



AGENDA
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
April 20, 2023, 6:30 – 8:30 PM
Held virtually via MS Teams

In light of the Saanich Communicable Disease Plan related safety measures, this meeting will be held virtually via MS Teams. Details on how to join the meeting can be found on the committee webpage – [Resilient Saanich Schedule, Minutes & Agendas](#). Please note that individuals participating by phone are identified by their phone number, which can be viewed on screen by all attendees of the meeting.

- 1. Territorial Acknowledgement**
- 2. Approval of Agenda**
- 3. Adoption of Minutes**
 - February 16, 2023, meeting
 - March 9, 2023 meeting
- 4. Receipt of Correspondence**
- 5. Review of Environmental Policy Framework Draft (30 min.)**
 - Lead: Judith Cullington
- 6. Presentation of Draft Connectivity Mapping – BCS (60 min.)**
 - Lead: Cassandra Cummings
- 7. Debriefing of BCS Open Houses (20 min.)**
 - Lead: Tory Stevens
- 8. Review of Stewardship Working Group Draft (if time allows)**
 - Lead: Chris Lowe

* * Next Meeting: May 18, 2023

To ensure quorum, please email megan.macdonald@saanich.ca if you are not able to attend.

MINUTES
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
February 16, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Councillor Zac de Vries, Kevin Brown; Tim Ennis; Purnima Govindarajulu; Stewart Guy; Jeremy Gye; Chris Lowe; Brian Wilkes; and Bev Windjack

Guests: Mike Coulthard, Alison Kwan, and Aubrey Butcher of Diamond Head Consulting (DHC); Judith Cullington, Secretariat

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks; Thomas Munson, Senior Environmental Planner; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

Councillor Z. de Vries read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED by C. Lowe and Seconded by B. Wilkes: "That the Agenda for the February 16, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved."

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by C. Lowe and Seconded by S. Guy: "That the minutes of the January 19, 2023 Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be adopted."

CARRIED

REVIEW OF DIAMOND HEAD CONSULTING DRAFT STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT

A. Kwan of Diamond Head Consulting (DHC) gave an overview of the Draft State of Biodiversity Report (Powerpoint on file). Committee members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft report, the following was noted during committee discussion:

- The level of detail provided in the document is not what members had hoped for, specifically the quantification. An example of the data available for salmon counts in local streams was given, although the data is available, it is not included in the report.
- The report is a foundational document which will enable staff and the public to monitor progress. It would be preferable to have a scale to rate areas excellent/good/fair or poor.
- Information is widely available, and it would be preferable to use more of the resources that are out there, such as GIS data and iNaturalist.
- Many groups in the region publish data that could be better incorporated in the report.
- The report needs to be detailed enough to enable the community to monitor progress.
- Stewardship and restoration efforts need to be quantifiable, the report should include data to know where we currently stand.

