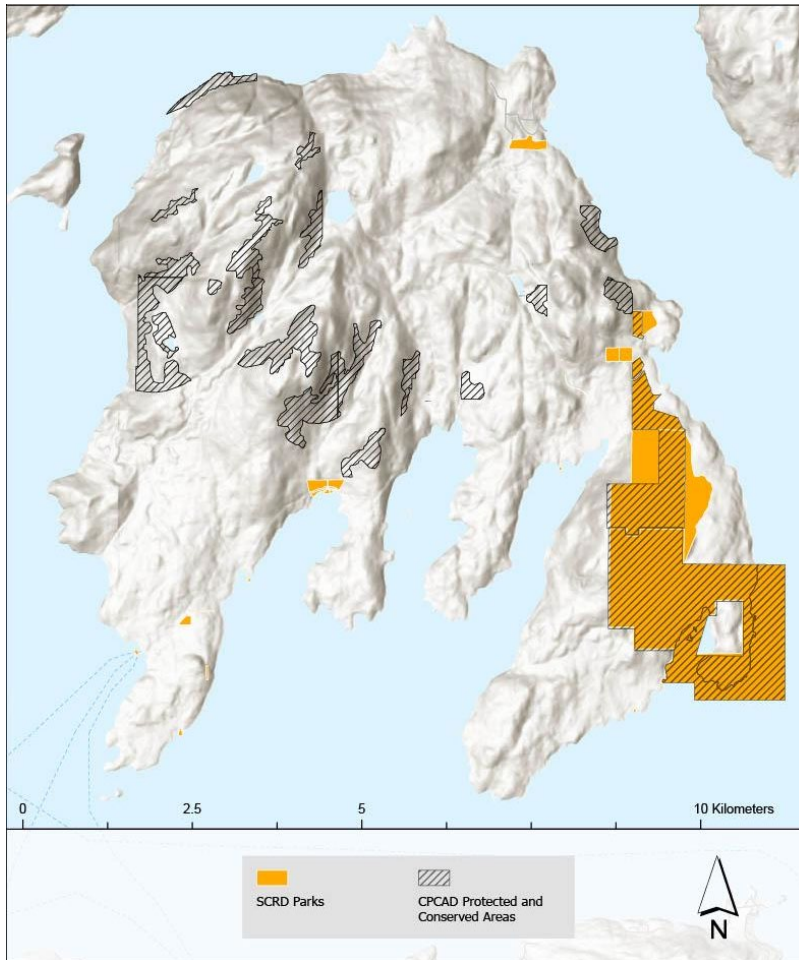


# Recognizing SCRD-owned parks on Chá7elkwnech/Gambier Island as Protected Areas or Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)

*A review of 10 SCRD-owned parks on Gambier Island and rationale for submission to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database*



Prepared for: SCRD & Islands Trust

By: Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society

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## Executive Summary



The Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS) is a registered charity responsible for managing the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region designation. One of our biggest projects focuses on protecting and conserving lands in the region, contributing to Canada's target of conserving 30% of lands and waters by 2030. Gambier Island, known as Chá7elkwnech by the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw/Squamish Nation, is the largest island in Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound, spanning roughly 6900 Hectares of a highly complex landscape that is rich in biodiversity due to limited development occurring there. HSBRIS has identified 10 parks across the island, totalling approximately 67 Ha, that are owned by the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) and, despite their zoning, function as parks and in some cases, essential buffer zones to other protected areas which increases connectivity across the landscape and achieves greater conservation of biodiversity. At present, approximately 12% of Chá7elkwnech is recognized in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD; 3), contributing to the 30x30 target. This number could be increased by at least 1% with the submission of these 67 Ha to the database, and the Sunshine Coast Regional District could be recognized for contributing to local, national and global conservation goals. Every bit counts.

## Context of the 30x30 Project

In 2021, Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Region. The Howe Sound

Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS) is a registered charity responsible for this designation and building capacity in the region for biodiversity conservation, reconciliation and sustainable development initiatives.

The threats of climate change and biodiversity loss are no secret, as is evident by Canada's commitment to protecting or conserving 30% of the country's land and waters by 2030. Canada's progress towards this target is tracked in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD). To reach bold targets such as these requires innovative approaches that recognize barriers to do so and take into consideration the social implications involved in activities that ensure biodiversity and ecosystem services are conserved. The term "Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)" first appeared during the 2010 Convention on Biological Diversity in the Aichi Target 11. OECMs were offered as an additional tool to meet global biodiversity conservation targets since they provide long-term biodiversity conservation benefits for species, habitats and ecosystems. OECMs offer recognition of efforts that already contribute to conservation, and it is believed that such a designation will provide support to these efforts, further encouraging land managers to maintain the systems they have put in place that result in conservation.

