March 1, 2020

Dear members, supporters, and partners,

For nearly two decades, I have been privileged to lead Friends of the San Juans and work with you to achieve many incredible accomplishments. It is with gratitude and optimism that I share with you that I am moving on after nearly 19 years as Executive Director.

When I joined Friends, it was a small local grassroots organization dedicated to the environmental stewardship of the San Juan Islands. What caught my eye about Friends was that it was uniquely positioned in the Salish Sea and wasn’t afraid to use science, education, advocacy, and citizen action to protect an incredibly unique place.

It has been a remarkable tenure for me and I am honored to have led Friends of the San Juans as it evolved to become a regional leader uniquely positioned to shape public policy for land-use planning and marine conservation.

Last year’s 40th Anniversary celebrations allowed us to raise our hands and honor each of you who participated in the conservation of these islands and the Salish Sea. We have done so much together – like increasing public awareness of and support for oil spill prevention, protecting and restoring forage fish spawning beaches and salmon rearing habitat, and leading land-use advocacy efforts that protect thousands of feet of shoreline and wetland habitat, forests, farmland, wildlife, and livability in the San Juans. Our outreach in both Washingtons and British Columbia, Canada, have made an impact on local, state, and federal decision makers.

All of this work has been done with the engagement and input of thousands of people who live, work, and recreate in the San Juan Islands. I am proud of our ability to make an impact at meetings, hearings, and in comment letters to protect our home, our environment, and our economy. Sometimes this work is thankless and difficult to fund. But the achievements that come
from working together with islanders, scientists, academics, non-profits, local, state, federal and tribal leaders, businesses and students has made it possible to protect what we all love.

It has been an honor to work in these islands, with so many incredible people, in service to this special place. Your generous support to the mission of Friends of the San Juans and the next generations has always been one of my greatest sources of inspiration. Because of you, this organization remains strong and resilient.

I know that the next leader of Friends will take us into a new chapter of our organization. I can’t wait to see what Friends will accomplish in the next 20 years.

Sincerely,

Stephanie L. Buffum