, unusually large Cascara trees on the Land were harvested for the production of laxatives.

Not as fertile as the adjacent properties to the south, the Land's agricultural use seems to have been limited to occasional homesteading, with lower areas sown as hay meadow. In 1967 the stage was set for the future of the Land as a community gathering space when it became the site for an international "Rainbow Gathering".

In the intervening years the Land became known as the Goat Farm, owned by Jean and James Brown and managed by Philippa Brown and Louis Brossard, for the production and marketing of goat cheese. It was one of the earliest commercial goat cheese plants in BC. Land was cleared in the northeast corner to build a residence and three large farm buildings: a goat barn, cheese plant and woodwork shop. A deep well was drilled for potable water. Portions of the forest were cleared for grazing.

In 1997, the Goat Farm came up for sale and a vision emerged of a public space belonging to the community as a whole. By 2005, the dream became a reality when a non-profit society, Amazing Grace Ecological Society (AGES), purchased the Land with a generous down-payment and invited the community to participate in creating what came to be recognized as a commons, owned by and for the benefit of the island community. The balance of the mortgage was paid in 2018 with donations from the community.

#### **5.2 Current Use**

There are currently multiple uses of the Land:

- **Agricultural:** Community gardens, local seed bank, agricultural fairs, processing of market vegetables and fruit in the Community Kitchen, home of the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust indigenous plant depot.
- **Ecological:** Focused study of the species within the various ecosystems on the Land to raise awareness of the need to preserve their biodiversity and interconnectedness, creation of trails as means of defining mindful access to the Land and control of species such as Scotch broom, *Daphne laureola*, Tansy Ragwort, Hawthorn and holly.
- **Community non-profit and minor for-profit purposes:** Opportunities for human interaction through educational/interpretive/recreational activities, providing space for various community events, meetings, workshops, concerts and storage.

**5.3 Stewarding** the Land and Amenities is an important ongoing function of the Commons.

#### **5.3.1 Stewardship Goals**

Every commons is defined within the parameters of a specific site and historic cultural background. The **Gabriola Commons** is a unique balance among its agricultural value, the intrinsic ecological value of the Land, and its cultural significance.

#### **5.3.2 Stewardship Vision**

The intent of the Covenant is to protect, preserve and steward the Land and the Amenities as a community commons through stewardship which involves balancing the needs of a working agricultural landscape with ecological protection and sustainable multi-purpose community use.

There are opportunities for energetic and creative community engagement in stewarding the shared resources and assets, while maintaining a process which is equitable and transparent. Though it is critical to an overall stewardship plan that the environmental, agricultural and community spaces be looked at as a whole, each aspect has specific stewardship requirements.

The primary Land uses (agricultural, ecological and institutional) are central to design elements. The built environment is planned using building practices which follow principles of sustainability and ensure design elements and patterns to achieve a visually pleasing, integrated public space.

#### **5.4 Description of the Right of Access to the Land**

Beyond the Statutory Right of Way legally granted to the Covenant Holder, a significant aspect of the nature of the Commons lies in the right of public access to the Land. Engaging in a wide range of activities (gardening, indoor and outdoor gatherings, meetings, community events and learning activities) as well as developing an appreciation for the natural landscape, open night sky and features such as the labyrinth, requires relatively unrestricted access to the Land.

Restrictions do apply to areas identified specifically as ecologically sensitive (including seasonal protection of nesting birds) or protected during restoration or enhancement work. All future Stewardship Plans must pay attention to this right of public access to the land and participation in stewardship activities.

### **6.0 Physical Features**

#### **6.1 Topography: Geology and Soils**

Sandstone bedrock underlies the Land, sloping from north to south. It belongs to the late-Cretaceous Nanaimo Group, specifically the Gabriola Formation approximately 65 million years old. There is evidence of glacial till, such as granodiorite erratics, from the ice ages ending about 12,000 years ago.

**6.1.1** In the **north** half of the Land, the soils are identified primarily as Bellhouse:

- Dominant soil: channery sandy loam, colluvial and glacial drift materials less than 30 cm deep over sandstone bedrock and drainage well to rapid;
- Subdominant soil: sandstone bedrock exposed or covered by moss or mineral soil less than 10 cm thick; rock to 30% in a subdued and hummocky, often rocky terrain with a southerly aspect under grass and bedrock exposure at random.

