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***PLANNING PROCESS LAUNCHED FOR DISCOVERY ISLANDS MARINE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT***

COURTENAY – A unique marine trail project proposal is receiving a \$10,000 grant from the Island Coastal Economic Trust to begin a complex stakeholder engagement process.

The BC Marine Trails Network Association (BCMTNA) has proposed the development of a marine trail through the Discovery Islands. The unique environment, a large and diverse marine territory with Islands, inlets and diverse parties – Indigenous communities and traditional territories, resource industries, commercial tour operators, Island residents and more – necessitates a specialized engagement process.

“One of the big lessons learned from last year’s Salish Sea Marine Trail project was the need to work with stakeholders before site selection starts,” said Paul Grey, President of the BC Marine Trails Network Association. “The funding we’ve received for the proposed Discovery Islands Marine Trail will ensure that all communities have full input into the design and development process, so that those who wish to participate can benefit fully from this new activity in their communities and territories.”

The 294-km Salish Sea Marine Trail involved engagement and cooperation between dozens of stakeholders, 19 Indigenous communities, and all three levels of government.

The newly-proposed Discovery Islands Marine Trail will be part of a larger network of marine trails, and will connect Powell River, Campbell River, and Sayward, with additional side routes and alternative trips for paddlers throughout the Great Bear Rainforest region.

“Hiking trails are a huge tourism draw across B.C., generating significant economic activity, and coastal communities are now embracing marine trails for paddlers as the next step in visitor attraction,” said Phil Kent, ICET Chair. “With the success of the Salish Sea Marine Trail we helped to fund, we’re looking forward to launching more of these unique tourism assets around the region.”

With reconciliation and engagement with First Nations a priority for projects across B.C., the BCMTNA project will use the funding from ICET and other funding partners to guide the steps needed for successful engagement and marine trail development.

The marine trail, once completed, will add considerably to the tourism infrastructure through a network of secured, formal campsites, safety stops, rest areas and inventoried and approved launch sites. The marine trail will provide new opportunities for self-directed tours, increased opportunities for eco-tourism operators, and economic opportunities for remote and Indigenous communities.

The planning process is budgeted at \$20,000, with half of the costs supported by ICET and the other half through Rural Dividend funding.

### **About the Island Coastal Economic Trust**

Created and capitalized by the Province of BC, the Island Coastal Economic Trust has been at the forefront of economic diversification, planning and regional revitalization for the past eleven years.

ICET is independently governed by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials, MLAs and appointees from the Island and Coast. This exceptional team of leaders collaborate to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community centered decision-making process, more than \$50 million in funding has been approved for over 180 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects. These investments have leveraged over \$270 million in new investment into the region creating more than 2500 construction phase jobs and 2600 long term permanent jobs.

A full overview of ICET can be found at [www.islandcoastaltrust.ca](http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca).

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