- A list of species should be included, even if the quantities are not currently available.
- Having the report set up in a way that data can be added in future would be beneficial.
- The Provincial data which was included is out of date. Much more effort is needed to gather current information to form the baseline.
- Having a table of current conservation measures and targets would be useful.
- Understanding the current trends and conditions is the crux of understanding the state of biodiversity. There should be more focus on quantifiable metrics.
- It will be difficult to articulate trends without a proper baseline. The report could include data such as impervious surfaces, daylighting and many other metrics that are currently available. Inclusion of this data is integral to develop a baseline and monitor trends.
- The Comox Valley was recently able to use Land Satellite data to back cast carbon sequestration for the past 40 years, this was only possible because of past monitoring.
- The ground truthing on page 7 and 8 does not include data, conditions or trends.
- Deeper results from the ground truthing would be preferred. More focus on analysis of the conditions and trends. GIS also has great information which could help inform this.
- Ideally the baseline would be detailed enough to changes in the future.
- Many sites were in poorer condition than what previous data implied. Site visits may inform changes that have taken place over time.
- Further work is required to determine where species are located.
- A better definition of phrases used should be included. An example of the use of “natural areas” was given. Another example was “threatened species” – the designation is not clear, phrases need to be more clearly defined.
- Adding a glossary to the report would be extremely helpful.
- Key ecological features are missing from the report, quantifying aspects such as impervious surface coverage and forest canopy coverage is necessary to fully understand the state of biodiversity in Saanich. Understanding how changes in these metrics influence other aspects of biodiversity is necessary.
- The report does not define what the state of biodiversity is in Saanich. The committee would like to better understand what will come from the report. Strengthening the connection between the State of Biodiversity and the Biodiversity Strategy is important.
- A summary of what data exists as a table in an appendix would be helpful. Making the reasons why the existing data was not used in the report is also necessary. This could include links to fish counts, or other field biologist findings in the region.
- The rationale for the ranking of biodiversity hot spots is mysterious, there needs to be an explanation on how these areas were ranked. iNaturalist data could be skewed as there are more people that visit parks than areas outside the Urban Containment Boundary, however many privately owned areas are likely much higher in biodiversity than parks.
- Stewardship programs are not fairly represented. There needs to be balance as Pulling Together is mentioned however they are only one of many stewardship groups.
- Metrics on the biggest threats to biodiversity would be helpful, including how much is spent per capita on maintaining natural areas or other quantifiable figures is needed.
- Metrics need to be set to ensure that changes to the State of Biodiversity can be measurable and clearly shown year over year.
- The executive summary references metrics and directions, these need to be more articulated than just one paragraph. The document needs stronger wording to address the fact that it will lead into the Biodiversity Strategy and form the base line.
- A number of statements are made in the document (such as “support populations of healthy wildlife”), which have no data to demonstrate they are true.
- The information on invasive species is provided to Saanich on a self-reported basis, there could be gaps in the data due to the fact that not everybody reports invasives.

The following was noted in response to committee member comments:

- The State of Biodiversity Report is intended to be a high-level public facing document, highlighting the important aspects about the state of biodiversity.
- Information can be added regularly to further the level of detail. An example was given of Whistler, who has decades of information available based on ongoing research.
- Determining what species exist and the quantity of them will take time.
- The ground truthing produced samples of data that can be used to monitor change.
- There are limitations on what can be included. The Biodiversity Strategy will include more information about what to do moving forward.

The consultant will take the feedback from the committee into consideration and send an updated report to staff. Once the finalized State of Biodiversity Report is submitted, Staff will forward a report with recommendations for Council to consider. The committee expressed interest in reviewing the updated report and providing feedback prior to Council consideration. Given the short timeline and opportunity for the committee to provide Council feedback, the March meeting date was moved ahead one week for the committee to review the updated report.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from J. Gye, the meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary

MINUTES
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
March 9, 2023 at 6:31 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Kevin Brown; Tim Ennis; Purnima Govindarajulu; Jeremy Gye; Chris Lowe; Brian Wilkes; and Bev Windjack

Regrets: Councillor Zac de Vries and Stewart Guy

Guests: Judith Cullington and Carly Bilney, Secretariats

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks; Thomas Munson, Senior Environmental Planner; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Chair read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED by K. Brown and Seconded by B. Wilkes: “That the Agenda for the March 9, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

REVIEW OF DIAMOND HEAD CONSULTING DRAFT STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT

Committee members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the revised State of Biodiversity draft report. The draft report is being presented to Saanich Council on Monday March 13, 2023. Round table discussions took place to determine what the most important feedback to provide to Council, and a word document was crafted during the meeting. The following was determined to be imperative for Councils consideration:

On February 16, 2023, the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) considered the first draft of the State of Biodiversity (SOB) report. The RSTC appreciated the opportunity to review the Diamondhead Consulting (DHC) State of Biodiversity report and provide the consultant with comments and concerns directly on draft version 1. We recognize DHC was constrained by time and finances and could not incorporate all committee suggestions into version 2 within their given timeline. In light of these constraints, the RSTC would like to highlight a few critical points for council and staff consideration as they are directing future work on the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

1. Overall, the SOB spatial analysis affirms the dramatic and stark biodiversity differences between inside and outside the Urban Containment Boundary due to development and other factors. Further analyses should be done separately for inside and outside of the UCB to ensure that the differences between rural and urban biodiversity are not lost.