OECMs are defined as "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values" (UN Convention on Biological Diversity). Although on the surface, it may seem like this definition could also be applied to a designated protected area, the main difference between these two designations is that the primary objective of a protected area is conservation. OECMs are managed for other primary purposes, but through management, biodiversity conservation is also achieved. Canada adopted this international OECM definition and voluntary guidance developed by the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2018.

Lands suitable for OECM recognition and registration in CPCAD need to achieve the following criteria:

- Have clearly defined geographical boundaries;
- Achieve in-situ conservation of biodiversity;
- Prohibit actions incompatible with conservation; and
- Are intended to be protected into perpetuity.

Some areas within the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Region are already recognized as OECMs, including Old-Growth Management Areas, Wildlife Habitat Areas, Sea to Sky Wildland Zones and Glass Sponge Reef Closures. Between HSBRIS and BC Nature and through collaboration with local municipalities, there have been successful OECM and PA recognitions in the last year in Lions Bay, Whistler, Metro Vancouver and on Bowen Island. This is an opportunity for local government's management practices to be recognized and celebrated, while organizations such as HSBRIS and BC Nature have the capacity to lead the process of submitting to the database while we have funding to do so. There is very little time required from the landowners.

HSBRIS has conducted preliminary research on many private and municipal lands within the Biosphere Region and has identified many potential areas for OECM or PA recognition. We have conducted a preliminary assessment of Gambier Island and have identified several Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) parks as

potential sites for OECM or Protected Areas recognition, totalling approximately 67 Ha. To date, approximately 11.8% of Gambier Island are registered in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD). Recognizing the SCRD Parks listed below would increase this contribution by approximately 1%. As stated in the SCRD Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2014): “Recreation and parks are essential to *quality of life*; Recreation and parks build *strong families* and *healthy communities*; Parks, open spaces, and natural areas are *essential to ecological survival*.” OECMs aim to balance human use of the land with biodiversity conservation.

See Figure 1 for a visual of the SCRD parks across the island as well as the lands on the island that are already recognized in the CPCAD as either OECMs (Old Growth Management Areas) or Protected Areas (Halkett Bay Marine Park, Nature Reserves). **With permission, HSBRIS would like to assess the SCRD-owned parks on Gambier Island, zoned by Islands Trust, further for eligibility for submission to CPCAD, contributing towards national and international area-based conservation targets.** Participating in this reporting and recognition does not entail any regulatory or policy restrictions for these areas. However, if the use or management of the areas changes in the future, it would need to be reassessed to see whether it still qualifies for CPCAD.

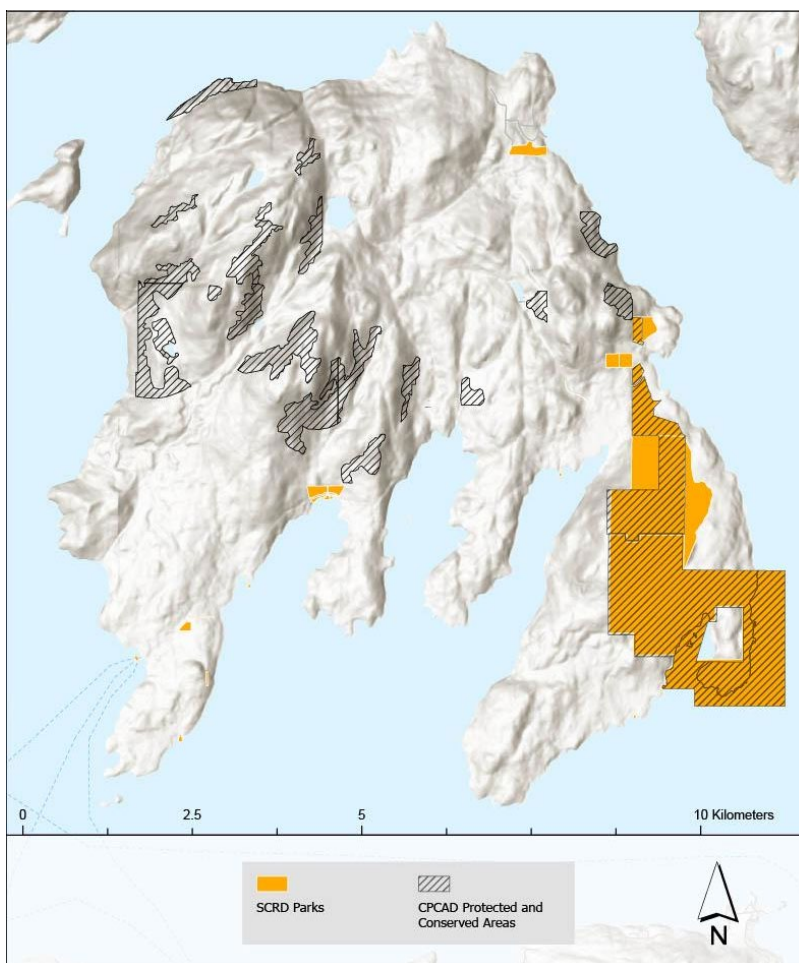




Figure 1: Map of SCRD Parks and lands already in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) on Gambier