The above description was confirmed in 2005 through an intensive inventory of the soils on the Land based on a grid of 30x30 metres. See Appendix C Soil Survey of Gabriola Commons, 2005.

Granular and impoverished, the shallow soil in the north section lies over near-surface bedrock (see Appendix D Photo of the vertical cut through cliff behind Folk Life Village).

**6.1.2** To the **south**, the lower half of the Land is an alluvial flood plain around a seasonal stream, with soils over the sandstone bedrock identified as:

- Metchosin: shallow organic soils over silty clay less than 100 cm and
- Fairbridge: less than 20 cm silty loam over diatomaceous earth greater than 5 cm deep over 150 cm spongy silty clay (montmorillonite) with poor drainage.

In the soil survey of 2005, the initial categorization of the soils in the southeast corner of the Land as Class 2 was based on an extrapolation from the deep reserves of peat known to lie under an adjacent property. The reality proved to be very different and corresponds to the Fairbridge description, although a band of approximately 10 metres running along the south property line offers further agricultural potential.

## **6.2 Hydrology, Climate and Agriculture**

### **6.2.1 Water Courses** (see Appendix B, Cadastral Map)

A major watershed on Gabriola includes Goodhue Creek, which runs into the Land from the northeast and cuts diagonally into a constructed pond before exiting through a channel to the south. Excavated in 1980 with a potential volume of 800,000 gallons, the pond is now an important source of water for irrigation as well as the basis for a rich ecosystem. An extensive system of water distribution had been created to pump water from the pond to irrigate low-maintenance landscaping, including a cedar hedge which partially surrounded the residence.

For the health of the ecosystem, the riparian areas along the creek and the pond are kept in a wild, unmanicured state with the exception of a narrow boardwalk bridging the creek at its entry point on the east to provide access to the south gardens. The fenced community allotment gardens established near the exit channel from the pond date from an early stage in the agricultural development of the Commons.

In the northwest corner of the Land, a natural swale funnels rainwater to the south, running above and below ground to seep into the wetland around the pond. A narrow channel was excavated in 1995 to receive the overflow from a pond on the adjacent land to the west, created to hold rainwater from the extensive roof system of the commercial centre in the Village Core.

A group of biologists and naturalists, including the local Streamkeepers, regularly visit the waterways on Gabriola Island, assessing fish habitat and presence, obstructions to fish passage and quality of the water. These Streamkeepers have included the Land in their assessment, keeping data on indicators of health such as turbidity, pH, temperature, dissolved gasses, coliform bacteria in the pond.

### **6.2.2 Topography and Climate**

In the higher areas along the north and west boundaries of the Land, the sandy or rocky gravel over shallow bedrock offers little capacity for water retention, whereas the deep reserves of clay in the lower reaches create a flood plain in winter, with a high-water table delaying the sowing of crops until late Spring. From early Fall to late spring the gardens near the pond are subject to severe frosts.

The open-textured structure of the montmorillonite clay surrounding the pond acts as a sponge allowing the overall water table to rise and fall with evaporation and irrigation usage. The level in the pond is closely monitored and, with the increasingly severe droughts in the summer and fall, the dropping level has brought an awareness that this is a finite source of water (see cistern construction, below).

## 7.0 Agricultural Features

Traces of agricultural activity over the past century are still visible in the timothy and alfalfa among the wild grasses of earlier hay meadows in the south and in the clearings initially created in the upper woodlands to allow grazing for an expanding goat herd. Invasive plant species have taken hold in the clearings and adjacent woodlands and are in the process of being removed. Rusty remnants from earlier homesteading occasionally surface in the gardens. Appendix E, Agricultural & Institutional Features, shows a cluster of solid buildings in the northeast portion of the Land remaining from the goat cheese manufacturing enterprise in the 1980s. This includes a large house (converted to meeting rooms and offices), a woodwork shop, the former goat barn, a former cheese plant now remodeled into a Community Kitchen.

An extensive system of water distribution was created in the early 1980s to pump water from the pond to irrigate the low-maintenance landscaping that includes ornamental trees and shrubs along the entry driveway and the hedge that partially surrounds the residence. From 2005 to 2008, this irrigation system was extended to the various gardens. A well drilled in 1980 provides excellent drinking water.