2. To improve the state of biodiversity it is anticipated that more staff, volunteer, and financial resources will be needed.
3. The first paragraph of the Executive Summary does not capture the State of Biodiversity accurately. For example, we know many species in Saanich have been extirpated or are not healthy (eg. Western Toad, Western Bluebird, Southern Resident Killer Whale, Red Squirrel, Island Marble Butterfly). Clear objectives on how to restore ecosystem health and consideration on restoring extirpated species are needed within the Biodiversity Conservation strategy.
4. Field data was reportedly collected from 152 sites by professional biologists. A list of the parameters measured is included but no summary or interpretation of the data exists in the report. Therefore, these data are not accurately presented as ground truthing but may be better described as reference sites that can support longer term monitoring. Can these sites be used as the basis for future monitoring sites to determine changes in biodiversity?
5. This report is not sufficient to set a baseline of biodiversity in Saanich. More inventory work and analysis are required to assess changes in biodiversity over time.
6. Even if information is not available district-wide there is great value in reporting it and identifying the gaps. There is abundant data on species, ecosystems and ecosystem conditions that is not district wide. A report consolidating this data should be done as part of the biodiversity conservation strategy.
7. The RSTC is seeking more clarity on the methodology described in Section 2.5 and chapter 6 on biodiversity ranking. Understanding these fundamental rankings is important for setting goals and priorities for biodiversity conservation.
8. Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping data has a 2010 date associated with it in the data table, but the footnote explains it could have been created anytime between the 1980s and 2010. Using outdated information should be done with caution; errors are known and ground truthing should be used.
9. As noted in the report there are inconsistencies in the historic Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping and Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory mapping. Therefore, the RSTC recommends that Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory be prioritized in the UCB and both data sets be updated to ensure that they are as accurate as possible when setting a baseline of biodiversity for the biodiversity conservation strategy.
10. The term natural is used throughout. We are in the Anthropocene. Classifying anything as natural, particularly within the UCB, is problematic.
11. The stewardship efforts by numerous people and groups in Saanich are underrepresented in the report. The efforts of these groups must be acknowledged and supported.

MOVED by B. Wilkes and Seconded by K. Brown: “That the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee forward the observations as confirmed by committee consensus during the March 9, 2023 meeting to Council for consideration with the Draft State of Biodiversity Report.”

CARRIED

REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Secretariat provided an updated version of the Environmental Policy Framework; due to time constraints, committee members were asked to send their feedback to the consultant. A review of the updated document will take place at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from J. Gye, the meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary

DRAFT

From: [Eva Riccius](#)
To: [Megan MacDonald](#); [Thomas Munson](#)
Subject: FW: (External Email) Mapping from the ESA Atlas was used by Diamond Head
Date: Wednesday, March 15, 2023 9:47:46 AM

Fyi – Megan – pls add to RSTC correspondence.

Thomas, fyi – I have shared with Dhc. Thx. e

From: TED LEA [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 15, 2023 9:24 AM
To: Mayor <Mayor@saanich.ca>; Susan Brice <Susan.Brice@saanich.ca>; Judy Brownoff <Judy.Brownoff@saanich.ca>; Nathalie Chambers <Nathalie.Chambers@saanich.ca>; Zac De Vries <Zac.DeVries@saanich.ca>; Karen Harper <Karen.Harper@saanich.ca>; Colin Plant <Colin.Plant@saanich.ca>; Mena Westhaver <Mena.Westhaver@saanich.ca>; Teale Phelps Bondaroff <Teale.Phelps.Bondaroff@saanich.ca>
Cc: cassandra@diamondheadconsulting.com; Eva Riccius <Eva.Riccius@saanich.ca>; Tory Stevens [REDACTED]
Subject: (External Email) Mapping from the ESA Atlas was used by Diamond Head

This email sent from outside the District of Saanich. Use caution if message is unexpected or sender is not known to you.

