

Recommendation to staff: DRAFT EPF Table of Contents

Note to WG members before you read below: The text in brown is text that is yet to be drafted; text in blue is from Brian's introduction; the remaining text is the latest version that is making the rounds on the TOC, Goals and Principles. These are still up for debate but in the interest of keeping this document as clean as possible, I took the latest version (if you want the details, please go back to Tory's emails).

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Background (or how the EPF initiative came to be)

Challenges and opportunities of our time: 1) Biodiversity/habitat loss; 2) Climate change adaptation and mitigation; 3) Reconciliation - Loss to western culture of FN connection to nature and management (First peoples of Saanich—indigenous perspectives)

The EDPA policy experience

There are a few factors that together helped launch the EPF initiative. From a concern that Saanich was losing species and ecosystems at risk, a development regulation bylaw (called EDPA) was adopted and then after a few years rescinded due to public opposition.

This prompted Council to want to find ways to accomplish those goals more effectively, and an overarching framework for improved coordination of environmental programs and policies was initiated. As well, it was recognized that Saanich has limited resources and can only do so much, making better coordination of available resources that much more important. These key factors led to the development of a program and workplan, as well as the creation of an independent Technical Committee that was asked to assist in developing the Environmental Policy Framework. Council requested a program that included the topics of climate change, a biodiversity conservation strategy and stewardship program to serve as a policy framework for other Saanich policies and programs, and that a new EDPA be considered a component of the program

Motion from Council

In November 2017, Saanich Council directed that an Environmental Policy Framework be developed to serve as a framework for Saanich environmental policies and programs. Subsequently, a technical committee of natural resource practitioners and specialists was selected and asked to develop goals and objectives for the policy framework. The following is the initial result of that work. The purpose is described below, and then guiding principles, goals and objectives of an overarching Environmental Policy Framework are specified. These are to be reflected in all that happens in Saanich.

Purpose and rationale (What are the problems for which an EPF is the solution? Definition of environment? Strategic focus for environmental policy. Culture of Saanich)

The framework is intended to enable and unify environmental policy and programs in Saanich. It is also intended to provide key policy filters for new or revised policy or programs to adhere to.

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Currently, environmental programs are split amongst various departments with varying degrees of capacity. Expertise or budget allotment available in one department may be needed but not available to other departments. It is possible for programs to operate at cross-purposes.

The Environmental Policy Framework is intended to apply to the entire body of Saanich policy and practice that touch on our environment. The term *environment* is used here to denote all the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and landscapes within Saanich, or within which Saanich is embedded, and their associated components, functions, and processes.

Policy net (Captures all policies where they touch on the environment and the environmental sensitivity of Saanich staff and public)

Policies and practices include any that impact the environment, including how we treat our wildlands, maintain the quality of our watersheds, adapt to changes in our climate or manage our waste and consumption. Other areas of concern include land development, transportation, agriculture, public works, emergency response, as well as organizational governance and culture. In this holistic view, virtually all aspects of the municipality's operations are implicated.

Also included within the Framework's environmental purview are the cultural, legal and economic *relationships* that Saanich maintains; these include local First Nations and community stakeholders (residents, businesses, learning centers and ENGOS), suppliers, contractors, and inter-agency commitments. The intension/purpose of the Framework is to promote all elements working together to sustain then environment and not degrade it.

EPF relationship to the broader Resilient Saanich program

The intent of the EPF is to produce a more coherent body of plans, policies, bylaws and strategies in support of a Resilient Saanich.

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

What would a "Resilient Saanich" look like?

Technically, resilience refers to the ability of complex systems, like ecosystems, to resist and recover from sudden changes caused by strong change events. It also has to do with the adaptability of systems to change. Resilience can be improved for economic and social systems, but the focus here is on environmental systems. In Saanich, we are experiencing complex change as a result of a warming climate, and population growth. There are fairly rapid changes to forest canopy, the amount of development, a loss or degradation of natural habitats, and more severe drought and rain events. A more environmentally resilient Saanich would be more biodiverse, and would have enhanced environmental services such as shade, water retention and infiltration, reduced loss of soils, and improved ability to withstand storms and droughts. Achieving a resilient Saanich will involve cooperation across society. But as an initial step, Council has asked for this enabling and unifying framework for environmental policy and programs.

