**To:** Judith Shaw, President of the Ruxton Island Home Owners Association
**From:** Sarah Keller, Ruxton Island Resident, Co-owner of Kraken Water Taxi & Diving Services Ltd.
**Date:** October 7, 2016
**Subject:***Proposal For Determining The Impact Of Building Docks On Ruxton Island*

**Introduction**

Whether docks should be implemented on Ruxton Island is a long standing argument among island residents. While some residents believe that docks will increase theft of household items such as fridges and generators and destroy the delicate marine environment in such bays as North Bay and Herring Bay, other residents believe that the implementation of docks will better regulate the placement of mooring buoys and will create artificial reefs for marine wildlife living in the waters surrounding Ruxton Island.

The Ruxton Island Home Owners Association, as well as other government bodies on Decourcey Island, Gabriola Island, and Thetis Island have long valued the safe, ecofriendly environment of the Southern Gulf Islands. A number of bylaws initiated by Thetis Island Trust have sustained this environment. It is important to identify Ruxton Island as the last remaining Island without docks in the Cowichan District, and to examine both the benefits and the consequences of possible dock implementation.

**Statement of Problem**

While the Ruxton Island Home Owners Association has addressed the issue of building docks in the past, there has been a lack of research employed as to whether or not docks would be beneficial to the residents of Ruxton Island. The Ruxton Island Home Owners Association mainly focuses on fundraising for fire prevention utilities, land use, upkeep of walking trails and wells, and environmental sustainability. As a governing body it lacks the capacity for the implementation of research because its representatives do not live on Ruxton Island on a full time basis. The cost of research also has to be taken into account as the only a small portion of the fees from members of the Ruxton Island Home Owners Association could be spared.

**Proposed Solution**

One of the possible solutions to the problem of whether docks on Ruxton Island would be environmental sustainable would be to do an environmental survey of the shipwreck in Herring Bay, of the seafloor at Pirates Cove Dock on Decourcey Island and Pages Resort Dock on Gabriola Island. The boat in Herring Bay was abandoned in 2010 and sits half submerged in high tide. A survey of the vessel would determine whether it has stimulated or deterred wildlife it was abandoned. The other two places mentioned above are docks, but while Pirates Cove only receives seasonal traffic, Pages Resort receives year round traffic and its ecosystem is possibly more disturbed. This will help clarify the argument as to whether docks are environmentally sustainable.

Another solution would be to interview residents of Ruxton Island, Decourcey Island, and Gabriola Island about the threat of thievery on their island homes due to docks. This will help facilitate an understanding of the benefits and consequences of docks on small rural islands.

**Scope**

To assess the feasibility of a potential dock implementation on Ruxton Island, I plan to pursue the following areas of inquiry:

1. What steps has the Ruxton Island Home Owners Association taken to research the implementation of docks?
2. What is the level of awareness that residents of Ruxton Island have toward its environmental sustainability?
3. How many residents have been robbed on Ruxton Island which has no docks, compared to Decourcey Island which has docks within the last five years?
4. How high is the demand for docks on Ruxton Island?
5. What are the most feasible and economical options for building docks on Ruxton island?
6. Are there any additional ways to organize mooring buoy installation without the implementation of docks?
7. How have docks influenced the environments of Decourcey Island and Gabriola Island compared to Ruxton Island?

**Methods**

I will conduct surveys with participants from the Ruxton Island Home Owners Association, Decourcey Island Home Owners Association, and residents of Gabriola Island. The surveys will be one of the primary sources of feedback towards the level of concern about the threat thievery connected to docks and environmental awareness about docks.

I will also consult my qualified diving team to do environmental surveys of the ship wreck in Herring Bay on Ruxton Island, Pirates Cove on Decourcey Island, and Pages Resort on Gabriola Island. It is important to survey multiple docks because each dock is polluted based upon the amount of boats that it receives. While Pages Resort holds many boats, Pirates Cove holds comparatively few. The ship wreck receives little boat traffic near it whatsoever and will provide a control (an observation designed to minimize the effects of variables other than the independent variable – in this case pollution) for the other two surveys. If Ruxton Island were to have docks built, it would have less pollution than both Pirates Cove and Pages Resort because it would receive less boat traffic.

**My Qualifications**

I have been a resident of Ruxton Island for four years and have become familiar with the argument among residents about whether to build docks. I co-own the only water taxi travelling to Ruxton Island, Decourcey Island and Gabriola Island, as well as Cedar on Vancouver Island. My business also provides diving services by a highly skilled team of divers and that gives me the capability to use their experience for this project.

**Conclusion**

The argument about whether or not docks should be built on Ruxton Island has taken up too much valuable time without enough action. By researching the impact that docks would have on Ruxton Island and addressing the seven areas of inquiry that I mentioned earlier, I can put the argument to rest and the Ruxton Island Home Owners Association can either get to work on dock plans or will have no need to bring up the issue again. With your approval I would like to begin my research at once.