



AGENDA
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
Tuesday, April 27, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

Due to COVID-19 measures, Saanich is unable to accommodate the public for any Council, Committee of the Whole, Advisory, Board or Foundation meetings while maintaining the limits on large gatherings due to the Public Health Order.

As per the Order of the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, *Emergency Program Act*, Ministerial Order No. M192, public attendance at the meeting is not required if it cannot be accommodated in accordance with the applicable requirements or recommendations under the Public Health Act.

To listen to this meeting by telephone call **250-900-5640** and use code **340 485 090#** during the time noted above.

1.	Call to Order	Chair S. Guy	
2.	Territorial Acknowledgement & Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement	Councillor R. Mersereau	
3.	Approval of Agenda	Chair S. Guy	5 mins
4.	Overview of Public Feedback on the Draft Goals, Objectives & Principles of the Resilient Saanich Process	T. Munson, A. Pollard, C. Richmond	45 mins
5.	Overview of Natural Areas Management	E. Riccius	45 mins
6.	Planning for the State of Biodiversity Review & Biodiversity Conservation Strategy	B. Wilkes & Biodiversity Working Group	45 mins
7.	Adjournment		

* * Next Meeting: May 25, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers * *
Please RVSP your attendance to lynn.merry@saanich.ca

RSTC Briefing Note

To: RSTC, April 27, 2021 Meeting

From: RSTC Biodiversity Strategy Working Group: Tory, Purnima, Kevin, Brian

Subject: Update on Working Group Progress and Recommendations

Background:

- Working group has established the need for a 2-step process, the first being developing a “State of Biodiversity” report to serve as a foundation for step two, the Strategy itself.
- Working group established the basic approach using “hubs and corridors”, as have other municipal strategies in BC, but has recently expanded this framework to include “stepping stones” and the remainder, or “matrix”. Please refer to the attached explanation of Four Tiers.
- The Working Group developed a document on the components of a state of biodiversity report, and presented it at the January 2021 RSTC meeting.
- This document has been refined, and moved to an excel spreadsheet format that now includes notes on the intended product, whether the work would be done by staff or consultant and other notes. Please refer to the attached excel spreadsheet pdf.
- The working group intends that this spreadsheet becomes the key guidance document for developing a Request for Proposals from consultants to do the work, and may serve as a framework for future RFPs.
- The Working Group is available to work with RSTC and staff to clarify elements of the guidance document that may still need more definition and clarity.
- We have also discussed the possibility of a fact sheet or similar resource to further examine the limitations and possible improvements to defining and assessing biodiversity.

Discussion Items

- It would be helpful to the Working Group if the RSTC confirmed its acceptance of the strategic direction suggested by the four tiers document calling for hubs, corridors, stepping stones and the “matrix”. (Please, no Mr. Smith jokes). Suggestions would be welcome on the criteria needed for defining hubs, corridors and stepping stones. We see the matrix as everything else, and this zone would be included in on-going efforts at volunteer stewardship.
- The Working Group is interested in diversity of ecosystem function as well as structure. It would be helpful for RSTC to suggest ways to identify functional attributes and how to incorporate them into the “State of” report, and onward into the strategy itself.
- We have discussed the importance of abiotic factors in influencing biodiversity, and are considering if this should be the subject of a separate investigation by consultants. Some advice from the RSTC on this would be welcome
- We are aware that the timeline for delivery of the “State of Biodiversity” report is proposed for October, 2021. Meeting this deadline depends largely on finalizing the guidance piece and ensuring that the procurement process is efficient.

Recommendations

- Recommend that the RSTC approve the four tiers approach and the spreadsheet as the working guidance for developing the State of Biodiversity report

- Recommend that RSTC pass a motion asking Saanich staff for feedback and comment on same, and for on-going cooperation and consultation with the working group in developing the RFP.
- Recommend that RSTC endorse the direction the working group is going, and confirms there is flexibility around the delivery date for the State of Biodiversity report.

Four-tiered Approach to Biodiversity Strategy

In line with the Principles, Goals and Objectives of the Environmental Policy Framework, the Biodiversity Strategy could be based on a system of 4 tiers that leaves no area of Saanich without a role in promoting biodiversity, from a backyard or an urban tree, to the wildest part of a large municipal park.