Since the Land has become the Gabriola Commons, three cisterns have been installed to collect water from the Farmhouse roof. Two 5,000 gallon ones are located east of the Farmhouse (eg, for toilet flushing, cooking) and in 2020, a concrete 25,000 imperial gallon cistern was constructed, the top of which serves as a large stage for concerts and exercise activities. The 25,000 gallons is crucial to growing food in all the garden areas in late summer, supplementing water that can be taken from the pond, which is carefully monitored so that it does not fall below a level critical to the wildlife it supports.

### 7.1 Current Agricultural Use of the Land (see Appendix E Map of Agricultural & Institutional Uses)

Total area in agriculture: ~ 1.8 acres (0.73 hectares)

#### 7.1.1 Community Allotment Gardens

##### • North Gardens (in northeast section, area 0.45 acre)

General description: Reasonable sun exposure (partially shaded by Douglas firs).

Soil: Sandy, rocky loam with very rapid drainage, improved over 10 years with raised beds, mulching and amendments to soil. Subject to cyclical vole incursions.

- 18 plots ranging in size from 100 to 216 sq. ft. gardened by community members, including Food Bank representatives
- Dragon Garden: gardened communally by elders, with raised beds and wide pathways for wheelchair access
- Hazelnut grove, 2 plum trees, 3 apple trees and a fig.

##### • South Gardens (in southeast section on lower flood plain, area ~ 0.74 acre)

General description: Reasonable sun exposure, partially shaded by tall forest to east.

Subject to late Spring and early Fall frosts; high water table delays sowing until early summer

Soil: Originally thin loam over diatomaceous earth over 5 feet of clay (poor drainage).

Improved with raised beds, mulching and amendments. Heavy concentration of wire worm in early years

- 52 plots averaging 400 sq. ft. gardened by community members
- Area gardened includes compost bins, toolshed, cold-compost toilet and walkways.

#### 7.1.2 Commons Farm Team Gardens

- Kitchen Garden (central, area 0.115 acre).

General description: shaded by mature Douglas firs to southeast

Original soil: sandy, rocky, impoverished with very rapid drainage; improved with composting and mulching over ten years

- Diverse produce grown as a community “Learners Garden”, seed saving
- Rhubarb, strawberries, asparagus, artichokes, other seasonal vegetables

- **Little Field** (south of the North Allotment Garden, area: 0.25 acre)

General description: Good sun exposure

Soil: mix of loam with heavy clay and glacial-till erratics. Slowly improving over ten years with intensive mulching, tilling and perpetual rock removal

- Crops grown, for workbee soups, etc.: seasonal vegetables (Summer and Fall/Winter) and occasional grains.

- **Orchard** (central, area: 0.26 acre)

General description: located on mid slope (shallow depth of soil in upper reaches)

Good sun exposure; mixed soils from sandy to clay

- 24 apple trees (Belle de Boscop, Red Gravenstein, Cox’s Orange Pippin, Fuji, Northern Spy, Golden Transparent, King, Dolgo crab apple
- 1 each: quince, Anjou pear, olive
- 95 blueberry plants, 12 Haskap bushes
- Separate fig orchard with 12 trees
- 1 walnut planted outside fenced orchard

## 7.2 Agricultural Spaces and Structures

Fenced community allotment gardens, orchards and gardens growing food for workbees and families consumption have emerged since 2005. The irrigation system with water originating in the pond extends to these gardens. Small structures serve as tool sheds, compost bins and greenhouses. A 320 sq. ft. equipment shed between the Orchard and the Kitchen Garden provides storage for large farm equipment and its south-facing roof has 20 solar panels (Installed in 2016) with an output of 5 kWatt of power per hour.

## 8.0 Inventory of Natural Ecological Features (see Appendix F Map of Ecosystems on the Land)

Reference : *Islands Trust Ecosystems Inventories : Cultivated Fields on Gabriola Island & Coastal Sand Ecosystems in the Islands Trust Area*, 2017, PDF online.

### 8.1 Assessment Procedures

Several explorations of the Land by groups comprised of biologists, geologists and citizen scientists have revealed a rich diversity of ecosystems on the Land. Twenty-three polygons were identified in 2018, delimited by clear transition vegetation and given a code letter to permit in-depth surveys over time.