## 10 SCRD Parks on Gambier Island

### Pete Shields Park

Pete Shields Park is a 35 Ha SCRD-owned park on the East side of Gambier (Figure 2) that borders the Mount Artaban Nature Reserve, Halkett Bay Marine Park and the Long Bay Wetland Nature Reserve. This is important as Pete Shields acts as a buffer between protected areas and developed areas as well as provides connectivity between habitats and watershed networks which is essential for wildlife and biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, Pete Shields Park borders several private lands with covenants on them (Figures 2 and 3), thus building the case further to ensure that this entire area is protected. While the area including Pete Shields is zoned Rural Residential (Appendix A), the park land appears to be achieving the in-situ conservation of biodiversity as there has been no development on this land and limited recreation due to the geography. Pete Shields Park has important ecological value as it connects with protected areas, contains a wetland which provides essential habitat and ecosystem services as well as mapped marbled murrelet habitat (BC Data Catalogue; see Figure 3), a species at risk. Pete Shields Park is an ideal opportunity area for OECM or Protected Area recognition and could be a great case study and story to showcase.

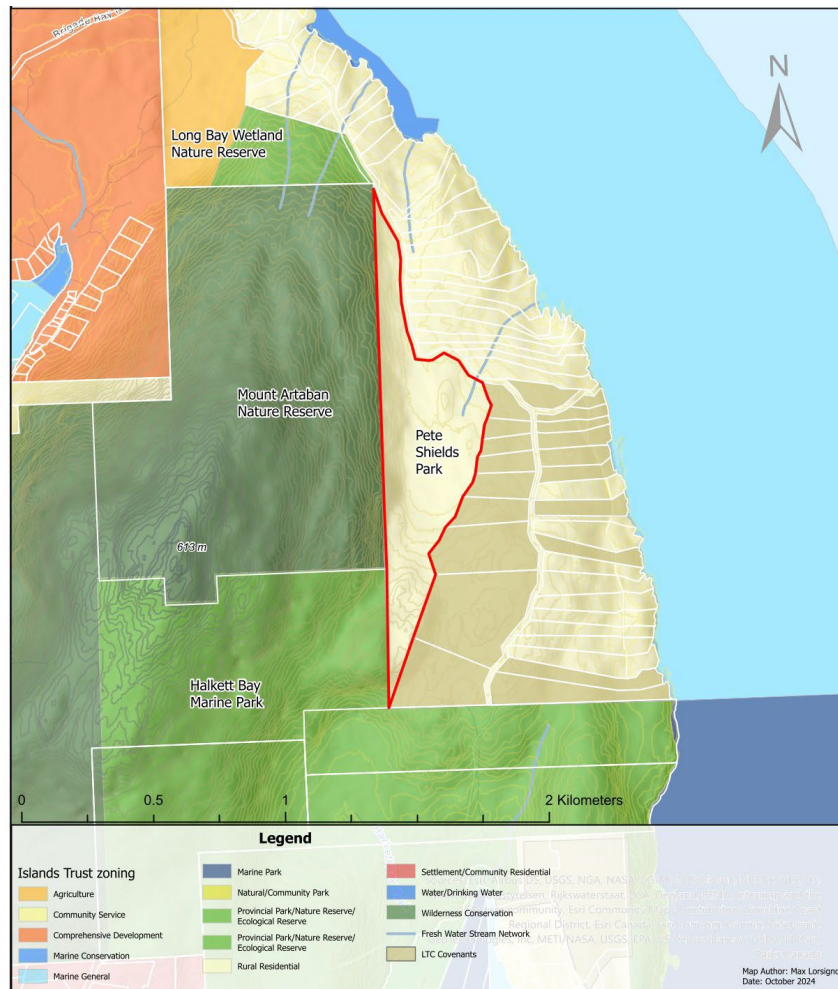


Figure 2: Pete Shields Park and surrounding areas Islands Trust zoning



Aerial photo of Pete Shields, Mt. Artaban Nature Reserve and Halkett Bay Provincial Park adjacent to the Brigade Bay residential area..



