

From: Friends of French Creek Conservation Society (FFCCS)

Estuary Lands Committee, Robin Robinson, Chair

To: the Oceanside Community

Re: French Creek Estuary Lands

There is talk in the community about the estuary lands at French Creek and their future. The fate of the estuary has been of prime concern for the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society since its inception in 2004. We are sending you this report to inform you of our progress in preserving this important and sensitive property. Like many land conservation projects, it is long slow work.

Most of the undeveloped land near the estuary is owned by French Creek Estates Ltd., with small sections of parkland owned by the Regional District of Nanaimo. Recently, less than half of the 23 acres, located between Hwy 19A, Columbia Drive, Viking Way and French Creek, has been contracted to be sold to a development company. The more sensitive area adjacent to the estuary is still owned by French Creek Estates Ltd. and is presently being proposed by them as a protected estuary park. The FFCCS Estuary Lands Committee is acting as the facilitator for this exciting prospect.

Some History

In 2006 the Nature Trust of BC, on behalf of FFCCS, held unsuccessful negotiations with French Creek Estates Ltd. owner, the late John Moore. Mr. Moore passed away in 2015, and during the summer of 2016 the 23 acres were put on the market with an asking price of \$6.9M.

In 2016, the Estuary Lands Committee was established, with the addition of some members from the French Creek Residents Association (FCRA) Board. The goal of the committee was to investigate feasible methods to secure as much of the estuary lands as possible for natural space and park, instead of for development.

The Committee has always been respectful of the fact that the land is privately owned with clear title and an RDN Development Permit (DP) dating from 1994. Fortunately, that DP has morphed over time with changes to BC's environmental standards and there is no longer a threat of multi-storey condominiums being built on the land.

Some results of the Committee's work to date:

- We have established a productive working relationship with the owner of French Creek Estates Ltd. As a result, FFCCS and FCRA are in the process of developing a Memorandum of

Understanding with French Creeks Estates Ltd. who have verbally agreed to facilitate the transfer of more than 60% of the 23 acres into preserved parkland.

- We have arranged a meeting with Ducks Unlimited Canada and the West Coast Conservation Land Management Program in September for the purpose of involving them in the management of the parkland.
- We have compiled and completed an on-line Community Survey ([link to pdf survey](#)) conducted July 2 – 16, 2018 to which we received 342 responses. It was created to gain information on residents' awareness and use of the lands and their interest in the land becoming a public park. The response was overwhelmingly positive towards forming an estuary park.
- We have been working in conjunction with the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI) and Vancouver Island University (VIU). With permission from French Creek Estates Ltd., VIU students and staff are preparing a land-use and environmental survey report of the estuary lands. This report is expected to be published at the end of September.

In Conclusion:

FFCCS has had the goal of securing the estuary lands for almost 15 years. In obtaining a verbal agreement with the landowner to protect more than 60% of the 23 acres, we are pleased with the progress that has been made to date. We look forward to succeeding in having this land protected.