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Salt Spring Books



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

COOKING UP SOME FUN: Salt Spring Lions Club members take orders at their burger fundraising booth at Ruckle Farm Day on Sunday, May 3 under sunny skies. For more event photos, see page 12.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Crews douse Stark garage fire

Hot, dry and dangerous weather predicted

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

While a recent blaze at a property on Salt Spring's north end was quickly extinguished by firefighters, officials still cautioned vigilance — warning that a potentially dangerous fire season on the island is only just beginning.

About 15 Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue (SSIFR) personnel and multiple vehicles raced from both ends of the island Friday,

May 1, responding just after 1:30 p.m. to a call of a structure on fire in the 400 block of Stark Road. When they arrived, firefighters quickly took over for neighbours who had been bringing water to a burning carport that sent smoke billowing into the sky above the residential neighbourhood.

Crews were able to safely douse the fire, preventing flames from spreading to other buildings; the fire reportedly began on the outside of the carport, although the cause

has yet to be determined by SSIFR officials.

The fire came as temperatures in the region began to climb, and local fire danger level at press time remained at "high" on Salt Spring Island, with a two-hour fire watch in effect. The B.C. Wildfire Service advised that early May's above-seasonal temperatures are expected to increase the likelihood of new wildfire starts.

FIRE continued on 2

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PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue truck and personnel at top of the driveway provide water to help extinguish a garage fire on Stark Road Friday afternoon.

Wildfire danger rated high

FIRES

continued from 1

They added that any fires that start could spread quickly, despite relatively light winds forecasted. "Early season wildfires are often human-caused

and, therefore, preventable," according to a situation report. "Please use caution with any activity that could cause a spark." There were 11 calls for structure fires in 2025, according to the fire chief's

annual report, down from 13 the previous year and 12 in 2023.

For current fire danger rating and restriction information, people should visit saltspringfire.com.

GULF ISLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Principal to step down

GISS' Massey excited about return to teaching roots

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The top administrator for the Gulf Islands' largest school says he's decided to step down from leadership — and is stepping back into the classroom.

Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS) principal Ryan Massey has officially requested the move and, according to Gulf Islands School District (SD64) superintendent Jill Jensen, will engage in a full-time teaching position effective this September.

In an email to the school community Thursday, April 30, Massey said the decision came with much reflection upon, and gratitude, for his 18 years of educational leadership — the last six of which have been at the high school on Salt Spring Island.

"I am proud of the work we have been part of at GISS," wrote Massey. "It is an amazing school, grounded in the values of learning, community and creativity, and I am thankful to have contributed to its growth alongside students, staff and families."

Massey said that as he looked to the "latter part" of his educational career, he felt a strong pull to the classroom, noting the "extraordi-

nary" level of dedication the principal role demands on one's capacity. The change, he said, will allow him more space for his own "growth, connections and experiences as an educator," while continuing to serve students in a purposeful, sustainable way.

"I am excited about this next phase of my career, and the chance to focus more directly on teaching and learning," wrote Massey. "I trust the district process will find an excellent next principal, and they will have my full support through the transition into next year."

Jensen said she joined the SD64 community in extending thanks to Massey for his years of service.

"During his time with the district, Mr. Massey has built strong relationships and shown a deep commitment to supporting students, staff and families," said Jensen. "His steady leadership, care and dedication have made a meaningful difference in the school community, and his contributions are greatly valued."

Jensen said she looked forward to continuing to work alongside Massey as he steps into his new role and wished him "every success in this next chapter of his professional journey."

The GISS principal position has been posted, according to district staff, and the review of applications the district receives will begin May 15. The new principal is expected to start in August.

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ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

'SSIRT' decision delayed to 2027

Trail system may take 'decades' once begun

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A \$300,000 slice of the regional budget already allocated to start a "missing link" pathway is now likely to sit idle well past next year, a consequence of uncertainty among officials as to whether the proposed Salt Spring Island Regional Trail (SSIRT) should be considered recreational or transportation-focused.

That distinction matters, at least to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, who have presided over considerable administrative friction on a long-imagined 21-kilometre bicycle and pedestrian route that would run from Fulford Harbour to Ganges, then on to Vesuvius — closing the last gap in a 186-kilometre regional network that connects trails in Victoria and the Cowichan Valley.