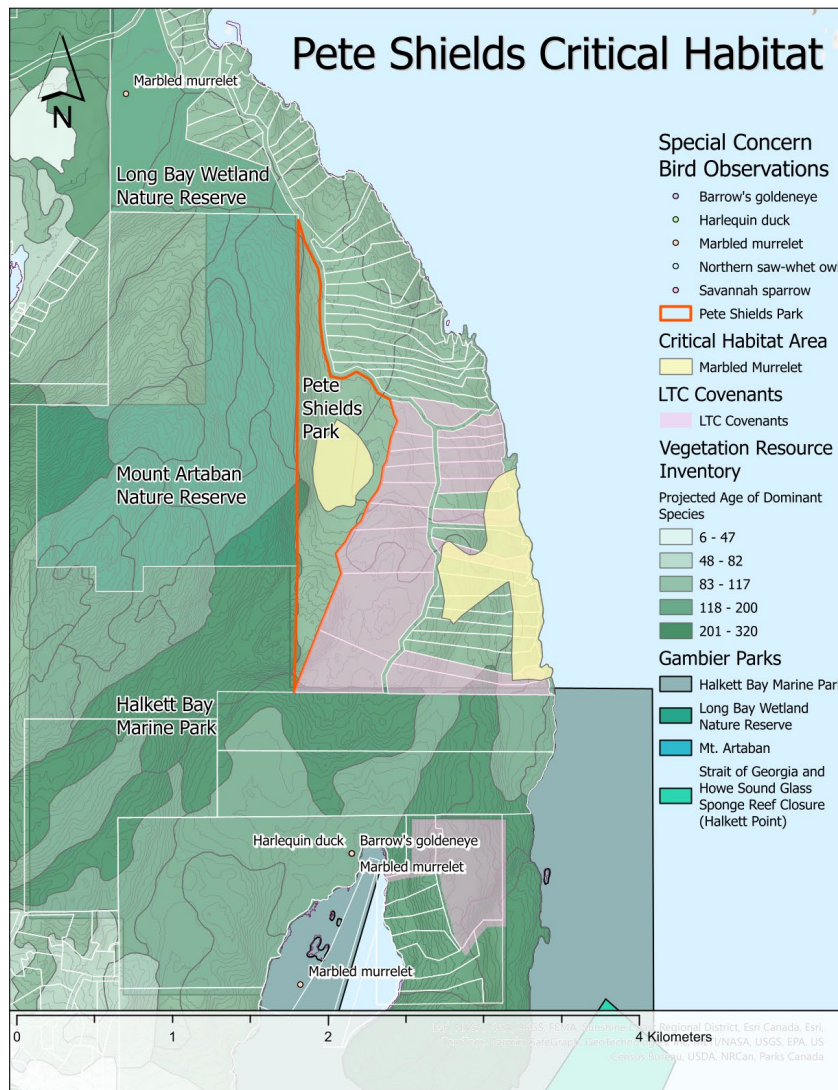


Figure 3: Pete Shields Park Ecological Considerations

[See photos of Pete Shields Park terrain and forests here.](#)

## Thomas Lipton Park

Thomas Lipton Park is an 8 Ha SCRd-owned park at the head of West Bay (Figure 4) that surrounds the headwaters of McDonald Creek, a fish-bearing creek, and the surrounding estuary area (Figure 5). This park is an ideal OECM candidate as it is already zoned as a “Community Nature Park” and is achieving biodiversity conservation through being largely undeveloped as well as ongoing research and monitoring in the creek and estuary area and active community involvement stewarding this area. McDonald Creek is home to Coastal Cutthroat Trout, a species at risk in BC, and Coastal Tailed Frogs (5; Appendix B), a species of concern in BC, as well as several other species who live in and around the creek and rely on its health and intact riparian habitat. Furthermore, estuaries provide myriad ecosystem services and are essential for the mixed terrestrial, aquatic and marine habitats they provide. There are regular Sea Lion and Orca Whale sightings in West Bay and Chum Salmon come each year to run up Whispering and historically McDonald Creek as well, highlighting the ecological importance of this area. There have also been Pink Salmon runs in the past in these creeks.