Mayor and Council

I would like to clarify about the response received about the ESA Atlas, from Diamond Head Consulting on Monday night. I have copied Diamond Head, the Senior Manager of Parks and the Chair of the RSTC on this email.

Despite the answer from Diamond Head, Diamond Head did use and said in the report that they have used the Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (TEM) and Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) for their analysis.

The ESA Atlas morphed into what was called the Environmental Reference Atlas, I believe in 2020 or 2021 - it contains both the SEI, and the TEM mapping. The TEM was not in the original ESA Atlas. But the Environmental Reference Atlas is basically just the ESA Atlas with a new name.

The TEM mapping, which was created in 2007, used some of the SEI mapping polygons (which were created in the 1990s), particularly within the Urban Containment boundary, and including Garry oak ecosystem polygons. This TEM still does include properties that Council removed from the EDPA, including the Rainbow Properties, Glendenning/Cedarglen properties and Tudor/Sea View properties and calls them mostly Garry oak sensitive ecosystems, when they no longer meet that standard.

The statement below is from the chair of the RSTC, in a previous presentation to Saanich Council, that referred to the ESA Atlas, when she, I believe, was referring to

the Environmental Reference Atlas. The RSTC chair indicated that the RSTC [has not endorsed publication of the new ESA Atlas](#), “for a myriad of reasons” and states: “Primary among them is confusion for the public in the form of out-of-date information, inaccuracies, contradictions, and overlapping designations.” This Atlas did include the TEM, the SEI mapping and others in that data set.

I was one of the lead authors of the Terrestrial Ecosystems Mapping (TEM) methodology when I worked for the provincial government.

In addition, I believe the following link is what Councillor Harper spoke about, regarding the SEI analysis done by Environmental Services, regarding sensitive ecosystems in the rural area and within the Urban Containment Boundary. This link is on the RSTC website - <https://www.saanich.ca/assets/Community/Documents/Environment/Sensitive-Ecosystems-Inventory-202208-web.pdf> I believe that the "Other" category is also public lands. Within the UCB mapped sensitive ecosystems on private land are about 10% of what is mapped, while public lands, mostly parks, contain about 90% of sensitive ecosystems.

I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Ted

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Anita Bull** [REDACTED]
Date: Thu, Apr 6, 2023 at 2:29 PM
Subject: SCRES NEWSLETTER - APRIL 6/23
To: <>

Update regarding Council Meeting and April Public Engagement Opportunities

SCRES had reported that we would be providing a further update on the State of the Biodiversity report discussion at Saanich Council. SCRES fully believe that the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC), appointed by Council to provide expert advice, were almost completely ignored at this March 13, 2023, Council Meeting.

Staff and a Diamond Head consultant presented the State of Biodiversity report to Council, and both appeared to be in full control, indicating to council that it was an excellent report. The RSTC Chair was not given an opportunity to express their major concerns about the Diamond Head State of Biodiversity report, even though staff indicated there was a “partnership” between staff and the RSTC. We have not seen this partnership in action, as it appears to be a staff led program, despite all the well thought input coming from the RSTC.

The RSTC had previously pointed out significant concerns about the State of Biodiversity report, including issues such as the poor ecological condition of most Saanich Parks, that the ecosystem mapping being used by Diamond Head Consultants was flawed, and other details regarding the actual state of biodiversity, which the RSTC believed should be addressed in the State of Biodiversity report.

The RSTC had recommended that new ecosystem mapping be done within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) in Saanich and include detailed mapping of all the Saanich Parks. The RSTC had recommended a Private Land Stewardship program, with many voluntary directions forward. **None of these important recommendations and other recommendations by the RSTC were in the Diamond Head State of Biodiversity report.**

The Diamond Head report did not deliver the information required by the Terms of Reference. Staff **did not** report to Council that the **RSTC didn't endorse** the Diamond Head report.

Prior to the Council meeting, the SCRES executive had spoken with several Councillors and there were some who said they just wanted to “get this done”, despite a former Council putting in place the RSTC to help develop a more thorough biodiversity program. SCRES is concerned that the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, which is the next phase of this project, will not meet the necessary level to be effective for enhancing biodiversity in Saanich in a strategic manner.