The CRD Board had allocated that funding for design work for SSIRT, and the CRD's Parks Committee — after an exhaustive multi-agency feasibility study concluded SSIRT represented a "significant opportunity" to enhance active transportation across Salt Spring — unanimously recommended the CRD Board refer "planning, implementation and operation" of all Gulf Islands regional trails to the nascent Transportation Committee.

The board did just that, but in January that committee referred the issue back to the board, largely over concerns SSIRT might be more recreational than transportation-oriented — and therefore less suited to be managed alongside \$53.5-million plans for widening and lighting on the Gallinip, Goose and Lochside trails.

Notwithstanding the 47-page SSIRT feasibility study report, the board agreed not to determine a designation without more information, and tasked CRD staff to return with their own report — on the "implications" of designating all Gulf Islands Regional Trails as regional trails under the transportation service.

Gulf Islands representatives seemed at their wits' end over the process.

"At this point in time, regional trails in the Gulf Islands are still under the auspices of regional parks, [while] regional trails in the Greater Victoria Area are under the transportation service," said Salt Spring CRD director Gary Holman at the CRD Board's Committee of the Whole meeting Wednesday, April 29.

"Residents on the Southern Gulf Islands don't have any access to convenient, green, affordable multi-modal transportation at all."

ROBERT FAWCETT
SGI Alternate CRD Director

"So when we talk about a regional plan, and a regional service, and a regional commission — do staff believe that we can resolve what are silos at this point, in terms of regional trail management within the CRD?"

Salt Spring property owners are expected to contribute some \$175,000 this year to support the CRD's Regional Transportation Service, roughly \$26 per average residential property. If managed by that service, Holman has said, SSIRT would be the first local manifestation of a tangible benefit for Salt

Spring; Holman, along with the island's Local Community Commission (LCC), had opposed being part of the new service at all, given Salt Spring's extant self-funded transit service.

CRD general manager Kevin Lorette reiterated staff were performing the work asked of them by directors, and expected that report on implications — covering issues such as land authority and construction standards — will be part of the update to the Regional Transportation Plan, being brought to the board in September 2027. At that point, the board presumably will consider again how it wants to designate Gulf Islands regional trails.

Southern Gulf Islands alternate director Robert Fawcett said he had concerns about the pace of the process, and given the only complete section thus far is a two-kilometre stretch on Mayne Island, finishing the rest could take years.

"Currently, the residents on the Southern Gulf Islands don't have any access to convenient, green, affordable multi-modal transportation at all — so I'm really glad that we're looking at equity when we're doing this," said Fawcett. "If we look at how much we've built so far through the Regional Trails Plan, to get to all of the Gulf Islands and all of the sections, we're looking at many, many decades."

CRD regional planning and transportation senior manager Patrick Klassen clarified that a June transportation workshop will focus predominantly on "umbrella objectives" — broader vision and goals for the transportation service — with limited opportunities to discuss actions like how to define regional trails or how to build them out.

"There's quite a bit of time that lies ahead to develop the plan itself," said Klassen. "We are still in that earlier stage of developing the higher-level framework."

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PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

With Safe Boating Awareness Week just around the corner, Ganges Coast Guard members, from left, Ben Charlton, Evan Drinkwater, Shawn Isaac, Ross Judson and Jocelyn Lees pose with their rescue dummy Oscar and the Oscar flag, a maritime signal flag with a yellow and red design that indicates "man overboard." The crew was at the Emergency Preparedness Fair (part of Emergency Preparedness Week) held outside and near the Ganges Fire Hall on Saturday, May 9. See page 12 for more photos from the fair and other community events.

SALT SPRING ISLAND FIRE RESCUE

Complete burn ban arrives early

Vigilance needed for predicted dry, hot months

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A comprehensive burn ban that went into effect across all of B.C.'s southern coast May 7 is the earliest in history, according to officials, and Salt Spring's fire department is gearing up for what has all the ingredients to become a record-breaking fire season.

Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue Deputy Chief Dale Lundy confirmed the district is following the broader regional ban on burning that came through the BC Wildfire Service. Apart from an exclusion in the Haida Gwaii Forest District

that, for the moment, still allows recreational campfires, the entire Coastal Fire Centre region is prohibiting fires of all sizes on both public and private land, an effort to prevent human-caused wildfires and protect public safety, officials said.