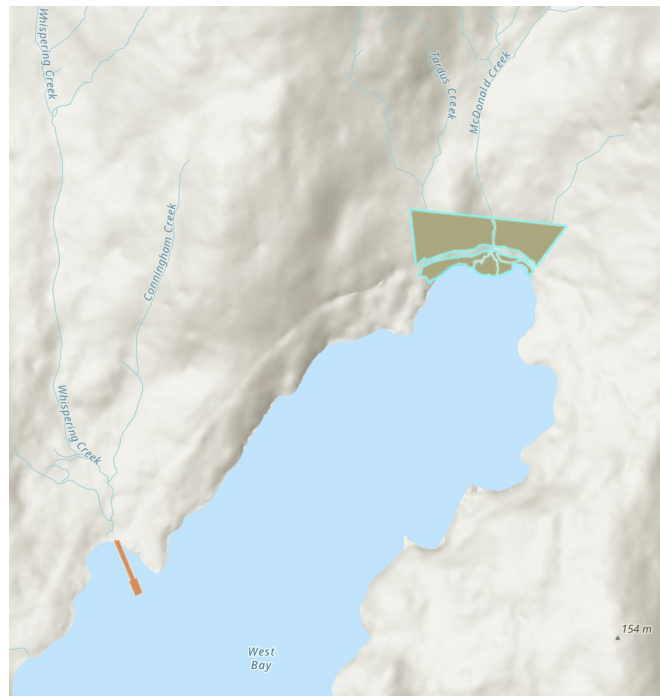


Figure 4 (above): Map with Thomas Lipton Park highlighted in blue; Figure 5 (below): Thomas Lipton Park Estuary and the mouth of McDonald Creek

## Brigade Bay Community Parks

There are two SCRD parcels above the Long Bay Wetland Nature Reserve as well as one adjacent to the Brigade Bluffs Nature Reserve, totaling approximately 14 Ha. As these border Protected areas, it would be ideal to recognize them as OECMs or PAs and highlight the connectivity in this area. There is important wetland habitat, tributaries, mature forest and restoration and monitoring work in the nature reserves, highlighting the in-situ conservation of

biodiversity in these areas. However, much of this area including these three SCRD parks, Pete Shields Park and many other areas around the island, are zoned by the Islands Trust as Rural Residential (RR; Appendix A). This poses a challenge for protecting these lands. There is a case here for rezoning as these areas must have protections in place to continue to achieve biodiversity conservation into perpetuity as well as to have mechanisms in place to prohibit actions incompatible with conservation.

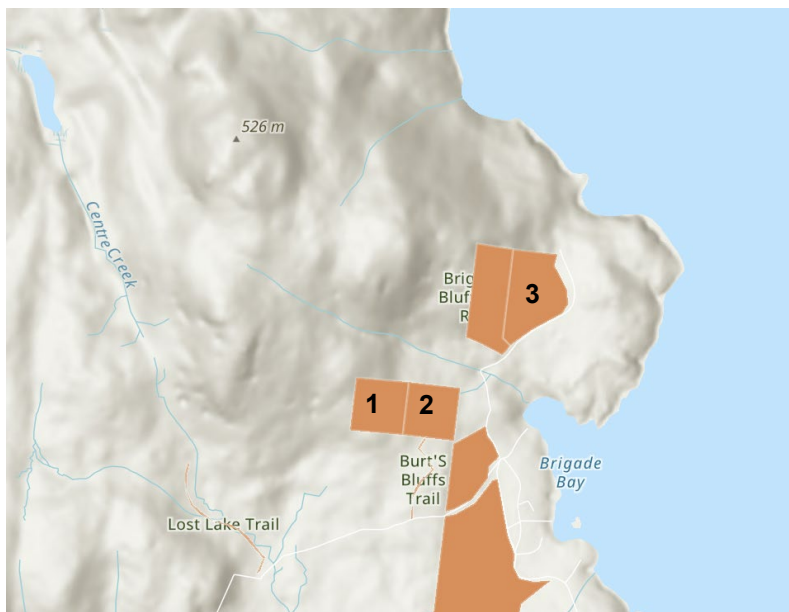


Figure 6 (above): Map highlighting 3 SCRD parks nearby to Brigade Bay; Figure (below): photo taken nearby to this park, representing mature forest habitat there

### Douglas Bay Community Park

The approximately 8 Ha SCRD community park in Douglas Bay (Figure 8) is also a potential OECM area. This park is near the mouth of Gambier Creek, home to Coastal Tailed Frogs (Appendix B) among other species, and the essential riparian habitat surrounding it that these species rely on. Tributaries of Gambier Creek appear to run through this park as well as mature forest (Figure 9). As well, several private properties surrounding this park have covenants on them, thus there is a case for increasing the level of protection across a greater area by recognizing this park as an OECM as it is achieving in-situ biodiversity conservation at first glance. The area including this park is zoned Settlement Residential (SR; Appendix A), making the requirement for achieving biodiversity conservation into perpetuity as well as for having mechanisms in place to prohibit actions incompatible with conservation, difficult to meet. There is an island-wide need for rezoning of important ecological areas, such as park lands, to be zoned appropriately such that protections are in place for generations to come.





