

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held electronically via MS Teams

April 20, 2022 at 6:00 pm

Present: Councillor Karen Harper (Chair), Braedan Drouillard, Kaden Calleberg (Youth Member), Kurban Ali Keshvani, Jennifer Grant, Ryan Senechal, Sarah Anderson, Spencer Gillis (Youth Member).

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Carolyn Richman, Environmental Education Officer; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; Rick Hatch, Supervisor of Natural Areas; Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; and Austin Winters, Committee Clerk.

Guests: Ian Douglas Bruce, Executive Coordinator of Peninsula Streams Society; Todd Creek Watershed; and Brian Wilkes, Biologist.

MINUTES

MOVED by K. Ali Keshvani and Seconded by S. Anderson “That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held March 16, 2022 be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair noted the following during their Chair’s remarks:

- The Strategic Plan Update and its Term of Reference is relevant to ENAC as it incorporates environment, society and the economy through the means of sustainable development.
- A number of issues that have been adopted by Council are to be integrated into the Strategic Plan Update in the future.
- More metrics and a better means to evaluate what has been accomplished is also being considered in the Strategic Plan Update.
- Saanich Council has met with the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council over the memorandum of understanding that was signed.
- A Vision Zero approach is to be implemented into the Active Transportation Plan going forward, which is to eventually achieve no vehicle related accidents or deaths.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING TOD CREEK

The Executive Coordinator of Peninsula Streams Society delivered a presentation on the concept of an integrated storm water management planning process for the Tod Creek watershed. The following was noted:

- The Tod Creek watershed has undergone significant impacts and modifications that have greatly reduced and continue to limit its health.
- The increasing frequency and severity of seasonal flooding and droughts are further

- exasperated by growing demands on natural flood infrastructure and local water supplies.
- These factors introduce new challenges and risk to local people and nature, including industry, residents, and vulnerable plant and wildlife populations.
 - A formal system of stewardship, conservation, and fair allocation of resources, that includes, respects, and provides benefits to a broad range of interest groups and values, must be developed.
 - Tod Creek Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) will follow the framework structure and principles used successfully by other coastal communities analogous in size and scope such as the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan.
 - Within the framework, management objectives and strategies to allocate scarce resources to identified needs will be documented within an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) that lays out actions, responsibilities and desired outcomes.
 - The IWMP and process will be guided and reviewed by a diverse and dedicated Steering Committee established through the IWM framework process to ensure targets, commitments, and timelines are being met and that public and private stakeholder engagement is effective.
 - The area included would be the entirety of Tod Creek Watershed from its headwaters of Prospect Lake and associated tributaries to its outflow including the marine coastal areas of Tod Inlet.
 - Leadership in this initiative will be undertaken by First Nations, local community stewardship groups, and supported by different levels of government and policy groups.

The following was noted during the discussion with committee members:

- A working group may be established to begin looking at issues such as the one brought forward during this presentation to give interested ENAC members an opportunity to delve further on potential solutions or pilot projects.
- Bringing forward an integrated storm water management plan for Tod Creek may be considered during the 2023 budget process.

CLIMATE ACTION REPORT CARD FOR 2021

The Manager of Sustainability delivered a presentation on the 2021 Climate Report Card. The following was noted:

- The updated Climate Plan was approved by Council in January 2020.
- The Plan provides a renewed policy framework and action plan for a comprehensive response to climate change in Saanich over the next 10 years.
- The Plan aims to cut community wide greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050.
- The Plan also sets new targets for municipal operations which assists in Saanich's aim to lead by example.
- Saanich has a goal to cut GHG emissions in half operationally by 2025 and then to get to net zero by 2040.
- The focus areas of the Plan include mobility; buildings and infrastructure; food and materials; ecosystems; community well-being; and leadership in district operations.
- The 2021 Report Card is about positive action that is being taken in Saanich, but Saanich is cognisant of the climate emergency that is taking place currently.
- There has been a 17% reduction in GHG emissions since 2007 community wide in Saanich.

- There are 131 actions in the Climate Plan with 86 of those actions were to be initiated within the first two years of the Plan and 62 of those actions are ongoing or on track.
- 24 actions are currently behind schedule or on hold for the Plan.
- 46% of Saanich's total community wide emissions are related to transportation for 2020.
- Accelerating the objectives of the Active Transportation Plan is a key priority of the Climate Plan.
- The e-bike incentive program is also a key part of the Climate Plan to encourage e-bike use.

The following was noted during discussion with committee members:

- COVID created some positive changes in terms of individual's behaviour towards driving less and using more forms of active transportation.
- There is a time lag between actions and outcomes for the District's environmental goals.
- Natural gas was promoted as the green energy source but it is still a fossil fuel and there are greener options.
- An inquiry was made over the feasibility of restricting the use of natural gas in new builds.

BIODIVERSITY IN OUR PARKS

A local Biologist delivered a presentation on the biodiversity in Saanich parks. The following was noted:

- Between April and October 2021, 18 of the major Saanich nature parks were visited and traversed for the purpose of applying a rapid assessment technique to determine the ecological condition of the park vegetation.
- The procedure was to walk the trails in the parks, covering as much as possible, and stop at points where there seemed to be a vegetation change, to estimate the proportion of native to invasive species within view.
- A minor cover of invasives, less than 5%, resulted in good condition. Fair condition was the result if an estimated 5% to 20% of a vegetation layer was invasive species.
- If it was estimated that more than 20% of what was in view was dominated by invasives, then the area was assessed as in poor condition.
- The overwhelming impact of invasive grasses such as orchard grass, annual brome grass, sweet vernal grass and reed canary grass, among others, was made clear.
- The parks are being overgrown by these weeds, despite the very valuable efforts of the volunteer weed pulling crews.

The following was noted during discussion with committee members:

- When natural areas are at their best, people are inspired.
- An inquiry was made over whether signage is put up periodically to explain why sections of parks are cordoned off to the public and pets to which staff said that they do.

NATURESCAPE PRESENTATION FOLLOW UP

The Environmental Education Officer provided a follow-up to the Naturescape presentation that was done in November 2021. The following was noted during discussion with committee members:

- A membership program may be established, where a kit and some new yard signs may be

obtained through said membership.

- There was an inquiry into the level of integration between Naturescape and Saanich Parks to which staff noted that greater integration is needed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is Wednesday May 19, 2022.

Councillor Karen Harper, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Austin Winters, Committee Secretary

