

MINUTES
NATURAL AREAS, PARKS AND TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams
770 Vernon Avenue
April 16, 2025 at 4:00 PM

In Attendance: Nathalie Chambers (Chair), Brian Wilkes (4:05 p.m.), David Little, Hollis Hodson, Julian Anderson (5:12 p.m.), Kathryn Bridge, Kathleen Woodruff, Kathy Humphrey (4:31 p.m.), Kim McIvor, Michelle Watt

Regrets: None

Guests: Cara Gibson, Executive Director, Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary; Emily Buccioni, Good Neighbours Stewardship Coordinator, Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT); Michael Moore, President, North Quadra Community Association

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager, Parks; Alix Link, Manager, Urban Forestry, Natural Areas and Community Stewardship; Renee Cenerini, Environmental Education Coordinator, Parks; Colton Whittaker, Committee Clerk

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by H. Hodson and Seconded by K. Bridge: “That the Minutes of the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee meeting held March 19, 2025, be adopted as circulated.”

RESULT: Carried 7 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Woodruff, Little, Chambers, Hodson, Bridge, McIvor, Watt

OPPOSED: None

ABSENT: Wilkes, Anderson, Humphrey

COMMITTEE BUSINESS ITEMS

CHAIRS REMARKS

The Chair welcomed committee members, and the following was noted:

- There are many environmental stewards in Saanich and establishing a formal stewardship program may be worth exploring.
- The committee will receive various presentations in the coming months and will prioritize them at a future meeting.
- There is interest in creating a year-end book featuring each committee member's personal connection to nature and how it has evolved over time.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOURS: SAANICH BIODIVERSITY PARTNERS PILOT PROJECT

The Environmental Education Coordinator, Saanich Parks and Good Neighbours Stewardship Coordinator, Habitat Acquisition Trust gave a presentation (PowerPoint on File), and the following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- The grant funding for this project was \$50,000.
- As a grant-funded pilot project, this initiative represents valuable work that has generated substantial community interest.
- As part of the pilot project, staff identified properties with natural habitats and engaged directly with landowners to encourage participation.

- Given the urban nature of the project, both smaller and larger lots were included.
- The project involved significant community engagement throughout.
- The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Implementation Plan notes that the Parks Division would like to see this project continue, however it would require ongoing funding support to do so.

The Environmental Education Coordinator and Good Neighbours Stewardship Coordinator exited the meeting at 4:38 p.m.

NORTH QUADRA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The President of the North Quadra Community Association gave a verbal presentation on Beckwith Park.

The following was noted during a verbal presentation:

- There is interest in renaming the pond area within the Beckwith Park to "Beckwith Pond."
- A soil processing yard is located on the north side of the pond. Soil contamination from this yard may be entering Beckwith Pond.
- The dams that contain the pond are currently not being maintained and are being considered for decommissioning.
- The dam licenses require a willing party to adopt them and assume dam maintenance (or removal) as required by the Dam Safety Regulation.
- Beckwith Pond is considered a valued natural feature by community members and is home to many mallard ducks and other species.
- Saanich is evaluating several options for the pond including fully decommissioning the dam, partially decommissioning the dam, or retaining the current water level, retaining the dam, and removing all surrounding trees.

The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- The Manager of Park Planning and Development will present further background and details to the committee at an upcoming meeting.
- The Province has indicated that June 30, 2025, is the deadline for submitting an action plan on this.
- The Dam Safety Regulation is the responsible Provincial authority for dam-related matters.
- There is interest from some community members in separating Beckwith Park from Beckwith Pond and reclassifying the pond area as a nature park.
- Parks rezoning needs are typically reviewed and updated every 5–10 years.
- Off leash dogs and fast-moving e-bikes have raised safety concerns for pedestrians using the park.
- The surrounding area is considered suitable for future densification, making the protection of the park and its biodiversity increasingly important.

The representatives from the North Quadra Community Association exited the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION CONCERNS IN PKOLS (MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK)

Michelle Watt gave a presentation on Ecological Degradation Concerns on PKOLS (Mount Douglas Park) (PowerPoint on File), and the following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Garry oak and oceanspray ecosystems in PKOLS are considered endangered.

- It may be worth exploring options such as designated use areas and fencing.
- While Garry oak ecosystems are naturally suited to some human presence, current levels of disruption have become unsustainable.
- Forest ecosystems in the area are highly sensitive to trampling.
- Clear messaging about the fragility of these ecosystems is essential.
- Educational efforts should begin at a young age, including programming in schools.
- Fostering a culture of conservation early in life is key to long-term ecological stewardship.

SWAN LAKE CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY

The Executive Director of the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary gave a presentation on the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary (PowerPoint on File), and the following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- The Capital Regional District (CRD) is currently developing a Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan.

FUTURE COMMITTEE ITEMS

The Committee discussed their baseline of nature and the environment, and the following was noted during roundtable discussion:

- Environmental stewardship is a priority, and efforts are underway to establish a regional wetland coalition.
- Enhancing accessibility to parks is important to help more people enjoy and connect with nature.
- Supporting opportunities for people to experience and learn about nature is a key goal.
- Volunteering in parks is seen as a valuable way to build community.
- Promoting both education and environmental protection is essential, as the two are closely connected.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by H. Hodson and **Seconded** by D. Little: “That the meeting be adjourned.”

RESULT: Carried 10 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Anderson, Woodruff, Little, Chambers, Hodson, Humphrey, McIvor, Watt, Wilkes, Bridge

OPPOSED: None

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE CLERK