Figure 8 (above): Map highlighting SCRD park in Douglas Bay; Figure 9 (below): photo taken nearby to this park, representing mature forest habitat there



## West Bay Community Parks

There are two SCRD parks in the West Bay area to highlight (Figure 10). One is a small 1.7 Ha park adjacent to a SCRD Trail with high ecological value. It includes the headwaters of Grennon Creek, a fish-bearing creek home to Cutthroat Trout, as well as invaluable wetland habitat (Figure 11). This is an important biodiverse area that is zoned Settlement Residential (SR; Appendix A). Another SCRD park in West Bay towards Gambier Harbour is a small 0.47 Ha strip along the water through undeveloped forest providing a natural buffer between developed communities, likely to be achieving in-situ biodiversity conservation despite being surrounded by Settlement Residential zoning. Both of these parks are ideal opportunity areas for OECM recognition as well as rezoning efforts.



Figure 10 (above): Map highlighting 2 SCRD parks in West Bay; Figure 11 (below): photo taken in 1st park, highlighting wetland habitat and headwaters of Grennon Creek

## Gambier Harbour Community Parks

There are a couple of small community parks in the Gambier Harbour area. The small Anavets park (Figure 13) has important historical and community significance that would make a great OECM story if recognized by showcasing the primary purpose of the land being for community use and ceremonies, while also achieving biodiversity conservation. It is possible that this park would not meet the criteria for OECM recognition as it is cleared with a building on it, however further analysis would be needed. There is another small SCR D park adjacent to the Gambier Harbour public dock that includes part of the foreshore area which is important habitat for birds and many other species. Changing the zoning from Settlement Residential for this area would help this small but important area and many others be protected.

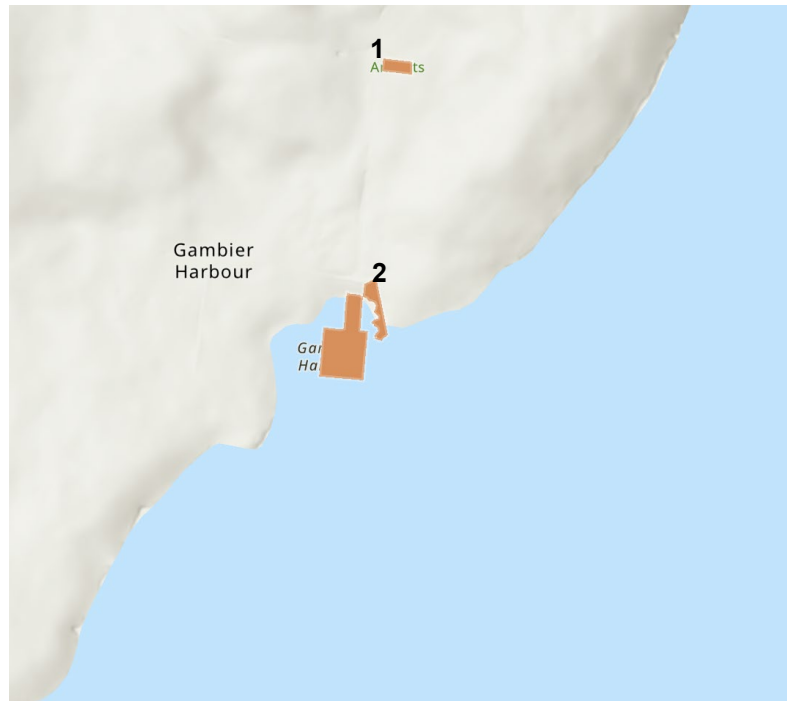




Figure 12 (above): Map highlighting 2 SCRD parks in Gambier Harbour; Figure 13 (below): photo of Anavets Park from SCRD website

## Summary Table of 10 SCRD Parks on Gambier

Name	Size (Ha)	Zoning	Adjacent Land	Ecological Features
Pete Shields	35	Rural Residential	Halkett Bay Marine Park Mt Artaban Nature Reserve Long Bay Wetland Nature Reserve Private lands with covenants on them	Wetland Mature forest Tributaries Species at risk: Marbled Murrelet mapped habitat
Thomas Lipton	8	Settlement Residential; Wilderness	Private properties with covenants on them	Estuary habitat McDonald Creek runs through it