"It's here, and probably [remaining in effect] until October," said Lundy. "We're hoping that will minimize the people-caused fires, and that'll take a little bit of stress off our resources."

At press time May 11, so far more than 4,600 acres have burned province-wide since April 1, according to the BC Wildfire Service, with nearly 34 fires burning 350 acres inside the Coastal Fire

Centre region.

In addition to campfires and open burning, use of fireworks, sky lanterns, burn barrels or burn cages, binary exploding targets, air curtain burners, Tiki (and similar) torches and chimineas is also prohibited. This prohibition does not include the use of stoves used outdoors for "cooking, heat or ambiance," according to wildfire regulations, which burn charcoal briquettes, liquid or gaseous fuel, and have a flame height less than 15 cm tall.

Anyone who lights, fuels or uses an open fire

BURN BAN continued on 2

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YOUTH

Dancers excel at spring competitions



PHOTO COURTESY JEN SOO

Salt Spring dancers trained by instructor Jen Soo with recently won awards are, from left, Eva Ilynhk, Isla Maruca-Alaire, Ivy Hennessey, Isla Ashall, Athena Dragland, Harlow Kazakoff and Gia Van Riel.

Whole group and individuals impress judges

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE

Salt Spring Island dancers are celebrating an outstanding competition season after strong results at two major Vancouver Island dance competitions this spring.

The dancers, who train together under instructor Jen Soo — owner of Studio North Dance Academy and Stage West School of Performing Arts — proudly represented Salt Spring Island among studios from across Vancouver Island and the mainland. Dancers featured in the group performances include Athena Dragland, Gia Van Riel, Isla Maruca-Alaire, Isla Ashall, Ivy Hennessey, Eva Ilynhk and Harlow Kazakoff.

Competing at VersaStyle Dance Competition at the Tidemark Theatre in Campbell River in mid-April and the April 28 to May 3 Euphoria Dance Competition at the Port Theatre in Nanaimo, the group earned numerous overall placements, special awards and adjudicator recognition.

Dragland achieved multiple top honours for her ballet solo Blue Bird, includ-

ing First Overall Soloist placements, Top Score Grand Overall, an Emerald Standing award and an Adjudicator's Choice Award. Her solo was also invited to participate in the Emerald Cup as a special guest performance.

Van Riel received overall solo placements for her ballet solo By Night at both competitions and also earned an Adjudicator's Choice Award for outstanding performance.

The lyrical group Not About Angels, featuring the full Salt Spring Island team, earned top overall group placements at both events, including First Place Top Scoring Group at Euphoria with an Emerald Standing award. The piece was also invited to perform in the Emerald Cup as a special guest performance.

The jazz group Boogie Shoes also earned a top overall group placement at VersaStyle.

"The dancers worked hard this season and had a really strong competition run," said Soo. "It was great to see them perform with confidence and represent Salt Spring Island so well."

The dancers will next perform at the Community Dance Showcase at ArtSpring on June 5, where audiences will have the opportunity to see several of the award-winning routines performed live.

ENVIRONMENT

CARL becomes society

Maxwell watershed work attracts research partners

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

As of April 2, Salt Spring Island's Climate Adaptation Research Lab (CARL) has become an independent registered society and is expanding its applied scientific work — efforts that are attracting the best sort of attention, according to CARL Society president Ruth Waldick, who gave the nascent nonprofit's inaugural annual report for the North Salt Spring Waterworks District (NSSWD) board Thursday, April 30.

Supporting its goals to build wildfire resilience and improve water quality in the Maxwell Lake watershed through riparian habitat restoration, Waldick said the group's transition "out from under" Transition Salt Spring was just the sort of launching that nonprofit was designed to do — and the new non-member CARL Society is focused on applying what it's learned, quite literally, on the ground.

"I think what we've done is create a living laboratory," said Waldick. "We had a lot of activity in the field, and a lot of partnerships, both on the fire risk reduction side and the hydro-logic; I'd say we really have found ourselves in a groove."

