

DRAFT Principles and Goals for the Environmental Policy Framework

Environmental Policy Framework Context

The intent of the Environmental Policy Framework (EPF) is to produce a more coherent body of plans, policies, bylaws and strategies in support of a Resilient Saanich. It is intended to enable and unify environmental policy and programs and provide key policy filters for existing, new or revised policy or programs.

The term environment is used here to denote all the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and landscapes within Saanich and their associated components, functions, and processes.

The framework is intended to promote changes necessary for Saanich, the organization, and the communities it supports to become more resilient, inclusive, and effective in adapting to climate change, reversing biodiversity loss, and addressing pandemics and other environmental challenges that might arise.

The Environmental Policy Framework is consistent with the Official Community Plan. The elements of the EPF fit together as illustrated by the diagram on page 4.

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The principles reflect our current understanding of the impacts of climate change, the importance of biodiversity and the wealth of knowledge that is held by indigenous people in our region.

1. **Recognize the intrinsic value of nature.**
2. **Learn from and appropriately apply Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices with their guidance** to better protect lands, water, plants and animals: Indigenous knowledge offers deep understanding of the environment. Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices are recognized for their contribution to environmental and social sustainability.
3. Use **best available management and decision-making tools** in support of the future environment. Evidence-based decision-making and being precautionary in the absence of evidence can both support good decisions. Adaptive management is the continuous evolution of practices based on careful observation. Learn from the past and plan for the future.
4. **Lead by example** through innovation and improving on best practices;
5. **Look beyond our borders** to achieve results at a bioregional scale;
6. **Address climate adaptation and mitigation** in all that we do;

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7. Collaborate with diverse interests to achieve outcomes that **realize multiple values and benefits**;
8. Safeguard **diversity, equity and inclusivity**: Create safe and welcoming public services and spaces for everyone including open environmental data for research and public oversight.
9. **Enhance community capacity and knowledge** – Create a passionate, informed and skilled community that can help to create a more resilient Saanich.

2. FRAMEWORK GOALS:

These goals are high level so that they encompass all environmental policy in Saanich.

Goal 1. Protect, rehabilitate and enhance the ecological function and biological diversity of Saanich.

In the past decades, rapid growth coupled with a lack of environmental understanding and sensitivity has led to a decline in biodiversity and environmental quality. Metrics such as air and water quality have declined, soil has been lost, green spaces reduced, and introduced species have decreased the abundance of the unique native fauna and flora of southern Vancouver Island. This goal aims to manage the natural and built environments to adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity and other essential ecosystem functions. This goal cannot be achieved without the commitment of residents, businesses, and landowners to be active stewards.

Goal 2. Develop and implement complimentary and coordinated policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives grounded in and consistent with the Environmental Policy Framework guiding principles.

This overarching goal is essential to promote the culture of environmental stewardship and resilience within Saanich staff and the public. The principles will assist in evaluating existing policy and provide guidance for the development of future policy.

Some of the actions that could result from this goal are:

- Assess existing regulatory, management and administrative tools to identify gaps and inconsistencies.
- Develop a strategic approach that encourages effective use of limited resources.
- Increase community understanding of policies, plans, programs, bylaws and partnerships encompassed by the Resilient Saanich Environmental Policy Framework.

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3. POLICY AREAS

Each of the policy areas below will be covered by a plan or strategy that uses the Framework Principles. This is an initial list. Topics may be added or deleted.

- Climate Plan
- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
- Enhanced Stewardship is also a “pillar” but will be described as an integral part of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
- Urban Forestry (includes soil and green space conservation)
- Water Management (includes storm water and watershed health)
- Land Use Planning and Development
- Marine Shoreline
- Saanich's Ecological Footprint
- Park Management (restoration, invasive species management)
- Agriculture (includes sustainable practice and food security)
- Green Economy
- Transportation (environmental aspects)
- Governance and Administration
- Area specific plans

The following is a schematic of how policy areas in Saanich would fit within the Framework. Note that Framework Principles and Goals are nested within the Official Community Plan. The specific policy areas such as climate change, stewardship and biodiversity are nested within the Framework Principles and Goals. Each policy area will have its own set of goals and objectives specific to that policy area but will be consistent with the strategic direction set in the OCP, and with the Framework principles and goals.

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ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK MODEL