Twenty-three small inventory teams each “adopted” a polygon for study over 18-24 months, recording observations at different seasons. Professional wildlife biologists and botanists were available for consultation. Notes and photographs from these working groups are filed in Gabriola Commons archives and available on request.

### 8.2. Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory

The Covenant area lies within the Coastal Douglas Fir moist maritime (CDF mm) zone, recognized as rare in British Columbia (<https://www.cdfcp.ca/about-the-cdfcp/> downloaded 2026-08-16).

**8.2.1** Within the broad CDF mm classification there are two primary ecosystems on the Land, recognized as sensitive and/or rare: Mature Forest and Wetland.

- **Mature Forest (Older Second Growth Forest)**

General Definition: Usually conifer dominated, occasionally deciduous; dry to moist forest types generally over 80 years old.

**Subclass: 75% Conifer**

- 50% is classified as mature forest (80 years old or more), with 75% coniferous vegetation (mainly Douglas fir with western red cedar)
- 40% is a secondary ecosystem (red alders, red huckleberry, dull mahonia, salal, sword fern)
- 10% is a tertiary ecosystem (described as wetland/swamp, with western red cedar, pacific crab apple, cascara, deer fern)

- **Wetland**

General Definition: Areas saturated or inundated with water long enough to favour vegetation and biological activity adapted to wet environments

**Subclass: Swamp**

- 60% is swamp with willows, hardhack, salmonberry, sedges and reed grasses
- 20% is a secondary ecosystem designated Non-sensitive Rural Residential, showing disturbance from human impact, including irrigation piping, fenced community gardens, a labyrinth, boardwalk and invasive species such as thistles, Queen Anne's lace and ox-eye daisy
- 10% is a tertiary ecosystem designated Freshwater

**Subclass: Pond**, more than 2 metres deep, with potamogeton and watershield; includes beaver lodge

- 10% is a tertiary ecosystem class designated Shallow water transition: i.e. flowing water less than 2 metres deep, no surface vegetation

**Subclass: Riparian** including a distinct ecosystem in the edges of Goodhue Creek, with willows, red-osier dogwood, cascara, salmonberry

Surveys of the pond reveal a healthy habitat for stickleback fish, newts, dragonflies, and frogs (including threatened red-legged frogs), as well as muskrat, beaver, raccoons and seasonal presence of birds (including rare sightings of Trumpeter Swans and the Virginia Rail). A Great Blue Heron, listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada as vulnerable, often stands guard over the main beaver lodge.

**8.2.2** There are two secondary sensitive ecosystems on the Land: Woodland and Herbaceous.

- **Woodland**

General definition: dry open forest, usually between 10 to 30% tree cover, often mixed conifer and deciduous; shallow soils and bedrock outcroppings

Identified on the Land: mixed Douglas fir and Arbutus, with dull Mahonia, trailing blackberry and Oregon beaked moss

- **Herbaceous**

General definition: open, less than 10% tree cover; thin soils, bedrock outcroppings

Identified on the Land: shrub/herbaceous vegetation cover: grasses, snowberry, evergreen huckleberry, strawberry, Yerba buena, electrified cat's tail moss, lichens and rare orchids, such as Calypso and Coral roots

**8.2.3 Transition species** between ecosystems reflect the impact of rock and water in the underground setting: The Bald-Hip and Nootka roses mark the transition from the clay of the wetland to the dry rocky upland. Red alder with salmonberry generally signals moist, deeper soil. Willows can stand in water for much of the year.

### **8.3 Endangered or Invasive Species**

**8.3.1** Species considered as threatened or at risk in reports by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC, *Wildlife Species assessment*, 2025) have been identified on the Land:

- the Northern Red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora*), noted of special concern in 2015 as an indicator species of environmental health with its large spatial requirements
- the Pacific Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias fannini*), seen mainly in the southern portion of the Salish Sea, bluelisted in 2008 for declining numbers due to habitat loss and human disturbance.
- the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), noted as threatened in 2011.

Several structures on the Land have become habitat for a wide variety of animal species recognized as vulnerable such as bats, Barn swallows (nesting under the eaves of the buildings and in the trusses of the woodwork shop) or the Brewer's blackbird (nesting in the hedge).