Diamond Head used the Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (TEM) and Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) for a major part of its analysis. The SEI Mapping was created in the 1990s and was used to develop the old EDPA. The TEM mapping was created in 2007 using some of the SEI mapping. This mapping, being used by Diamond Head in their report, still includes many of the private properties which Council had removed from the EDPA and the ESA Atlas since they did not meet the sensitive ecosystem standards.

Many other properties have been confirmed by consultants and members of the RSTC, as no longer being sensitive ecosystems because they are areas of lawn or covered in invasive species. In 2020, the ESA Atlas morphed into what is now called the Environmental Reference Atlas which contains **both** the SEI and the TEM mapping. You might recall that the RSTC did not endorse the publication of this new Atlas, citing inaccuracies, contradictions and overlapping designations. There had been just over 2,000 properties captured in the EDPA. With the inclusion of the TEM mapping, **the number of properties mapped as having sensitive ecosystems appears to have more than doubled.**

SCRES is very concerned that the RSTC will continue to be ignored in all actions going forward, including what they believe needs to be the content of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

The next step in the Resilient Saanich Program is **public engagement** regarding the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. At the time of writing, we have just been provided with dates and details of the public engagement. **We will advise on the details of this opportunity by the end of the Easter long weekend.**

Input from SCRES, along with the Diamond Head Report, will be important contributors to the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The RSTC, ostensibly with the support of staff, is tasked with creating it. **Again, the Strategy may include an EDPA. It is disturbing that inaccurate mapping and an incomplete State of Biodiversity report will be utilized.**

It will be important for all of us to get involved with the public engagement.

Watch for the email after the Easter weekend.

Saanich Citizens for Resilient Environmental Stewardship (SCRES)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Anita Bull** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, Apr 10, 2023 at 12:50 PM
Subject: SCRES - Public Engagement on Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
To: <>

Public Open Houses: Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Urban Forest Strategy

Date: Tuesday, April 18
Time: 5:00-7:30pm
Location: Cedar Hill Golf Course clubhouse
Format: **In-person**

Date: Wednesday, April 19
Time: 6:30-8:00pm
Format: **Online**
Location: Saanich website link (TBA) – (SCRES will provide link when available)

Surveys for both Strategies are available on-line until May 8, 2023 <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/natural-environment/resilient-saanich-environmental-policy-framework/biodiversity-conservation-strategy.html>

SCRES recommends completing both, with special attention to the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy survey.

That survey clearly shows that an EDPA is being considered, along with other regulatory actions. One line of questioning indicates **requiring** ecosystem restoration and enhancement, and **requiring** ecosystem retention and protection. On private lands, of course.

There are not many opportunities in the Biodiversity Strategy survey for providing detailed information, except in the “vision for 2050”. SCRES suggests the issues below be considered for that section. SCRES recommends further that you complete the text portions of the surveys in your own words.

SCRES believes that until Saanich shows that it is leading by example on public lands, that there should be no regulation on private land. For the simple reason that the most gains in biodiversity can be made from restoration and protection on public land. Saanich owns these lands and has both control and responsibility.

SCRES offers these ideas for your consideration. Many of them you will be familiar with since they flow from the core of the SCRES mission:

1. A private land stewardship program has been recommended by the RSTC. SCRES strongly concurs, believing that a voluntary private landowner stewardship program is the single most important initiative Saanich could undertake. Not the least of its benefits

would be a supportive and encouraging environment for landowners to enhance biodiversity on their own properties. As contrasted with the select and compulsory compliance measures of the past. Linked only with development.

2. The District of Saanich needs to lead by example, by restoring the highly degraded natural ecosystems in Saanich Parks and on other public lands. *Before* it considers restrictive regulation for private lands. From its comprehensive assessments, SCRES has concluded that Saanich Parks are in crisis – in poor condition due to the predominance of invasive species. The parks need significant resources to protect what exists, and restore the what in many cases are seriously degraded ecosystems. Furthermore, there is little restriction-to-access, to protect against overuse. There is no indication of long-term funding to deal with these issues. Saanich appears to be relying exclusively on the volunteer Pulling Together Program, which can only cover small portions of some parks.