1. Hubs – the anchors of the biodiversity network. These will be identified based on as yet unspecified criteria related to size, condition, ability to rehabilitate, representation at the watershed and/or broad ecosystem level, ownership, likelihood of future condition, location, existing work plans, stewardship groups... These are the areas that are the most likely to maintain biodiversity because of their size and lower level of disturbance.
2. Corridors – the links between the hubs to facilitate movement of individuals and their genes. Corridors will follow natural lines (e.g. riparian corridors) where possible. Where possible they will include smaller parks and other kinds of green spaces, environmentally sensitive habitats, important habitat for species at risk, species of global responsibility, species of cultural importance (food or medicinal plants)... They will be the focus of incentives for property owners to encourage them to enhance their natural characteristics. They may be the focus of land acquisitions. A minimum width will be defined. The corridors will increase the functional size of the hubs by providing links to other areas.
3. Stepping Stones – these are important natural or cultural areas that are too small to be hubs and not able to be included in the corridor network. These areas are already managed to be green and usually wild, but they are too small to be hubs. They may be habitat for important species (for biodiversity or culture). They could be the focus of habitat enhancements. These areas are too small for some species to persist but can be used by species that do not require continuous habitat to move across the landscape or species that do not require a large space.
4. The Matrix – this is everything else, the land in which all the other categories are embedded. This will include most private property (except those properties that are included in corridors) and the densest parts of the municipality (urban cores, shopping areas, backyards). As the largest category, this land has an important role to play and everyone who owns a patch of it can make a difference. Saanich can also provide incentives here such as recognition for providing habitat, however small. The current Saanich program called Drip Line is an example of the kinds of incentives that can be provided. Criteria can be developed.

Cross walk to Work Plan: The state of biodiversity (and conservation) report is a Milestone 2 deliverable (Dec 2021). This is to support the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy which is Milestone 3 deliverable (June 2022)

The Biodiversity working group developed a "foundational document" that laid out the various components that would be in a "State of biodiversity and conservation in Saanich" report.

The table below is guidance document on how to gather the required information that would feed into this report, some of which would need the help of a consultant. Hence guidance to RFP

We would suggest that the same consultant that collects these data is also hired to draft the actual "State of biodiversity and conservation in Saanich" report.

Current timelines in work plan: Draft "State of biodiversity and conservation in Saanich" October 2021 and final by Dec 2021. Ambitious schedules especially if we want to involve the public in the consultation

No	Major sub-heading	Why do we need this information	Components under each	Format of product	Completed by contractor	Completed by Staff	Desk/Field work	Notes and reference to methods	Associated policy	PG notes	
I	Prioritization of Species and Ecosystems (terrestrial, aquatic, marine)	To figure out which species and ecosystems at risk in Saanich	Distribution and status of species and ecosystems at risk in Saanich	Table and map	?	Yes	Desk	Information available on BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer. This table is supported by the maps below	Policy on implementing critical habitat?	Red and Blue lists, and federally listed	
			List of species and ecosystems where Saanich might have a higher global/provincial responsibility for conservation	Table and map	Yes	Yes	Desk	Use method described in Burnell et al. Applying the Concept of Stewardship Responsibility in British Columbia			
			Regionally/culturally important species/species groups for conservation	Table and text	Yes	Yes	Desk	Expert opinion (consultant) and First Nations consultation (staff)			
II	Condition/risk/conservation potential of areas of current or future biodiversity conservation interest	To figure out which areas to focus on.	Irreplaceable or rare or unique habitats/habitat features	Table, text and map	Yes	Support	Desk	Table supported by map			
			Mapping of 4 tiers: hubs, corridors, stepping stones and matrix	Table, text and map	Yes	Support	Desk	See Four Tiers document from Tony but we still need to make a tentative list of criteria for defining hubs, corridors and stepping stones. Using agreed upon methods (yet to be completed) the contractor works with staff to complete this mapping. Recommend a draft is published with the "state of" document for public consultation and finalized in "Biodiversity Strategy" document		To address Brian's point about focusing on parks and protected areas - I feel we should start with a full list of hubs, corridors and stepping-stones - naturally the focus will shift to parks and protected areas in the implementation stage.	
			To provide a baseline against which to measure improvements as the Biodiversity Strategy is implemented	Ecosystem condition assessment of hubs, corridors, stepping-stones and matrix	Table and text	Yes	Support	Desk/field work	Use Provincial RISC standard for mapping Ecosystems at Risk in B.C. (Pages 41 onwards). "Element Occurrences are ranked based on three factors: size, condition, and landscape context (see Table 14 below). Each of the three factors are rated in a four class ranking system and these classes are assigned a numerical value which allows for calculation of overall viability ranks as well as facilitating thematic mapping for conservation priorities". In this case, instead of "Element occurrence" we use hubs, corridors and stepping stones.		What do you think of asking the contractor to add two metrics to this assessment: Risk of loss and potential for rehabilitation/securement (the later metric can be used for defining the hubs but could also be moved here)
			To assess progress that has been made since 1972 on the greenbelt strategy	Retrospective assessment of the 1972 Greenbelt proposal for Saanich	Report (with tables and maps as appropriate)	Yes	Support	Desk	This can be in the "State of biodiversity and conservation" report as a retrospective assessment. The full report can be an appendix but referred to in the preamble and introduction.		
		Important habitats but often overlooked in strategies	Foreshore and marine	?	?	?		The above methods focus primarily on the terrestrial ecosystems. Need to figure out methods for foreshore and marine			
			Abiotic factors - soil, air quality, light and sound pollution	?	?	?	May require s	Do we need a separate assessment of this or can it be captured in any of the other efforts. Kevin to provide guidance if this should be a standalone assessment. For example, the condition assessment above does look at soil disturbance - is that sufficient? The three assessment below looks at sound and light pollution - is that sufficient?			
III	Biodiversity threat assessment	To figure out which threats to focus on - this might differ depending on hub, corridor, stepping stone or matrix	UCN standardized methodology to assess threats to hubs, corridors and stepping stones	Table and text	Yes	Support	Desk	Need support from experts. Can be done as a group exercise, public consultation. A Standard Lexicon for Biodiversity Conservation: Unified Classifications of Threats and Actions https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1523-1739.2008.00937.x		I think it would be fruitful to do this exercise for hubs, corridors and stepping stone as the elements being assessed. This will give us a quasi-quantitative assessment of the major threats and make it transparent how we reached the conclusions. Some threats such as "urban development" are pretty obvious but I doubt it is the highest threat to Hubs - because I suspect hubs will be mainly protected areas, and invasive species may be the greatest threat to hubs, but urban development might be the highest threat to corridors.	
IV	Stewardship and volunteer contribution to biodiversity conservation	To figure out what is being done, what needs improvement and what the gaps are	List of stewardship initiatives coordinated by Saanich	Table	No	Yes	Desk	Completed by Staff?		I missed the stewardship presentation. I have not gone back to look at the recording	
			Maybe this is not needed because we don't have control over these investments	List and investment in stewardship initiatives in Saanich coordinated by other levels of government	Table	No	Yes	Desk	Completed by Staff?		
			This list might help identify future partners and collaborators.	List of non-government stewardship initiatives	Table	No	Yes	Desk	Completed by Staff?		
V	Financial investment in biodiversity conservation by Saanich in the past 10 years	To figure out how much money is being spent currently on biodiversity conservation. The assumption is that the implementation of a biodiversity strategy will need further investment	Line items/estimate in the Saanich budget that directly contribute to biodiversity conservation	Table	No	Yes	Desk	Do we have to have approval from Council to obtain these figures.		Also, I think we can say for certain that we are going to need further financial investment if the biodiversity strategy is going to be implemented. Otherwise, no point writing the strategy. Given this, how can we start the process of a local conservation fund based on Bryn White's great presentation	
			Number of staff hours directly dedicated to biodiversity conservation and monitoring	Table	No	Yes	Desk				
VI	An assessment of knowledge and engagement	Need a baseline to assess improvement in the metrics as the biodiversity strategy is implemented	Knowledge of biodiversity, programs, incentives, laws?	Summary stats and report	?	Yes	Online	Do we need motion or council permission to permit staff to conduct this? Done by external consultant?			
			Public education	Summary stats and report	?	Yes	Online				
			Volunteering	Summary stats and report	?	Yes	Online				