

Marsh owner in no hurry

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OCEANSIDE — There's a bevy of conservationists waiting eagerly in the wings but the president of the timber company that owns Hamilton Marsh and surrounding area said a coalition seeking to purchase the 90 acre wetlands for protection will have to wait a little longer.

Negotiations between Island Timberlands and prospective buyers that include the Regional District of Nanaimo and Ducks Unlimited Canada broke down one year ago in November after the timber company said it needed more time to conduct a land analysis review.

Interest in preserving the marsh as park has intensified on word the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation will put up \$200,000 towards the cause but Island Timberlands president Darshan Sihota said in an e-mail to The News the company isn't quite ready to return to the negotiation table.

"Our lands review is not yet complete. Also, we have not received any followup contact from any prospective purchasers, but look forward to future discussions on this topic once we have completed our review (probably in the new year)," he wrote.

Hamilton Marsh is south of Qualicum Beach along Hilliers Road. It's considered an important contributor to preservation of area water flows and is home to more than 120 species of birds. — by Fred Davies