3. There is no Species at Risk program in Saanich for Saanich lands. The District of Saanich needs to lead by example by protecting and maintaining its species at risk locations in Saanich Parks and on other public lands.

4. Saanich needs to do full assessment of the previous EDPA - what did it protect and what state is it all in now - has there been any monitoring? What special sites were protected?

5. Most of the Sensitive ecosystems with the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) are in parks - the rest, a minority, could be better managed needs by incentives and on-the-ground education for landowners. A program implemented by conservation groups, but managed by Saanich.

6. There is an urgent need for new ecosystem mapping within the Urban Containment boundary (UCB) - as recommended by the RSTC. It should include all Saanich Parks.

7. Natural State Covenants on private lands must be voluntary to be successful, according to conservation manuals – the Green Bylaw Toolkit. Accordingly, the District of Saanich needs a full assessment of existing Natural state covenants as part of the current Biodiversity Conservations Strategy. Which must question what they are protecting. i.e., have they been successful in protecting the intended ecological features?

8. Saanich could lead by example by setting the default to native species plantings in Saanich non-natural parks. For example, why aren't we planting more Garry oaks throughout the parks system - why instead, are non-native trees and shrubs being planted? A policy is needed.

Saanich appears to be poised for the return of an EDPA, with regulations that may be similar to the EDPA it rescinded in 2018. The mapping that will be used for a new EDPA appears to capture more than double the approximately 2200 properties captured by the previous EDPA. Most of the 33 properties Council had removed from the EDPA in 2018 because the science showed they did not have sensitive ecosystems, are still mapped as having sensitive ecosystems.

Regrettably, we are heading down the same road as with the previous EDPA. Properties captured by faulty environmental mapping will almost certainly be regulated, and held to a different standard than properties *not* included. Properties owners wishing to make changes may be required to perform additional processes, and incur further expense. The potential

threat to property values will again raise its ugly head, since disclosure reports would reveal whether a property is in the EDPA.

SCRES strongly supports protecting sensitive ecosystems, but does not support discrimination against private land owners who are captured by faulty mapping, nor holding them to a different standard than Saanich Parks and other private properties. SCRES encourages you to attend one of the open houses and to complete the surveys.

Saanich Citizens for Resilient Environmental Stewardship (SCRES)

To Saanich Citizens for a Responsible EDPA (SCRES):

The RSTC ("the committee") was provided with copies of the recent SCRES newsletters (dated April 6 and 10, 2023), and is concerned about SCRES' misrepresentation of the committee's perspective.

The committee recognizes that it is ultimately an advisor to staff and Council and they are under no obligation to incorporate our input. All the committee can do is provide our expert advice and highlight any gaps or concerns with the Resilient Saanich process.

With regards to the State of Biodiversity report, the committee was definitely frustrated with the output, and our most significant comments and concerns were provided in the memo that was included as part of the March 13, 2023 Council agenda package. Generally the largest gap from RSTC's expectations was the level of inventory detail presented. While the State of Biodiversity report does provide a high level summary suitable for the general public, it does not provide accurate and detailed site specific biodiversity data to assess success (or failure) of future biodiversity conservation efforts. In addition, the committee, consultants and staff all recognize the concerns with the older TEM/SEI mapping datasets which contain many inaccuracies due to the scale of the original mapping, lack of ground truthing, and (unfortunately) subsequent loss of biodiversity since they were originally compiled. To verify these concerns, committee members, staff, Diamond Head Consulting (DHC), and many other local experts put considerable effort towards ground truthing biodiversity status and assess TEM/SEI accuracy. Unfortunately very little of this effort was represented in the report, primarily because there were insufficient resources and time available to verify all ecosystem polygons and apply similar effort fulsomely across the entire District.