### **8.3.2 Invasive Species**

From 2005 to the present, the existence of two invasive species on the Land has been recognized as a critical concern: all forested areas harboured deep, impenetrable thickets of *Daphne laureola* while the herbaceous areas had been overcome by Scotch broom in some areas. A stewardship program was launched to eliminate these two species using continuous removal, and monitoring has resulted in significant containment of both species; Scotch broom and *Daphne* are now rare on the Commons, though Tansy ragwort and holly continue to require attention by the Trails and Green Spaces Team.

## **9. Inventory of Buildings, Structures and Other Physical Modifications (see Appendix E Agricultural & Institutional Features)**

### **9.1 General Buildings and Structures**

Early in the 1980s all traces of structures dating from earlier homesteading of the Land were removed to permit the construction of four buildings near North Road for the creation of a goat cheese enterprise: residence, barn, woodwork shop and cheese plant. All buildings were constructed and inspected to building codes of the time. Since 2005, all cedar or asphalt shingle roofs on the Commons have been replaced with high-quality metal roofing.

#### **9.1.1 Residence/Farmhouse**

In 1982, a 2-storey residence with a total area of 3200 sq. ft. was constructed in the northeast corner of the property. Solidly built and well insulated, with a 10 foot deck running the length of the south facade, it now serves as a space for meetings, gatherings and undertakings of many community organizations. A 200 ampere electrical panel was originally installed, along with a subpanel connected to a generator, with a secondary string of DC lighting for power outages. A 5 kWatt array of 20 solar panels was installed on the south-facing roof in 2016.

A Red cedar hedge along two sides of the house provides separation for the next door Rollo Senior centre and the Main Commons parking lot. A driveway gives access from North Road to the house. Located to the west of the hedge, three buildings form an inverted U-shaped unit which defines the

space potentially enclosed between them. A community based 100 sq. ft. Tool Library is located just to the east on the western hedge.

### **9.1.2 Goat Barn**

One of the first structures to be built was a 2300 sq. ft. high-ceilinged barn for the shelter, milking and birthing of the goat herd. Reinforced concrete foundation walls eight inches thick extend to four feet above the adjacent grade. These have been sounded by structural engineers who approved both the condition and spacing of the reinforcement. Manufactured roof trusses were designed to exceed the structural requirement for agricultural buildings. A 200 ampere electrical panel has been installed to service the structures in the centre of the Land. Currently used primarily for storage, the long term plan is to improve this structure as a community performance venue.

### **9.1.3 Community Kitchen**

In 1983, a 1200 sq. ft. facility was constructed on the Land for the commercial production of goat cheese, satisfying fully the regulations of the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) at the time, with hot water radiant heat in the concrete slab floor and a separate doubly insulated room for refrigeration. This former cheese plant has undergone substantial renovation as a VIHA approved Community Kitchen available to community groups. Regular tests continue to affirm the high quality of the well water. A heat pump provides seasonal heat and cooling. The impractical hot water radiant heat array installed on the south wall has been disconnected and will be removed. The Community Kitchen is now serviced by a dedicated 200 ampere electrical panel.

### **9.1.4 Multi-Purpose Workshop**

A 1000 sq. ft. insulated shop is outfitted with essential tools for woodworking and Commons maintenance. A 200-amp electrical panel installed in the shop serves the energy needs of the shop and powers the deep well pump.

### **9.1.5 Current Multi-purpose Structures**

- A one and one-half floor timber frame structure was donated and erected on the Land in 2008 by the Gabriola Island School of Building Arts. It serves to shelter various community events such as outdoor concerts.
- The central equipment shed (320 sq. ft.) noted in Section 7.2, p. 10 above fulfills three goals: to explore and promote alternative energy sources for Gabriola Island, to limit the erection of structures on the Land, and to supplement electric energy for the Commons.
- Small structures have been built to serve as tool sheds, greenhouses and compost bins. A 3-bin composting facility receives the compostables from the local grocery store, turning former garbage into valuable soil.
- A 28-foot diameter yurt installed in 2011 on concrete piles as a temporary structure is used by the community for cultural events and workshops.
- A classic Cretan labyrinth was created on a clearing between the orchard and the pond, near a path accessing the wild ecosystems on the Land. Memorial benches offer space for meditation.