How the EPF is structured

The EPF consists of three primary sections:

Commented [PG1]: I added this subsection in the Introduction – can be removed later if the WG decides it is not necessary

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- 1) A set of guiding principles to promote a culture of reconciliation and environmental conservation and resilience in the face of climate change;
- 2) Three high level goals to enable policy and procedure development/amendment and later implementation. The development of SMART objectives is in individual strategies developed in Section 3 below;
- 3) A collection of strategies each designed to focus on one primary topic. Three of these strategies are considered essential and are: 1) Climate change and adaptation strategy (complete); 2) Biodiversity strategy; and 3) Stewardship strategy

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The principles described below are intended to situate the Environmental Policy Framework and the associated policies and practices firmly within the moral, cultural and aspirational norms of current society. Within the context of the EPF, the two imperatives of our current society are to achieve reconciliation with our Indigenous nations, and to slow and reverse the rapid environmental degradation of past decades, while ensuring quality of life for future generation.

Proposed Principles building (The version included here is the amalgamation of the original and Kim's suggestion based on stakeholder input).

1. Recognize the intrinsic value of nature;
2. Respect Indigenous knowledge and land uses: Indigenous knowledge offers deep understanding of the lands, waters, plants and animals. Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices are recognized worldwide by the United Nations for their contribution to environmental and social sustainability.
3. Ensure evidence-based¹ decision making;
4. Adopt the precautionary principle when facing knowledge gaps;
5. Learn from the past and plan for the future – learn from past successes and failures to make informed decisions for future generations [This is an amalgamation of our original 3 and 6 following Kim's lead]
6. Lead by example through innovation and best practices;
7. Look beyond our borders to achieve results at a bioregional scale;
8. Address climate adaptation and mitigation in all that we do;

Commented [PG2]: The adaptive management intention can be amalgamated in this principle.

Commented [KB3]: I don't know where adaptive management fits in this list – need to continually monitor effects of actions and update practices accordingly. That is in addition to incorporating new knowledge, which may come from research elsewhere

¹ Supported by as much available and appropriate scientific data, models and research, Indigenous knowledge, historic and cultural documents.

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9. Collaborate with diverse interests to achieve outcomes that realize multiple values and benefits;
10. Safeguard diversity, equity and inclusivity – Create safe and welcoming public services and spaces for everyone. [New from public comment]
11. Build community capacity and knowledge – invest in an informed and skilled community that can help to create a more resilient Saanich. [New from public comment]
12. Manage for complexity by adopting a whole systems approach. [New from public comment...I'm not sure about this one. It is so vague.]

Commented [PG4]: Agree with Kevin and Tory on this one.

Commented [KB5]: agreed- ditch it unless someone can convincingly explain and justify it

3. FRAMEWORK GOALS:

The more specific objectives associated with the EPF can be found within each policy area (Section below). For instance, the Climate Plan, Biodiversity Strategy, and Stewardship strategy will have their own SMART objectives.

Goal 1. Ensure that Saanich's environmental policies and practices conform with the Framework's guiding principles.

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

Commented [PG6]: Could add more text here if needed.

Goal 2. Protect, restore and enhance the ecological function and biological diversity of Saanich.

In the past decades, rapid growth of the municipality has led to decline in biodiversity and environmental quality. Metrics such as air and water quality have declined, soil lost, green spaces reduced, and introduced species have decreased the abundance of our unique native fauna and flora. This goal aims to fairly and effectively manage the natural and built environment to adapt to climate change, and enhance biodiversity and other essential ecosystem functions. To support this goal, it is essential to provide clear and rigorous standards for mapping, environmental assessments and reporting. It is also necessary to monitor, evaluate and report progress towards increased environmental health. This goal cannot be achieved without the engagement and support of residents, businesses and landownersto be active stewards.

