

**MINUTES**  
**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers  
**October 20, 2021 at 6:02 pm**

Present: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau (Chair), Kevin Brown, Al-Nashir Charania, Braedan Drouillard, Karthik Narayan, George Klima and Anqian Wei.

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Adrienne Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; Rick Hatch, Assistant Supervisor Natural Areas; Katie Turner, Park Stewardship Coordinator; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk.

Regrets: Tiffany Joseph, Ryan Senechal and Jennifer Grant.

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### Minutes

**MOVED by A. Charania and Seconded by K. Brown: “That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held September 25, 2021, be adopted as amended.”**

**CARRIED**

### CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair gave an update on recent topics of interest, the following was noted:

- Members of the committee were invited to take part in a tour of Cuthbert Homes Park to view the recent enhancements to the area following the completion of the Highway 1/McKenzie interchange.
- The Saanich Environmental Awards will be announced at the Monday October 25, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, recipients were not invited to attend the meeting in person. An event will be held to recognize the winners of the 2020 and 2021 Environmental Awards in future.
- Applications for the 2022 committee appointments are now open. All members who wish to serve on the committee in 2022 will need to apply to do so. The deadline to submit an application is 4:30 p.m. on Friday November 5, 2021.
- The Chair had provided a memo related to item 5 on the agenda (the Proposed Cordova Bay Local Area Plan), which has been to the committee previously. This item is returning for discussion following the approval of the Housing Strategy. The committee consented that it would not be necessary to discuss this item in detail.

### INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM

Senior Manager of Parks introduced the Invasive Species Management Program and implementation in parks and on boulevards. The following was noted:

- Natural Intelligence is a program created by Saanich Staff, which is being implemented and encouraged in parks. The Invasive Species Program falls within the education, engagement and stewardship pillars of Natural Intelligence.

- The Natural Areas program is a relatively new program. Thanks to support from the Council and the community there has been significant growth in the past five years.
- The Environmental Services Department and Parks work together on the Natural Areas program, there are various bylaws, plans and policies which guide the work.
- The Invasive Species Strategy (ISS) of 2013 outlines guiding actions, from prevention to active management of priority invasive species, which are specifically outlined.
- When a priority invasive species is identified, work begins regionally to consult with the Province and start the early detection and rapid response (EDRR).
- The ISS is a broad program related to public and private land. There are many roles which involve Saanich staff from various departments, volunteers and the Province.
- The Natural Areas Section is responsible for EDRR of invasives on all public lands: parks, right of ways and boulevards. Natural Areas also supports the provincially funded Shiny Geranium program on public and private lands.
- Pulling Together Volunteer Program removes some EDRR invasive species in parks, as well as ongoing removal of high-impact plants like ivy, holly, daphne, himalayan blackberry and broom in natural area parks.
- Environmental Services work with landowners to eradicate priority species on private property, except for shiny geranium which is handled by Natural Areas.
- Bylaw Enforcement deals with noxious weeds bylaws and enforcement.
- Spending related to the management of invasive species has increased since 2015.
- There are currently over 500 sites which are being actively managed by staff for poison hemlock, yellow flag iris, purple loosestrife, knotweed, lesser celandine, garlic mustard, gorse and hogweed. There are 44 official Pulling Together volunteer projects, which target species such as holly, ivy, daphne, broom, and blackberry.
- New GIS layers are being created by Environmental Services to map these locations.
- Most removal work is done either manually by digging it out or mechanically.
- Herbicide use has been reduced in recent years due to environmental considerations.
- The Pulling Together Volunteer Program includes over 60 Lead Stewards, more than 150 registered volunteers, drop in community groups, approximately 44 projects, more than 15,000 volunteer hours per year, and \$140,000 in staff support per year.
- Staff support for Pulling Together ranges from operational staff removing the debris, plant and seed orders, training, maintaining tools, as well as volunteer management.
- The program has doubled in the past six years, however there are many demands and areas to address. There are many opportunities for growth if funding is increased.

