

Savary Island developer Roger Sahlin files for bankruptcy in Washington state



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Roger Sahlin, the owner of 50% undivided interest in DL 1375, filed for bankruptcy on May 22, 2015. In addition to filing for personal bankruptcy, four of Mr. Sahlin's companies, Governor's Point Development Co, Dancing Waters LLC, Pleasant Bay Properties and Associates LP and Pleasant Road Partners LP also filed for bankruptcy. Little is known about the details of the cases at this time.

According to an article from the Bellingham Herald (September 3, 2014) the Sahlin family, has owned most of the peninsula south of Bellingham for the past 50 years. They put the Governors' Point property on the market a year after the Sahlins' business, Governors Point Development Co., lost in a state Court of Appeals, where it tried to convince the judges that Bellingham needed uphold a 40-year-old promise to provide city water to the point. Apparently, the Sahlins had submitted a development application before the residential density was restricted to one lot for every five acres, and were planning a 141-lot subdivision on the point, to be served by city water. Rather than appeal to the state Supreme Court, the Sahlins decided to sell. Now Mr. Sahlin and 4 of his businesses have filed for bankruptcy.

Savary Islanders are familiar with development plans proposed by the Sahlin family. Here on Savary, opposition to the development of DL 1375 began when the developers purchased it in the 1980's, and has grown considerably since that time.

Twenty years ago the Savary Island community said no to a 90 parcel gated community on DL 1375 proposed by Roger Sahlin's RRR Construction and David Syre's Trillium Corporation. The proposal put forward included 90 waterfront parcels, an airport and private airplane hangars. The plan was proposed for the last intact District Lot on Savary; a 133 hectare parcel in the center of the Island and the largest and last wild space on Savary. On August 22, 1995 the Powell River Regional District (PRRD) held a public hearing on Savary, to seek public input for the

gated community bylaw, locally known by many as the "Trillium BUY Law". Held before the fire hall was built, the gathering took place at Duck Bay under the trees. Much of the community expressed opposition to the plan and ultimately the PRRD withdrew the Bylaw and began the Savary OCP process.

Today we know that the areas slated for development in 1995 contain ecosystems with rare plants, plant communities, intact archaeological sites and endangered species. The 1995 bylaw would have destroyed all of this.

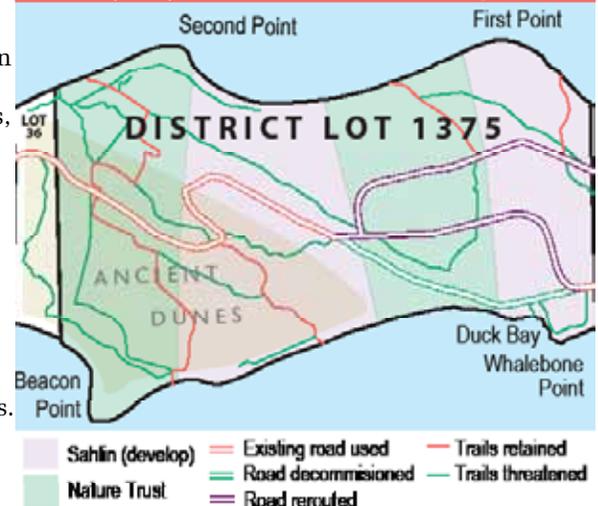
SILT was established in 1997, to preserve this last wilderness on Savary. The developers put forward a subdivision application to divide the land into 36 parcels. In 2001, MOTI Approving Officer, Mr Howard Hunter tentatively approved the subdivision of the land into 10 acre parcels, subject to the satisfaction of numerous stringent conditions designed to address the ecological, environmental, archaeological, geotechnical, and health issues that concerned Islanders alerted him to. The preliminary layout approval contained 20 conditions.

In 2002, David Syre decided to sell his part of DL 1375 and the Nature Trust of BC was able to purchase the 50% undivided interest in the property. Another 13 acre adjoining parcel was acquired and 12 one acre waterfront lots were donated to the effort by 2 Savary Islanders. Since then, the Nature Trust of BC has tried to purchase the remaining 50% of DL 1375 from the Sahlin family. In 2010 SILT endorsed the PRRD's proposal to amend the Savary OCP to designate DL 1375 as a Heritage Conservation Area and establish the first development permits in the Regional District. The Sahlins took the Nature Trust to court to partition the property. The court decision failed to take environmental factors into consideration and now the division of the property into alternating strips threatens to destroy the natural connectivity of the land. SILT joined with the Nature Trust of

BC in a court appeal in 2010. Many Savary Islanders donated to the court appeal but in the end it failed and the land remains under threat of subdivision today.

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After failing to complete any of the requirements of the subdivision application over the last few years, the Sahlin developers requested and were granted three extensions by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Approving Officer, Jeffery Moore. The most recent extension is until January 2016. SILT has learned that the Sahlins are 2 years in arrears with their property taxes in DL 1375.

Savary has changed in very many ways over the last 20 years. Today we know so much more about the land and its significance than we did at that public hearing under the trees at Duck Bay on August 22, 1995. Today DL1375 is recognized as the best example of a coastal dune ecosystem in Canada, designated as a Heritage Conservation Area in the Powell River Regional District, and as such, subject to Development Permits. Today DL 1375 is on the BC Parks acquisition list.

The Sahlin bankruptcies went to court in Seattle, Washington on June 17. It is unclear at this time how the Sahlin bankruptcies might impact DL 1375. Nature Trust of BC Chairman, Doug Christopher will give an update on DL 1375 at the SILT AGM on August 3, 2015 at the Main Firehall at 11 am.