Commented [PG7]: I moved from bullets in Tory's version to a paragraph. I have not materially changed the meaning, I don't think.

Commented [KB8]: It's hard to argue with this, but there is more to it than what I hear the mapping WG talk about. And I suspect the broader (interested) public will wonder exactly what it means. We will need to flesh this out in the EPF document as well

Commented [KB9]: and is this where we mention the need for adaptive management/continuous improvement in policies and practices as we (hopefully) learn from successes and mistakes?

Goal 3. Develop and implement complimentary and coordinated policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives grounded in the overarching set of guiding principles.

Assess existing regulatory, management and administrative tools to identify gaps and inconsistencies.

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Develop a strategic approach to filling gaps that maximises the effectiveness of limited resources.

Increase community understanding of policies, plans, programs, bylaws and partnerships encompassed by the Resilient Saanich Environmental Policy Framework.

4. CORE POLICY THEMES

Essential Strategies

Climate Plan

Biodiversity Conservation Plan

Stewardship is also a “pillar” of the EPF but will be described as integral to the BCP

Additional Strategies and POLICY AREAS [fluid]

Urban Forestry (includes soil and green space conservation)

Water Management (includes storm water and watershed health)

Land Use Planning & Development

Marine Shoreline

Saanich's Ecological Footprint

Agriculture (includes sustainable practice & food security)

Green Economy

Transportation (environmental aspects)

Governance and Administration

5 ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

Additional policy and procedures, and support structures will be needed for the full implementation of the EPF and its associated strategies. These are (not exhaustive list):

- i. Standards for mapping, environmental assessments, and reporting
- ii. Policy Evaluation Tool (a.k.a. the “Evaluation Matrix”)
- iii. A new EDPA?
- iv. Gap analysis

Commented [PG10]: I moved these from the last paragraph of the introduction to this summary section.

6. CONCLUSION

7. RSTC SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Commented [PG11]: I feel this should be in a cover letter

Explanations, definitions etc.

Commented [PG12]: I am sticking this below because I don't want it to get lost. It will need reformatting and the “subscript” renumbered and reinserted

This principle reflects the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (June 2006) which states in part, “Recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.”

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¹ This principle emphasizes the importance of: a) being sensitive to people of all identities, abilities and socio-economic experiences, particularly those who are under-represented and marginalized, and b) working to eliminate systemic discrimination of all forms.

¹ Strong leadership is needed with courage, initiative and commitment to act, particularly in the face of complex challenges. In addition to leadership, this principle emphasizes working with partners and collaborators through a broad network of residents, businesses, organizations, First Nations, local governments and other stakeholders.

¹ Evidence-based and precautionary decision making are prudent and well-supported approaches to address dynamic or uncertain environmental conditions. Adaptive management takes these approaches further to continually learn and improve environmental management with the support of working partners, appropriate and best available information, evaluations, risk assessments, and experiential evidence.

¹ There is widespread recognition that we now live in a state of crisis with respect to global climatic conditions and its impacts. Adaptive and mitigative actions include a variety of responses. Together, they recognize the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as adapt to permanent damage that cannot be repaired. More detailed information is available in the Resilient Saanich Climate Plan (2020).

¹ A bioregion is a concept that identifies geographic units of similar socio-economic, abiotic and biotic features. Bioregions transcend political boundaries and can be useful in focussing on the need to collaborate across jurisdictions to resolve transboundary concerns such as climate change, contiguous wildlife corridors, habitat fragmentation, ecologically significant areas, and watersheds. Saanich is located within the Cascadia bioregion.

¹ A systems management approach is one that works with the intricate and complex web of interactions among all components of our natural (biotic and abiotic) and human-centred environment.