Fortunately, the ground truthing effort has not been lost. It has been incorporated into various GIS datasets, some of which have been made available to the public while release of other data layers is waiting until later in the conservation strategy development process. The committee hopes that fulsome and updated inventory mapping, with regular updates, will be a primary recommendation within the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. These efforts would require substantive time and resources, which were not available for the State of Biodiversity report, and also have not yet been set aside in support of the future Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

The committee did not characterize the DHC mapping in the report as flawed - more so that insufficient rationale was presented in the report for the committee to fully understand DHC's ranking methodologies. As we noted in our memo, "understanding these fundamental rankings is important for setting goals and priorities for biodiversity conservation." While it is true that some of the potentially inaccurate TEM/SEI mapping was used by DHC, this data and the subsequent ground truthing is the only data we have and a "State Of" report needs to start with something. Ultimately, concerns about the TEM/SEI inaccuracies may become irrelevant as other criteria (e.g. hub/spoke restoration) may be more valuable for prioritizing areas for biodiversity restoration,

protection and enhancement - be it through a regulated EDPA replacement and/or enhanced volunteer stewardship.

The SCRES newsletter also indicates that RSTC Private Land Stewardship recommendations were not incorporated in the State of Biodiversity report. The RSTC has not yet provided our final recommendations to staff or DHC yet, so it is no surprise they were not incorporated!

As far as RSTC endorsement of the report goes, the committee did not actually formally vote in this regard. Instead, the committee decided to provide the memo summary of our concerns and gaps to council as noted above. Committee endorsement (or not) is irrelevant to the next steps in the Resilient Saanich process.

Overall, the committee's concerns about the State of Biodiversity report neither preclude the upcoming public consultation, nor prevent the successful development of a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. Many of the gaps we have noted will hopefully be filled by, or recommended within, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The RSTC is committed to working with consultants, staff and Council through the remainder of the Resilient Saanich process.

Regards,
The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee

A photograph of a field of pink flowers, likely chives, with green grass and stems. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the background is a soft-focus field of similar plants.

Saanich Environmental Policy Framework

Prepared by the
Resilient Saanich Technical Committee

April 2023

DRAFT April 13, 2023

Territorial Acknowledgement

The District of Saanich is within Coast and Straits Salish territory, the territories of the lək'wəŋən peoples, known today as Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, known today as W̱JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), S̱ÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nations. The First Peoples have been here since time immemorial and their history in this area is long and rich.

The District respectfully acknowledges the First Nations' long history of land stewardship and knowledge of the land and will look for opportunities to learn from and collaborate with First Nations to help us improve our community's resilience.

Contents

Territorial Acknowledgement	ii
1. Introduction	4
1.1. A Coordinated Approach to Environmental Stewardship.....	4
1.2. Creating a Resilient Saanich	5
2. The Environmental Policy Framework.....	8
2.1. Guiding Principles.....	8
2.2. Environmental Policy Framework Goals	9
3. Measuring Outcomes	11
4. Implementing the Environmental Policy Framework.....	12
4.1. Policy Gap Analysis.....	12
4.2. New and Updated Policy Areas and Strategies.....	13
4.3. Policy Filter	14
4.4. Public Actions Supporting a Resilient Saanich	14
5. Appendices	15
A. Glossary.....	15
B. Resilient Saanich Technical Committee	15
C. Gap Analysis.....	15
D. Sample Thematic Plans	16
E. Policy Filter.....	20

Cover image: Sea blush © Judith Cullington

1. Introduction

1.1. A Coordinated Approach to Environmental Stewardship

The Environmental Policy Framework (EPF or the Framework) is a way of thinking. It provides Guiding Principles and Goals to align and direct the District of Saanich’s policies and programs to support the creation of a Resilient Saanich. It fosters a strong and united culture of environmental protection and enhancement from Council, staff, business interests, and the community.

Natural environment: In this document, “natural environment” refers to the biota and ecosystems found on southern Vancouver Island pre-European settlement, together with the abiotic factors necessary for life and the physical processes that affect them.

