

2012

Community of Barnston Island

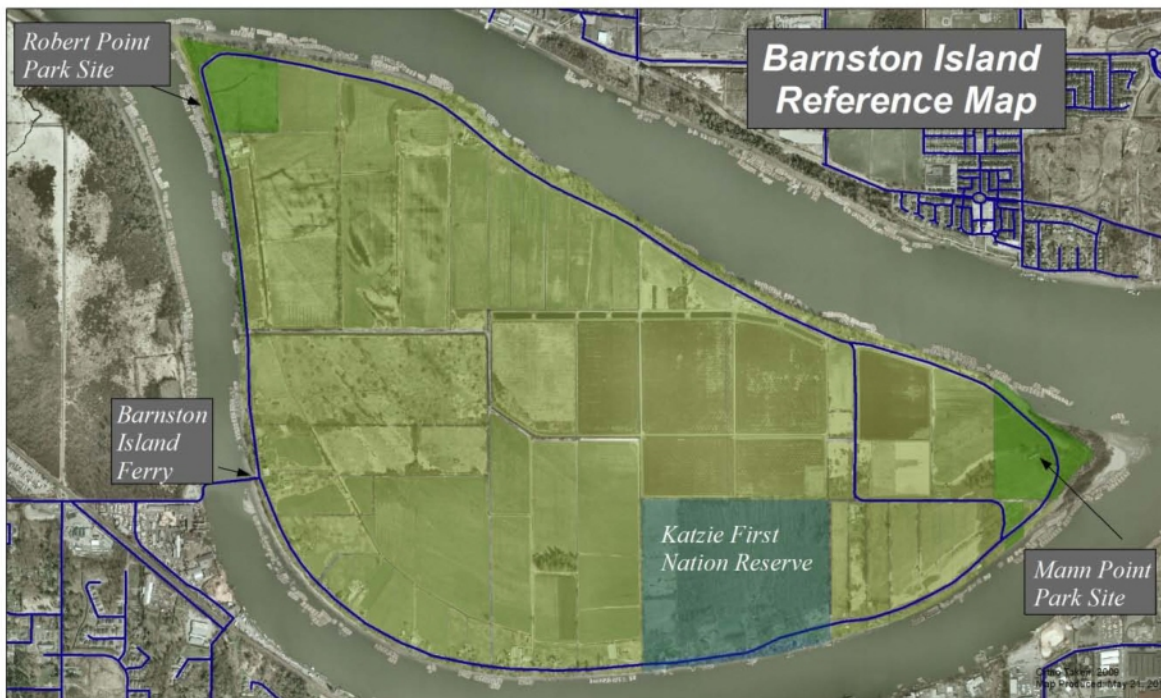


Tom Pearce
Metro Vancouver
5/25/2012

Part 1 - Profile

1. Background

Barnston Island is located in the Fraser River between Surrey and Pitt Meadows. The area of the Island is approximately 1,400 acres (567 ha). There are approximately 150 people who live on Barnston Island, with about one third located on the Katzie First Nation Reserve. There is a ten kilometre road that sits on top of the dike surrounding the Island.



There are 54 residences on Barnston Island, 16 are located on the Katzie First Nation reserve and 38 are located the rest of the Island. There are a number of buildings that are in a poor state of repair and are not being occupied. In recent years a number of demolition permits have been issued. Metro Vancouver is also working closely with land owners to try to resolve derelict vacant buildings.

The Katzie First Nation reserve has approximately 16 homes and 50 people. The Greater Vancouver Water District provides domestic water to the reserve through the City of Surrey. Sewer service is not provided to the Island.

Properties on Barnston Island had a total assessed value of approximately \$18,000,000 based on the 2011 assessment role. The dike and associated ditches as well as a small pump station are currently maintained by the Barnston Island Diking District comprising local property owners/residents.



Painted River Farm, Barnston Island

2. History

Located within the traditional territory of the Katzie First Nation, Barnston Island was settled by Europeans in the mid 1800's. The Island was named after George Barnston, a Hudson's Bay Company clerk, who travelled with fur trader James McMillan who founded Fort Langley in 1827.

The Islands' first known dike was built in the early 1900's. There was a breach of the dike during the flood of 1948 which was subsequently repaired. Approximately 820 metres of the dike is through the Katzie First Nation Reserve, which is Federal Government jurisdiction.



Air Photo 1949

In 2005, there was a major application for exclusion of farm land from the Agriculture Land Reserve to the Agricultural Land Commission and Metro Vancouver. The application was not supported, in part because of the excellent agricultural land on the Island.

3. Ferry Access

The ferry is jurisdiction of the province. The service is contracted out to a private operator. The ferry has the capacity for three to four vehicles and there is no charge for the ferry. The ferry operates 6:15AM to 11:45PM Monday to Thursday and 6:15AM to 12:45AM Friday to Sunday. Vehicles can drive straight onto to the ferry on the Surrey side but vehicles must back onto the ferry on the Barnston Island side.