In response to questions and comments from the committee, the following was noted:

- Overall, many areas are improving. Some volunteers have photos of restoration areas from years ago, the photos show that over time we can make a significant difference.
- There is lots of interests from the community to contribute to volunteer projects.
- Management of volunteers takes time, there is now help from recreation. Staff often needs to attend along with the volunteers, especially if youth volunteers are present.
- Ferndale Forrest has had extensive restoration, which is now significantly improved.
- On Mount Doug, the Glendenning Trail was a holly forest ten years ago. Volunteers have swept most of the Mount Doug area over the past couple decades.
- The removed biomass which goes to the landfill is minimal. Knotweed and hogweed need to be incinerated, the majority is composted if there are no berries or seeds.
- In some areas, it is possible to leave pulled materials on site to decompose naturally.
- Large woody debris is can be reused at small restoration sights around Saanich.
- The seeds of some species (such as poison hemlock) can stay in the soil for decades and sprout when conditions are suitable. Removal is a process over several years.
- Invasive species are happy anywhere, it is important to quickly re-plant exposed areas with native species and to work with Mother Nature. Some areas are becoming dryer, and some species are less resilient, we plant diverse species and hope for the best.

- There are over 100 sites currently being monitored/watered, which will continue for 3-5 years after planting to help the plants survive while the roots become established.
- Diversity is important, the more diverse an ecosystem is the healthier it is.
- There are specific goals and targets related to removal of the priority species, which are set through the regional committee. Saanich is a leader in the region.
- The measures of success when it comes to volunteers groups are more difficult to quantify. There are many goals such as removal, replanting and restoring. Many associated benefits of gathering and working together exist, but are less quantifiable.
- One measurable goal in the ISS was the creation of a new GIS layer. Data has been collected over the years, and is now being catalogued and input into the master data base. This will help determine where to focus efforts. There is also a new GIS analyst who will help make information more accessible for staff and to monitor changes.

## **CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSION ABOUT REDUCING SOLID WASTE THROUGH BUILDING DECONSTRUCTION**

The Manager of Sustainability provided information related to the discussion of deconstruction initiatives in Saanich. The following was noted:

- Saanich has implemented a Zero Waste Strategy, a program to provide rebates to residents who purchase an E-Bike, energy efficiency rebates and EV priorities.
- The City of Victoria will be implementing a bylaw in early 2022 related to deconstructing buildings rather than demolishing, details are not yet final.
- The community greenhouse gas calculations considers territorial and consumption based emissions. Transportation accounts for the highest percentage of emissions.
- There are some key differences between Saanich and Victoria, there are many scenarios where we are able to share resources and learn from one another.
- The Victoria bylaw will consider options to salvage reusable materials from building deconstruction, as well as ways to motivate and support the industry in doing so.
- The market capacity for salvaged materials is being considered, there has been consultation and engagement from the development industry to determine capacity.
- The report that is prepared by Victoria will help inform us on how to best proceed.
- Sustainability has had new positions added to help with strategic work.
- There is an opportunity for the committee to receive a presentation and updates on this topic as the work proceeds.

The following was noted during discussion with the committee:

- There is interest in incentivizing applications who choose to deconstruct and reuse existing buildings rather than demolishing them. This could potentially come in the form of shortened timelines/prioritization for the necessary permits.
- Incentives can complement regulations and policies really well.
- The Development Review Process is underway to shorten the timeline for developments, it would be possible to look at the deconstruction incentives idea.
- There is value in reclaiming old growth wood, as it is stronger and typically reuseable.
- Concrete can be recycled, recycling what has already been used would be beneficial.
- The Capital Regional District (CRD) has a new Solid Waste Management Plan, staff has brought forward short term actions to implement the plan, including the proposal of an inter-agency working group to coordinate on solid waste management in the region. This will allow municipalities to advance this work in a coordinated way.

**PROPOSED CORDOVA BAY LOCAL AREA PLAN**

The revised agenda included a memo related to the Proposed Cordova Bay Local Area Plan. The return of this item subsequent to the approval of the Housing Strategy is outside of the purview of this committee, it was decided that this item did not need to be discussed.

**ROUNDTABLE**

The following was noted:

- Saanich has recently launched an electric bike rebate program, which has had great interest from the community.
- The CRD published a new Climate Strategy, which was recently approved by the Board. Discussions on the 2022 CRD Budget will be beginning soon, including potential funding for the new Climate Strategy.
- A Request for Proposal will be going out in November for a consultant to provide expertise during project coordination, as well as complete the State of Biodiversity Report, and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The committee will be provided progress updates as consultant begins this work.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting is Thursday, November 25, 2021.

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Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary