

PARKSVILLE QUALICUM BEACH NEWS

Trust giving \$200,000 to help save marsh

By Fred Davies - Parksville Qualicum Beach News

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Advocates, who for years have been seeking to protect Hamilton Marsh as park, are cautiously optimistic on news of a \$200,000 contribution towards the cause from the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.

“We have a long history of supporting conservation purchases across B.C. and the habitat values at Hamilton Marsh certainly justify the investment,” said Brian Springinotic, executive director of the foundation, in a media release.

Regional District of Nanaimo chair, Joe Stanhope, said the RDN, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society all have contributed towards efforts to save the marsh from potential logging by land owners Island Timberlands. Last year an offer was made to purchase an area of the private forest company’s lands that included the marsh but Island Timberlands said in November they were not willing to negotiate a deal until they completed a year long land analysis review on all their forested Vancouver Island holdings.

“Some of the money we had ready collapsed after that,” said Stanhope, adding the recent contribution means stakeholders are once again interested in purchase.

“Now that year is up. We’ve heard from the community that they’re still very much in favour of purchase and protection of the marsh.”

The 90-acre wetlands, just south of Qualicum Beach along Hilliers Road, is used by many migrating waterfowl, and is an important contributor to water flows and home to more than 120 bird species.

“We’ve worked hard at the grass roots level and collected almost 3,000 signatures in support of negotiations to secure Hamilton Marsh and surrounding lands,” said FFCCS director Ceri Peacey. “We were delighted to retrieve these funds from HCTF.”

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