Barnston Island Ferry

4. Roads

The Ministry of Transportation has jurisdiction for all roads on Barnston Island. The roads are maintained by a private contractor which also mows the grass on either side of the road twice per year. The road distance around the Island is 10 kilometers. With the exception of short stretch of road across the middle of the Island, the road sits on top of the dike.

5. Planning and Building Regulation for the Island

Metro Vancouver provides planning and building regulations for the Island except the Katzie First Nation reserve. The Island is also located within the Agriculture Land Reserve. The Island is zoned agriculture (BI-1) with a park site at both the western and eastern tips of the Island. The first zoning bylaw for the Island came into effect in 2005 with minimum lot sizes of 20 hectares and continues today. There are a number of lots which pre-date the first Zoning Bylaw and are considered legal non-conforming.

The Island has no Official Community Plan however the Island is covered by the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) adopted in July of 2011. Under the RGS all private lands are designated Agriculture and the parks sites are designated Conservation and Recreation.

Metro Vancouver also provides Building Inspections services for new construction and demolitions. Over the last five years Metro Vancouver has issued three demolition permits and two building permits for construction of outbuildings.

6. Agricultural Land

Historically there were as many as eleven dairy farms on the Island. The primary crops on Barnston Island today include cranberries and hay. Barnston Island fields produce as many as four crops of hay per year. Other significant farms include a dairy operation, herb farm operation and a beef farm. There are also hobby farms with sheep, goats and horses.



Bradner Farms supplying Avalon Dairy, Barnston Island

7. Dike Status and Flooding

The dike and associated ditches as well as a small pump station are currently maintained by the Barnston Island Diking District comprising local property owners / residents. It has a limited operating budget funded through an \$11-13 per acre levy on properties, which generates approximately \$15,000 per year. Most maintenance work is done by volunteers who live on the Island.

Typically, the Fraser River has its highest water in the spring during what's called the "freshet". This is also the time when Barnston is most susceptible to flooding.

8. Metro Vancouver Regional Park Land

Metro Vancouver owns regional park land at two locations on Barnston Island. These land holdings are part of an extensive regional park system that encompasses 13,800 hectares and 33 sites throughout the Lower Mainland between Bowen Island and Abbotsford.

At the downstream (west) end of Barnston Island, Robert Point Rest Area provides a stopping point with washrooms and picnic tables for cyclists and hikers visiting the Island. At the upstream (east) end of the Island, land has recently been acquired at Mann Point. This land has no facilities to serve public use at present, and in fact, steps had to be taken to block unwanted vehicle access to the shoreline which was causing environmental damage. The two land areas total 67 acres (27 ha).

Regional park land was acquired to serve the needs of recreational visitors, especially cyclists, who by the mid 1990's, were already coming to the Island in numbers and who had no public places where they could safely and conveniently stop, have access to washrooms, approach the water and enjoy river views.

Metro Vancouver operates Robert Point Rest Area as walk-in or cycle-in only, that is, no car parking is provided. This approach respects the limited capacity of the ferry. Robert Point is maintained and cleaned by Metro Vancouver uniformed staff on a once a day to twice a week to daily basis, depending on the season, and security is provided regularly into the evening between May and September.

Both park sites on Barnston Island include important Fraser River riparian and aquatic components which are valuable habitat for fish and wildlife. Both sites also contain agricultural land that is licensed, or in the process of being licensed, for continued agricultural use. This blend of uses will continue into the foreseeable future.



Robert Point Rest Area, Barnston Island

Recreational visitor counts for Barnston Island show that about 14,000 people per year visit the Island and use has remained stable over the past few years. The majority of visitors are cyclists. The counts are provided annually by the ferry operators.

9. Fire Protection and Emergency Services

There is no fire protection on the Island. In 2005, there was a referendum on the Island which asked if residents would be in favour of establishing a fire suppression service area with the costs of operating that service recovered from the residents of Barnston Island by way of a property tax or a combination of property tax and a fee for service. The official results noted 21 in favour and 36 against. There were also two service delivery options considered: a volunteer fire department and a fee for service agreement with the City of Surrey.

Metro Vancouver provides wildland fire suppression to all areas of the Electoral Area including Barnston Island. Based in the north-east sector; this team works with supporting agencies and residents to extinguish forest fires and grass fires in the Electoral Area. Metro Vancouver also provides Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner services including inspections and investigations of all fires.

Metro Vancouver also provides coordination and support during emergencies such as flooding or earthquakes. Metro Vancouver has an emergency plan in place to address flooding on Barnston Island should the need arise.

The Surrey RCMP detachment provides policing services to the Island and so does the BC Ambulance service.

10. Open Fires

Open fires are permitted on Barnston so long as the material originates from the land on which it is being burned. The owner or the occupier must also check the Metro Vancouver open burning advisory hotline each morning they wish to burn. Owners and occupiers must also ensure there is not a provincial open burning prohibition and that they are at least 100m from residences. In addition, smoke must not pose a hazard at airports or on provincial highways.