## **9.2 Modifications to the Land - Roads and Trails**

### **9.2.1 Vehicular Access**

To accommodate the vehicular presence on the Land, several areas have been cleared and surfaced with permeable material to permit safe off-street parking required for access to community events.

Four points of vehicular entry exist along the 900 feet of North Road:

- one to the east, giving access to the Farmhouse
- one centrally located, providing general parking and access to all utility buildings
- one to the west providing additional parking with access to western structures and trails through the forest.
- One at the southeast corner of the Land off Redwood Road, provides direct access to the South Allotment Gardens and to a pathway with boardwalk to the upper reaches of the Land.

### **9.2.2 Trails**

To preserve the integrity of the natural area while still inviting walking access to enhance peoples' awareness of and respect for nature, there are two kinds of trails on the Land: primary, marked trails intended to protect the environment through which they pass and minimal secondary trails to provide access to and through the Land for environmental protection and scientific study.

The primary trails are:

1. Main Trail, which runs diagonally across the Land, connecting the residential neighbourhoods in the southeast to Gabriola's Village Core in the northwest
2. Upper Trail, which links the facilities along North Road to the gardens, viewpoints and special features
3. Circle Path, which leads through the major ecosystems on the Land, from red cedar grove to Cascara and skunk cabbage swamp and back through Red Alder grove and the Labyrinth to open grasslands with Yerba buena and Mahonia.
4. A central entry path off North Road, focussed on a tall landmark Arbutus, allows people to avoid cars entirely when they come to explore the trails.

### **9.3 Utilities**

Overhead connections to transformers on North Road currently give access to the electrical grid for three 200-ampere panels. Infrastructure supporting solar power projects has also been installed as noted above:

- 10 kWatt of solar energy is tied into the grid under the net metering agreement with BC Hydro through an array of solar panels on the roof of the Farmhouse and the equipment shed, connected to the panel in the Woodwork Shop via an underground line.
- Hot water on demand is available in the Community Kitchen.
- Two septic systems service the property. One serves the Farmhouse and a June 2026 professional assessment revealed that its capacity is severely overutilized and components are crumbling. This system has been improved to accommodate current use but will require complete upgrading in 2027. The second system handles waste from the Goat Barn and Community Kitchen and is functioning well within its limits.

### **9.4 Excavations and Soil Removal**

There is no evidence of any past removal of soil, gravel or other material from the Land. The excavation of the pond in the early 1980s was a major modification, with the clay transferred to amend the upper sandy soil.

### **9.5 Contaminants, Garbage and Pollution Sources**

Minor traces of garbage buried during early homesteading were found in 2005 and 2006, but not since. No traces of pollution or contaminants have been detected.

### **9.6 Vegetation Modification and Removal**

In 2004, old-growth Douglas firs (36”- 48” in diameter) were removed at the edge of North Road, leaving the stumps. Young Douglas firs began growing vigorously in the areas which had been cleared for grazing by the goats. Where they shade areas used for growing food they are gradually removed.

Invasive vegetation (Daphne laureola, Scotch broom and Holly) is removed in an ongoing endeavour. Invasive Hawthorn bushes are expanding on the Land and under scrutiny.

## 10 Gabriola Commons Land Use: Permitted Accessory Uses

Commons Institutional means the provision of special purpose services including educational and interpretive activities, without the purpose of gain, provided by non-profit or not for profit enterprise for the benefit of residents of Gabriola Island, and includes skateboard park structures;

Commons Accessory Commercial means commercial activity that is ancillary, secondary and exclusively devoted to a principal use, and that is intended solely for the benefit and support of community initiatives and community organizations based on the property;

Commons Accessory Food Depot means an establishment for the distribution of food produced on the property or obtained from off the property for distribution to the public at no charge;

Commons Accessory Office and Storage means space identified for the management and direction of activities on the parcel and the provision of administration space for other non-profit or not for profit enterprises, including the storage of materials necessary for conducting activities on the parcel, but excludes such uses as retail sales, manufacturing, and professional services;

Commons Accessory Public Assembly means indoor and outdoor gatherings, meetings, and events and includes infrastructure necessary to support these activities, such as washroom facilities, dining hall space, and institutional kitchen facilities;

