



Island Coastal Economic Trust Announces Funding for Cowichan Estuary Interpretive Nature Centre

For Immediate Release

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Duncan, B.C. - Mayor Phil Kent, acting Chair of the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and Mayor of Duncan, today announced funding approval of \$87,500 for the Cowichan Estuary Interpretive Nature Centre. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$350,000.

The Interpretive Nature Centre project - to be undertaken by the Cowichan Community Land Trust Society - will create an interpretive Nature Centre overlooking the Cowichan Bay Estuary on the Cowichan Bay waterfront.

“ICET's financial support for this project will help position the region as a prime bird watching destination, building on other local initiatives such as the Somenos Marsh's open classroom, already drawing in this lucrative tourism market. This will encourage the diversification of the Cowichan Bay area and provide an important piece of tourism infrastructure which will benefit the entire region,” commented Mayor Kent.

Jane Kilthei, who chairs the Land Trust's Nature Centre Committee, described the project's outdoor and indoor elements as including maps and interpretive signage leading visitors through Hecate Park, along Cowichan Bay's waterfront, showing the diversity and scope of the Cowichan estuary ecosystem; a two level viewing platform with telescope to observe birds and other wildlife in the estuary; and an indoor interpretive centre with aquaria, touch tables, microscope stations and interactive displays.

"The Centre will provide opportunities for visitors to learn about the estuary, its watershed, marine life, and natural and cultural history." Kilthei said, "These same visitors will patronize businesses along the waterfront and in the region, spending their dollars at local retail shops and hospitality and eco-tourism related businesses. As peak bird watching season is in the spring and fall/winter, the Centre will attract significant tourist dollars into the community during the shoulder seasons when they are most needed."

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust was established in February 2006 under an Act of the Province of British Columbia. It provided a \$50-million endowment that is managed by an independent Board of Directors comprised of thirteen members – eight Mayors and five provincial appointees from the prescribed area.

The Board's mandate is to make strategic investments in economic development priorities including forestry, transportation, tourism, mining, energy, economic development, agriculture and aquaculture, and small business. The ICET region encompasses all Regional Districts and municipalities on Vancouver Island north of the Malahat as well as the Powell River and Sunshine Coast Regional Districts.

ICET has approved over \$46 million for over 80 projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. The total impact of these investments is estimated at over \$245 million.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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