11. Garbage and Recycling

There is no civic garbage collection on Barnston. Most residents take their garbage and recycling to Port Kells transfer station in Surrey. There are however a number of privately contracted bins, one on the Katzie reserve and one at Apollo Cranberries.

Part 2 - Issues

1. Barnston Island Park Management Plan

A Park Management Plan for regional park land on Barnston Island was started in 2009 when the planning process for nearby Surrey Bend Regional Park commenced. However, this effort was put on hold due to availability of staff resources. Staff are now assessing the timing of the Barnston Island park planning process. A park plan would deal with the use of park land within the context of the Island community.

2. Farming Viability and Land Speculation

Some farmers on the Island have questioned viability of farming on the Island. Ferry access to the island adds complexity for farm businesses particularly those that depend on frequent deliveries and pickups. There is also a truck size limitation for the Ferry which limits the largest transport trucks from coming to the Island, requiring more frequent smaller trucks.

Currently, two developers own a number of land holdings on Barnston Island. Over the years, there have been various development proposals put forward including an amusement park, a racetrack, even a university campus, a golf course and more recently conversion to industrial land.

3. Proposed Dike Transfer

In December 2008, the Province announced that the *Drainage, Ditch, and Dike Act* would be repealed as of December 31, 2010 (since extended to December 31, 2012) – the result being the transfer of the Barnston dike and drainage facilities from the Province to Metro Vancouver and the dissolution of the Barnston Island Diking District. This change would also affect dikes within the City of Coquitlam, City of Surrey, and Township of Spallumcheen. These municipalities also have concerns regarding the transfer of these facilities and associated costs and liabilities and prefer continued provincial responsibility for the dikes.

The Province has promised to work with local governments to complete a comprehensive assessment of the diking district prior to any transfer of diking authority responsibilities. However, to date no specific commitments to complete and fund a technical assessment of the dike or any other work have yet been received. Attempts by Metro Vancouver to resolve this with Ministry staff and elected officials have not provided a satisfactory conclusion. Serious issues remain unresolved including:

- Physical repairs and upgrades required to the dike.
- Legal right-of-ways for the dike.
- Maintenance agreement with the Ministry of Transportation for the road and dike interface.
- Insufficient property tax base and population to fund substantial upgrades to the diking facilities.
- Diking District facilities and drainage ditches are partially located on private lands which are not secured by registered right-of-ways.

- There was no legal authority granted to the Province or the federal government for construction of the dike across the Reserve. Active Katzie First Nation claim was filed in 1993 with respect to “alleged unlawful dykes on Katzie I.R. No. 1 and Katzie I.R. No. 3, resulting in an illegal trespass and damages”.
- Legal agreement with respect to maintenance of the water utility lines within the dike on the reserve.

Metro Vancouver can only responsibly consider accepting the transfer of the Barnston Island Diking District facilities after a complete technical assessment study and all necessary physical upgrades have been completed, along with securing necessary legal right-of-ways, and with full indemnity against any liabilities towards Metro Vancouver in the event of a dike failure or flood.

From: Amos, Deanna M IRR:EX(Deanna.M.Amos@gov.bc.ca)
To: Wrean, Alissa IRR:EX (Alissa.Wrean@gov.bc.ca)
Subject: FW: FYI: Katzie IR and Barnston Island
Sent: 01/18/2021 19:17:27

FYI

From: Dyck, Heinz IRR:EX <Heinz.Dyck@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: January 18, 2021 10:01 AM
To: Johnsrude, Allan N FLNR:EX <Allan.Johnsrude@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: King-Scobie, Cher FLNR:EX <Cher.KingScobie@gov.bc.ca>; Mynen, Tonianne FLNR:EX <Tonianne.Mynen@gov.bc.ca>; Amos, Deanna M IRR:EX <Deanna.M.Amos@gov.bc.ca>; Gale, Stuart IRR:EX <Stuart.Gale@gov.bc.ca>; Harvie, Christie IRR:EX <Christie.Harvie@gov.bc.ca>; Perry, Katelyn IRR:EX <Katelyn.Perry@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: FYI: Katzie IR and Barnston Island

Thanks for the heads up, Allan.

Copying Stuart and the rest of the Katzie team so they are in the loop as well.

HD

From: Johnsrude, Allan N FLNR:EX <Allan.Johnsrude@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: January 15, 2021 4:33 PM
To: Dyck, Heinz IRR:EX <Heinz.Dyck@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: King-Scobie, Cher FLNR:EX <Cher.KingScobie@gov.bc.ca>; Mynen, Tonianne FLNR:EX <Tonianne.Mynen@gov.bc.ca>; Amos, Deanna M IRR:EX <Deanna.M.Amos@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FYI: Katzie IR and Barnston Island

Heinz,

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If anything that comes up related to this in your discussions, we can be included to support the conversation.

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