		Conservation	Old Growth Management Area	Species at risk: Coastal Tailed Frog and Coastal Cutthroat Trout are both found in McDonald Creek, this creek has also historically had a salmon run. Marbled Murrelet mapped habitat
Brigade Bay #1	4	Rural Residential	Brigade Bay Park #2	Mature forest
Brigade Bay #2	3.8	Community Park (Greater area is zoned Rural Residential)	Brigade Bay Park #1 Long Bay Wetland Nature Reserve	Mature forest
Brigade Bay #3	6	Community Park (Greater area is zoned Rural Residential)	Brigade Bay Bluffs Nature Reserve Old Growth Management Area Priority Old Forest Deferral Area	Species at risk: Marbled Murrelet mapped habitat Stream adjacent
Douglas Bay	7.8	Settlement Residential; Wilderness Conservation	Private lands with covenants on them Priority Old Forest Deferral Area	Mature Forest Gambier Creek tributaries Riparian habitat Species at risk: Coastal Cutthroat Trout; Coastal Tailed Frogs; Marbled Murrelet mapped habitat
West Bay #1	1.7	Settlement Residential	SCRD trail Undeveloped privately owned land Provides a buffer from developed areas	Wetland habitat Headwaters of Grennon Creek Species at risk: Coastal Cutthroat Trout in Grennon Creek; Marbled Murrelet mapped habitat Mature forest
West Bay #2	0.47	Settlement Residential	Undeveloped coastline; provides a buffer between that and developed areas	Mature forest
Gambier Harbour #1	0.06	Settlement Residential	Private properties	
Gambier Harbour #2	0.09	Settlement	Private properties;	Foreshore habitat

		Residential	Gambier Harbour Dock	Species at risk: Great Blue Herons often seen here
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## Summary and Recommendations

In summary, our recommendations are two-fold:

1. Allow HSBRIIS permission to assess further the lands owned by the SCRD currently zoned by Islands Trust for eligibility for Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) and/or Protected Area recognition and further submission to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).
2. Eventually, these lands to be rezoned for protection and conservation of in-situ biodiversity in perpetuity.

Despite the Islands Trust zoning of these SCRD parks, there is still a case to be made for the parks to be eligible for submission to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) and recognized for their achieving biodiversity conservation and for good management practices. However, there is work to be done on Gambier Island to ensure that there are the appropriate bylaws and other mechanisms in place, such as management plans, to ensure conservation moving forward.