Of particular interest to NSSWD trustees was a three-year wetland restoration effort near Rippon Creek, largely funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada. Waldick said the work covered more than six acres, an area where erosion and sedimentation along Mount Maxwell Road had been identified as major problems — and for the water district, improving what flows into Salt Spring's lakes makes for less work for treatment plants.

"This was a wetland restoration, but really with the major objective being to reduce sedimentation and erosion," said Waldick. "That also had high community engagement, and had us working with the Ministry [of Transportation and Transit] on modifications along the road."

Between the installation of sediment traps and other erosion-control features along the road and creek corridor — including more than 50 volunteers planting 750-plus community-donated plants — Waldick said the result has been encouraging; much of the material that had been running off the roadway with every rainfall is now being captured before it reaches the wetland.

CARL's wildfire-risk work is also expanding, Waldick said, and the organization has recruited UBC's Lori Daniels, whom she called "the top fire ecologist in the province." Daniels will be working with CARL for the next three years, with a goal to produce a fire behaviour model and fuel classification system for the "Coastal Douglas-fir moist marine maritime zone" — two things Waldick said don't exist yet, drawing broader interest from Simon Fraser University, the BC Wildfire Service and Indigenous fire keepers.

"It's kind of cutting edge," said Waldick. "There's a lot of interest in the fuel management and the strategic approach to fire risk reduction we're looking at in the watershed," said Waldick.

"I think what we've done is create a living laboratory."

RUTH WALDICK
Scientist and CARL Society president

Community involvement remains central to CARL's efforts, Waldick said, with volunteers and local organizations helping reduce costs and boost capacity. She also pointed to growing educational partnerships, particularly an ongoing program with Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS).

"What's been amazing is that we're getting increased enrolment year over year," said Waldick. "For next year we have a really refined, excellent program designed. I think this is really becoming part of the [GISS] curriculum for Grade 11 and 12."

Waldick said CARL's future priorities include water catchment and water retention in the watershed, along with ongoing water quality and fire-related work. She said CARL expects to finalize data-sharing terms and build a new work plan with regional partners in the coming months.

To read CARL's full report visit northsaltspring-waterworks.ca/maxwell-watershed-project.

Smoke sightings should be reported

BURN BAN
continued from 1

Anyone who lights, fuels or uses an open fire when a fire prohibition is in place or fails to comply with an open fire prohibition may be issued a ticket for \$1,150 or, if convicted in court, be fined up to \$100,000 and/or sentenced to one year in jail. If the contravention causes or contrib-

utes to a wildfire, the person responsible may be subject to a penalty of up to \$100,000 and ordered to pay all fire-fighting and associated costs, according to the Coastal Fire Centre.

"When a burn ban is in effect, people are mostly conscientious," said Lundy. "We've had a few minor incidents, and we try to give people the benefit of the doubt. But it's just

so dry right now." Lundy said complaints about prohibited burning ideally should come to the department's non-emergency line at 250-537-2531 rather than 911, although he added they'll get the message passed along from emergency dispatchers. "But you know what, if anyone sees smoke, let us know either way," said Lundy, "and we'll check it out."



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Seen in the Community — a busy weekend on Salt Spring! Emergency Preparedness Fair, Men's Shed Public Event and Tsunami Circus' Undertow show.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Emergency Management Salt Spring Island team members Colin Medhurst (deputy) and Amy McLeod (pod program lead) with information at the Emergency Preparedness Fair Saturday.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue Assistant Fire Chief Ken Akerman gets an electrocardiogram administered by Emergency Health Services personnel, from left, Tina Vasarab, paramedic supervisor, and primary care paramedics Grace Tsang and Jason Grindler at Saturday's fair.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Firefighter Bree Herbert demonstrates rescue knots at the same event, which was held for the last time in front of the Ganges Fire Hall.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Seen at Saturday's Men's Shed Public Event and Tools Talk are, from left, group member John Newton, vice president Remi Vuichard and president Matthew Quetton. The group has an estimated 60 active members and more than 300 on an email list.



PHOTO BY CASI LITTLE

Lucy Dagenais, left, and Layla Powers in the Tsunami Circus Undertow show that thrilled crowds at the Salt Spring Island Multi Space gymnasium from May 7 to 9.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Local BC Hydro operations manager Stefan Peters with safety gear like rubber gloves and "hot sticks" that allow hydro workers to handle power lines.

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