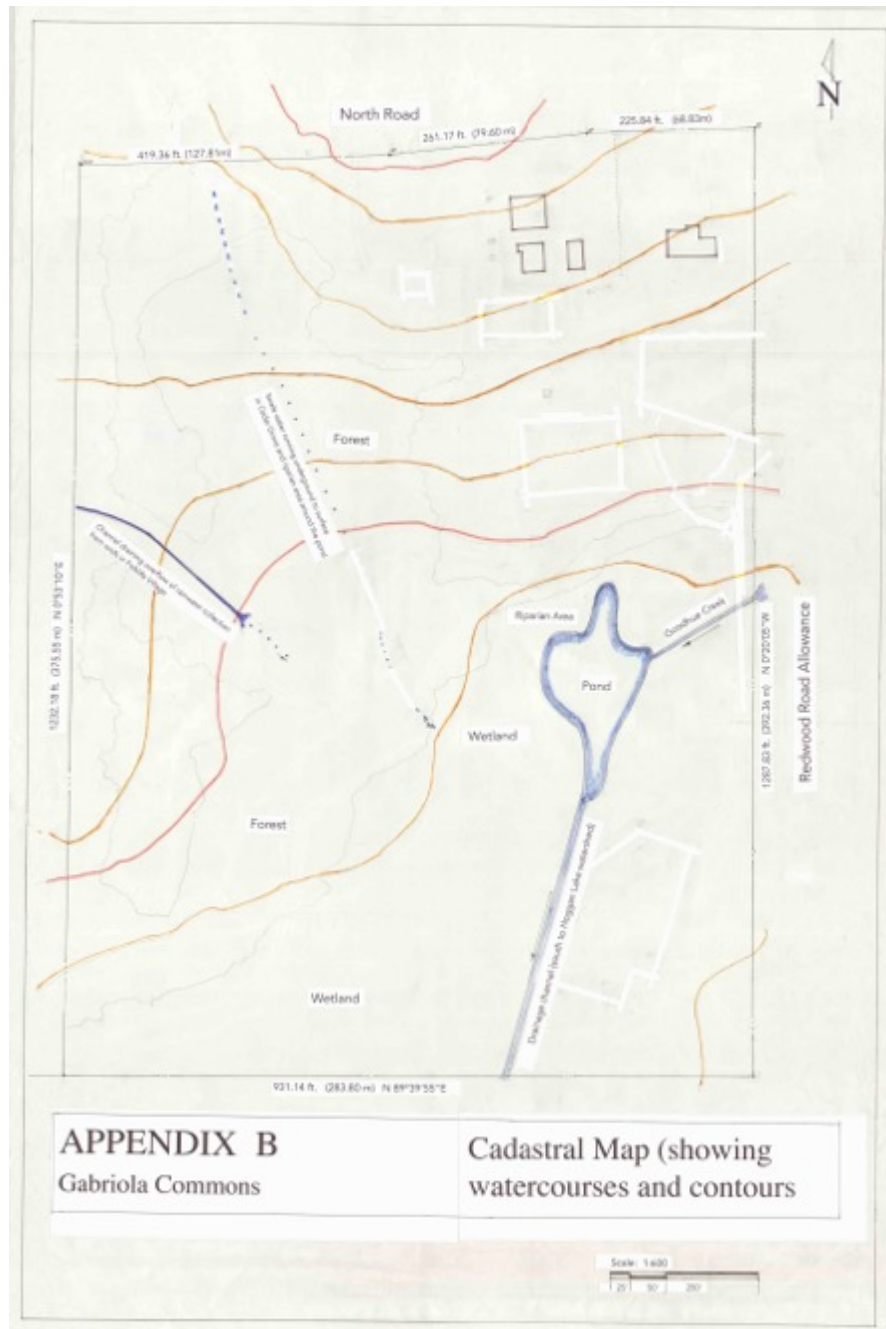
## 11. List of Appendices

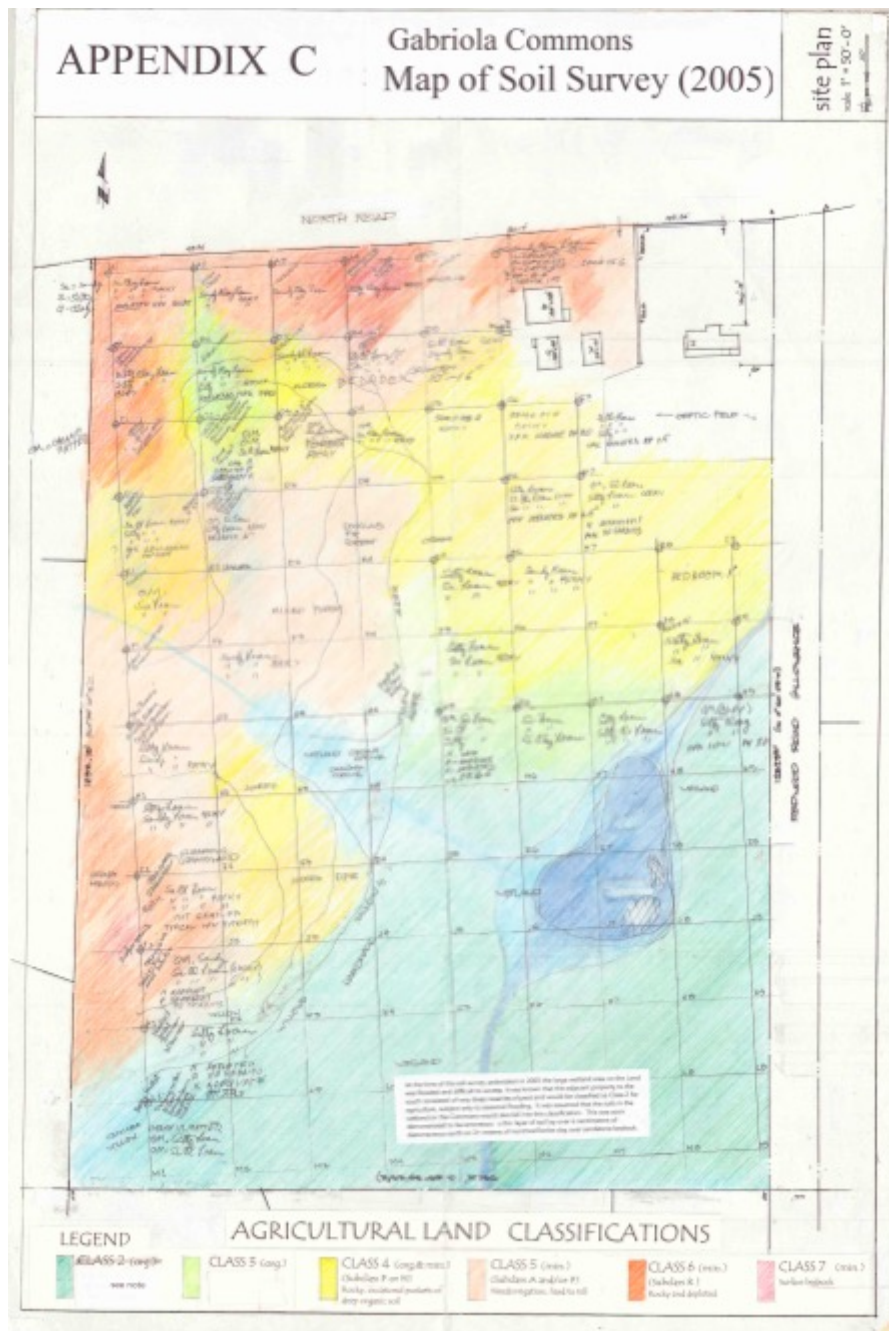
|                                                                                |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| A. Map of Gabriola Island identifying location of Gabriola Commons.....        | p. 17 |
| B. Cadastral Map of Gabriola Commons incl. Water courses and Contours.....     | p. 18 |
| C. Soil Survey of the Gabriola Commons (2005) .....                            | p. 19 |
| D. Photo showing typical section through Bellhouse soil.....                   | p. 20 |
| E. Map of Gabriola Commons showing Agricultural and Institutional Features.... | p. 21 |
| F. Map of Principal Ecosystems on Gabriola Commons.....                        | p. 22 |

## APPENDIX A

### Location of Gabriola Commons







Appendix D Photo of vertical section through Bellhouse soil structure





