

Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

Likely you know that we live in a special place here on south Vancouver Island. It is special for so many reasons, including the unique and rare ecosystem that occurs here. This ecosystem, known as the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone, covers just 0.3% of BC and, included in this zone, and even rarer, are our iconic Garry Oak ecosystems. It is here that many species at risk are found, including plants, insects and other invertebrates, vertebrates, and even fungi.

This rare Garry Oak ecosystem, stretches in a narrow band from Victoria around the east side of Vancouver Island up to Nanaimo, and includes the Gulf Islands and small pockets of the lower mainland. This is also where most of the population of Vancouver Island lives, which has resulted in significant changes in the original ecosystem and continues to put pressure on what is remaining. Land use changes, from urban development to agriculture, have reduced the remaining natural ecosystems. Invasive species, in addition to climate change, add extra pressure.

All of these factors point to the importance of a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy to lead the District's work and approach in how we want to manage, maintain, and enhance the remaining natural ecosystems. The intent of the Strategy is to identify priorities and lay out a path that acknowledges the difficult trade-offs that will need to be made as Saanich continues to grow.

In revoking the Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA) in 2018, Council directed staff to develop an Environmental Policy Framework that would include: the [Climate Plan \(2020\)](#), a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and enhanced stewardship opportunities. Council also created a technical committee, the [Resilient Saanich Technical Committee](#) (RSTC) consisting of local experts appointed to lead the initiative.

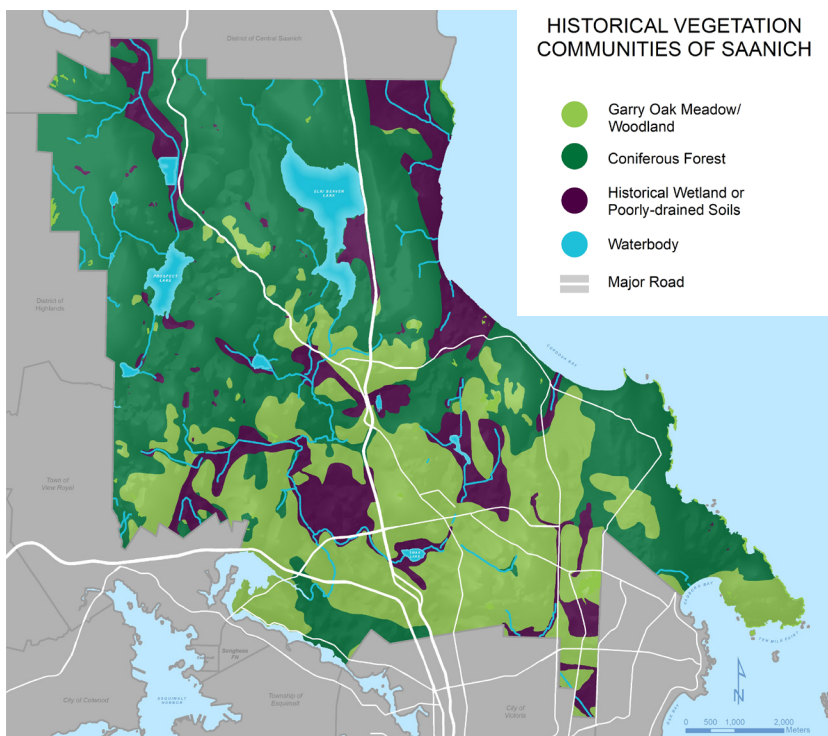
Saanich is developing its [Biodiversity Conservation Strategy](#) within the [Resilient Saanich initiative](#) (2020-2023), which is intended to guide the District's approach to maintaining, restoring and enhancing biodiversity. A [State of Biodiversity](#) Report is being developed by Diamond Head Consulting and will be available early winter. This snapshot, along with public engagement and expert advice, will provide information to inform the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. A draft strategy is anticipated in spring/summer 2023.

Recently, Saanich residents have had the opportunity to share information about urban forest and biodiversity locations they value or feel could be improved on an online mapping tool, "[StoryMap](#)".

The broader Resilient Saanich initiative is being led by the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee, supported by Saanich staff and consultants. In August 2022, Council received draft [principles and goals](#) for an Environmental Policy Framework along with a workplan for the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

In November, staff and the RSTC are meeting with [WSÁNEĆ](#) community members and the [WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council](#) to better incorporate their values into the Urban Forest Strategy and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

To stay informed, you can sign up for the [Resilient Saanich e-Bulletin](#) to learn about updates and public participation opportunities. You can also view updates and past e-Bulletins on our [Resilient Saanich Updates webpage](#). If you have any questions, please contact the Resilient Saanich staff team at biodiversity@saanich.ca.



All data displayed on this map is estimated from historical maps and data sources.

Map is intended for general reference purposes only and land designations may be inaccurate at large scale.