

Resilient Saanich Environmental Policy Framework

In November 2017, Saanich Council directed that an Environmental Policy Framework be developed to serve as a framework for Saanich environmental policies and programs. Subsequently, a technical committee of natural resource practitioners and specialists was selected and asked to develop goals and objectives for the policy framework. The following is the initial result of that work. It starts with consideration of the Vision for Saanich as provided in the Official Community Plan¹, and then specifies the vision, guiding principles, goals and objectives of an overarching Resilient Saanich Environmental Policy Framework. These are to be reflected in all that happens in Saanich; they are intended to promote the level of meaningful structural change necessary for the District and the communities it supports to become more resilient, inclusive and effective in adapting to climate change, biodiversity loss, pandemics and other environmental challenges that might arise.

Framework Vision:

By 2030, coordinated efforts by all in Saanich/WSÁNEĆ yield measurable improvements in climate change resilience, habitat conservation, watershed health and ecological footprint, benefiting all those who share and inhabit our community.

Framework Guiding Principles²:

1. Recognize the intrinsic value of nature;
2. Respect Indigenous knowledge and land uses;
3. Consider future generations;
4. Ensure evidence-based³ decision making;
5. Adopt the precautionary principle when facing knowledge gaps;
6. Build upon foundational knowledge of historical land use;
7. Lead by example through innovation and best practices;
8. Look beyond our borders to achieve results at a bioregional scale;
9. Address climate adaptation and mitigation in all that we do;
10. Work in partnership with diverse interests to achieve outcomes that realize multiple values and benefits;

Framework Goals⁴:

1. Protect, restore and enhance the ecological function and biological diversity of Saanich.

¹ The vision from the OCP: “Saanich is a model steward working diligently to improve and balance the natural and built environments. Saanich restores and protects air, land, and water quality, the biodiversity of existing natural areas and eco-systems, the network of natural areas and open spaces, and urban forests.”

² Principles are defined as cross-cutting values statements that will guide behaviour and decision-making within the Corporation of the District of Saanich including both elected officials and staff.

³ Supported by as much available and appropriate scientific data, models and research, Indigenous knowledge, historic and cultural documents.

⁴ Goal is defined as the outcome Saanich is looking for.

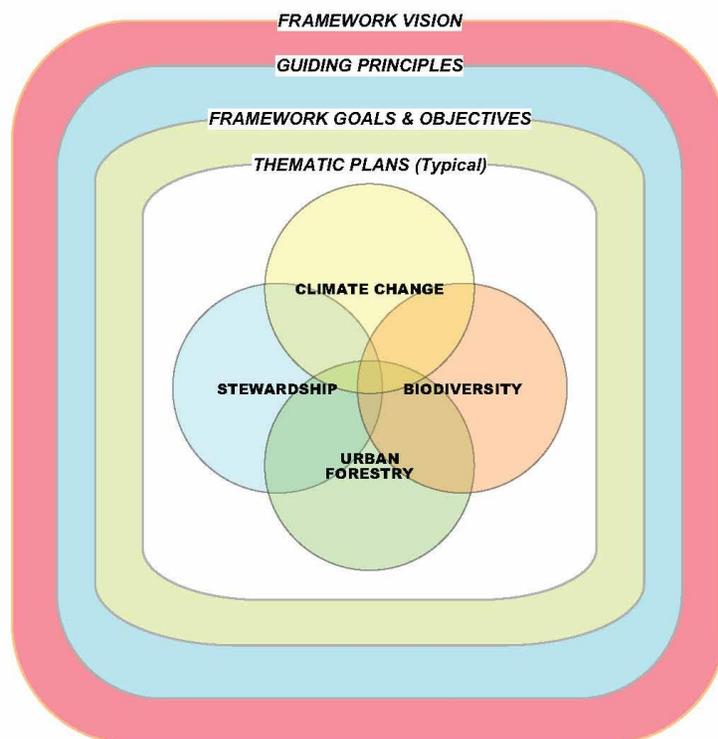
2. Develop and implement complimentary and coordinated policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives grounded in the overarching set of guiding principles to achieve the vision.

Framework Objectives⁵:

1. Fairly and effectively manage⁶ the natural and built environment to adapt to climate change, and enhance biodiversity and other essential ecosystem services;
2. Foster resistance and regenerative capacity (i.e., resilience) in our landscapes against escalating environmental shock and stressors;
3. Engage and support citizens in diverse approaches to active and beneficial stewardship;
4. Update bylaws and policies across all departments to be transparent and consistent with the Environmental Policy Framework.

Thematic Plans

The implementation of Saanich’s environmental policy framework will be outlined and developed in a series of thematic plans—one for each area of environmental focus or concern. These are nested within the overall vision, principles, goals and objectives of the policy framework as illustrated in the following graphic.



⁵ Objectives are defined as the purpose of actions intended to attain a desired goal

⁶ “Manage” encompasses protection, rehabilitation, enhancement, as well as planned development and managed use.

The Venn diagram above shows the various themes intersecting with one another. This intersection is intended to convey the way in which the different thematic areas influence and inform one another. Conservation of tree canopy, for instance, is a policy focus not just for urban forestry, but also for Climate Adaptation (e.g. cooling effect of shade on the urban heat island) and Biodiversity (e.g. species diversity and habitat provision).

Several Thematic Plans already exist, such as Saanich's plans for Climate Action, Urban Forest Management, Active Transportation and Agriculture and Food Security); others remain to be developed. The following is a preliminary list of thematic plans that the Committee is currently considering for the Environmental Policy Framework:

Climate Change

Biodiversity

Urban Forestry (includes soil and green space conservation)

Stewardship

Water Management (includes storm water and watershed health)

Land Use Planning & Development

Marine Shoreline

Saanich's Ecological Footprint

Agriculture (includes sustainable practice & food security)

Green Economy

Transportation (environmental aspects)

Governance and Administration (of environmental policies and service areas)

As indicated in the outline below, nested within each plan are the policies and program objectives that will make up Saanich's response to its diverse environmental challenges and opportunities. For its implementation, each plan also needs to set forth the strategies and tools it will adopt in pursuit of program objectives, along with an action plan.

TYPICAL OUTLINE OF A THEMATIC PLAN

(the outline can vary depending on the thematic plan)

1. Relevant Landscapes and Scales
2. Evaluation of ecosystem health and functional condition
3. Desired future condition
4. Gap analysis and SWOT assessment
5. Policies and program objectives
6. Strategies (approaches)
7. Tools
8. Action Plan (tasks, timelines, lead department, resources)
9. Monitoring and Assessment