

## Update on Southern Gulf Islands Food and Agriculture Strategy process

We have essentially completed the technical phase which saw the creation and review of the Agricultural Land Use Inventory maps and the outputs from runs of the Agricultural Water Demand Model. Both of these items are with the Ministry of Agriculture for final review and finalization.

Phase two was launched in early November with a Steering Committee meeting on Mayne Island. This meeting was held to reinvigorate the energy and work toward the building of the Strategy. A specific workshop exercise was done to help the members identify trends (positive or negative) that are or will influence our food and agriculture economies on the islands. From this exercise we identified desired outcomes for food and agriculture either at the local or SGI region level. This was a precursor of a gathering held in Sidney November 21 for a larger group representing the island communities, interested First Nations, CRD and Salt Spring Island. 24 people were in attendance.

The Sidney session benefitted from hearing stories from Anne Macey, Salt Spring Island Farmers Alliance; Peggy Bill, San Juan County Agricultural Resources Committee and representatives of the Tsartlip and Tsawout First Nations groups.

The stories provided inspiring examples of successful implementation of food and agricultural strategic actions. The First Nations engagement process will inform the Strategy by moving its purview to the marine realm.

The path forward from this gathering is that over the next few months each island coordinator will host in-community gatherings of interested parties. The purpose is to broaden the engagement representation of interests on each island, share local insights and knowledge identify core strategies for each community as well as the SGI region that will provide a series of actions toward a food and agriculture future for the region.

The target for a draft of the strategy is Spring 2016.

Other matters of note is the [growingislands.com](http://growingislands.com) website is continuing to evolve and it presently has all the documents to date as well as a draft of the a new document the Market Opportunities Assessment. This document is part of the second phase and provides a look at the factors the currently drive our food and agriculture economy and also highlights possible opportunities to grow this economy. Please take a look a [www.growingislands.com](http://www.growingislands.com)

In concert with the market assessment two stakeholder surveys have been completed - one by the Pender Island Farmers Institute that targeted growers and producers and the other by our consultant team targeting a broader spectrum of home gardeners, restaurateurs, growers, value added food producers and consumers among others. The results of both will inform the market assessment future drafts.

Michael Dunn

Chair, SGI Food and Agriculture Strategy Steering Committee