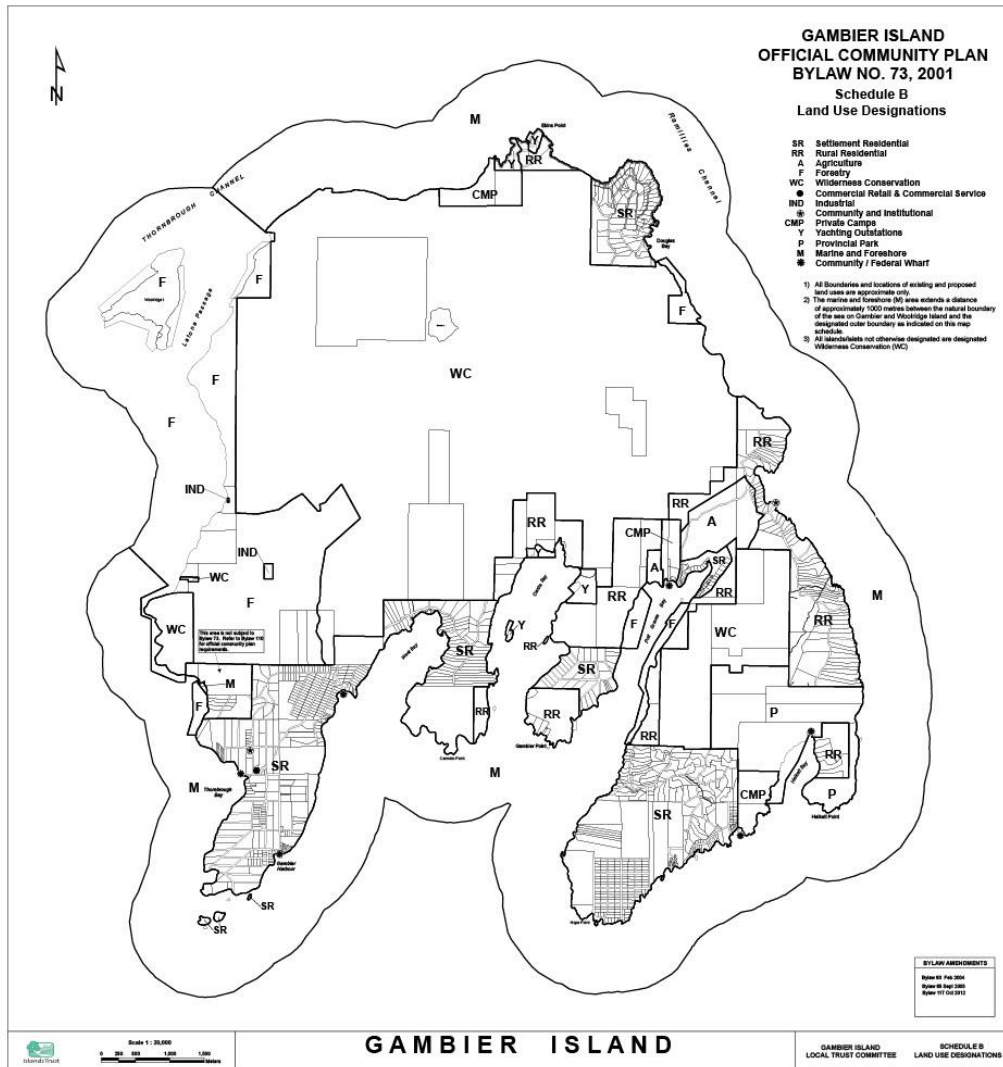
## References and Additional Resources

1. [BC Data Catalogue \*Critical Habitat for federally-listed species at risk \(posted\)\*](#)
2. [BC Data Catalogue \*Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel \(TAP\) Priority Deferral Areas\*](#)
3. [BC Data Catalogue: \*Freshwater Atlas Stream Network\*](#)
4. [Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database Web Map](#)
5. [\*Chá7elkwnech \(Gambier Island\) Coastal Tailed Frog: the distribution of eDNA and natal areas among streams: Stamford Environmental Final Report Spring 2024.\*](#)
6. [Gambier Island Official Community Plan 2001](#)
7. [Mackie, Grace. \*Knowing Our Streams: a review of knowledge and stewardship programs of fish-bearing streams within the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region.\* 2023](#)
8. [SCRD Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2014](#)
9. [Reporting Protected and Conserved Areas - Canada Conservation](#)

## Appendix A: Islands Trust Zoning on Gambier Island

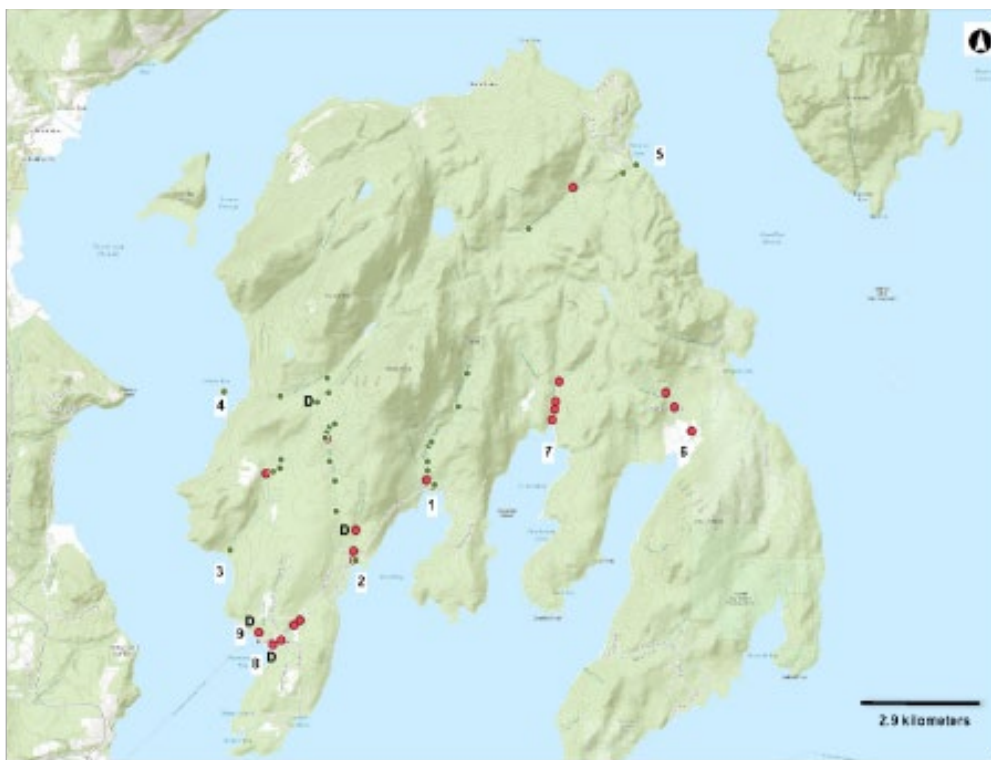






Islands Trust OCP Zoning Map 2001

## Appendix B: Coastal Tailed Frog Distribution Gambier Island



Distribution of eDNA sampling among Chá7elkwnech streams showing locations where CTF was detected (Green Dots) and not detected (Red Dots). The letter 'D' labels four sites where duplicates were collected (see text for details). Numbers at stream mouths are 1. McDonald Creek; 2. Whispering Creek; 3. Mannion Creek; 4. Andy's Bay Creek; 5. Gambier Creek; 6. Long Bay Creek; 7. Center Creek; 8. Grennon Creek; 9. Kingston Creek.