A healthy natural environment is a high priority for the Council and residents of the District of Saanich. The Official Community Plan¹ (OCP) vision is that:

“Saanich is a sustainable community where a healthy natural environment is recognized as paramount for ensuring social well-being and economic vibrancy, for current and future generations.”²

This importance is emphasized in numerous OCP policies, multiple departments, and numerous public committees such as the “Sustainability and Climate Action” and “Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Committees.” Saanich residents also play a large part in maintaining and enhancing the natural environment, both on their own properties and by assisting with environmental stewardship on public lands.

The Framework Guiding Principles and Goals nest within and are consistent with Saanich’s OCP (Figure 1). In turn, if the objectives associated with each thematic policy area³ (such as parks, urban forests, biodiversity) are consistent with the Framework Principles and Goals, this will support the creation of a resilient natural environment that supports the biodiversity, economy, and desirability of Saanich.

¹ [2008 OCP](#) . Note that an updated OCP is in development.

² <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/community-planning/official-community-plan-ocp.html>, page 10.

³ [Add to Glossary](#)

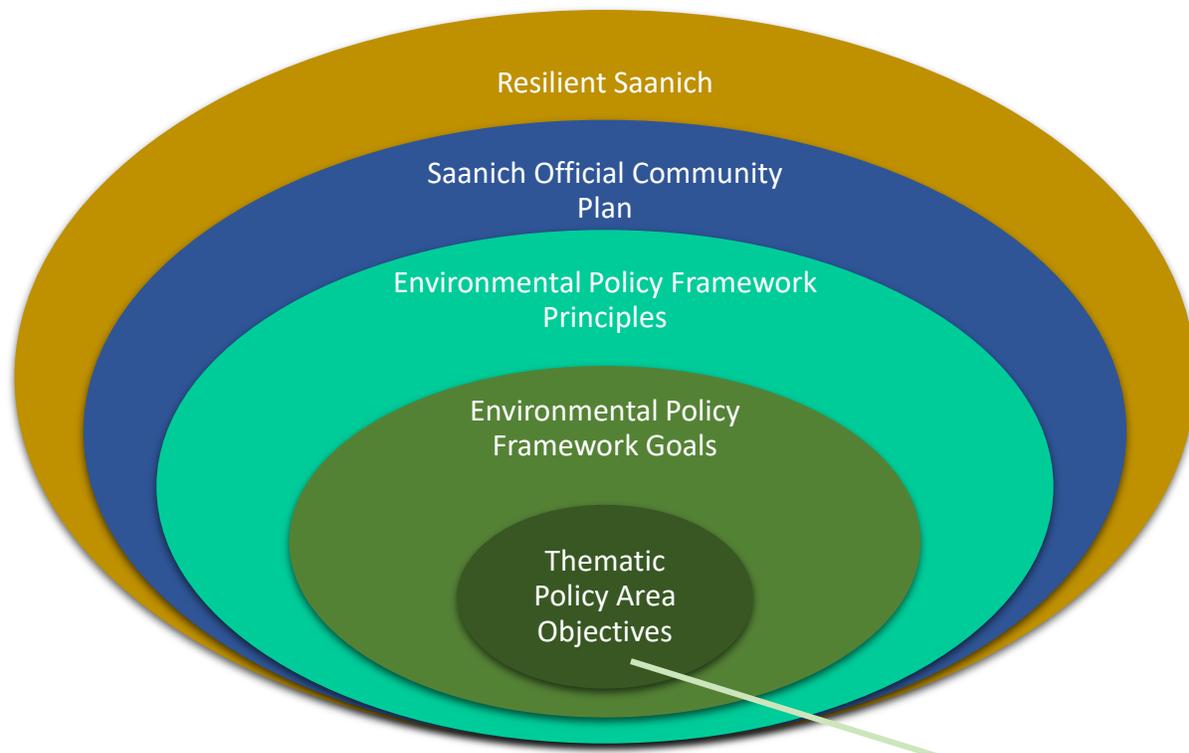


Figure 1: Environmental Policy Framework

Examples of thematic policy areas are the Urban Forest Strategy, Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, and Climate Plan.

1.2. Creating a Resilient Saanich

The concept of resilience is the ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adverse change. Resilient Saanich includes not just a resilient *natural environment*, but a resilient *population* that is well informed, socially well-connected, and supportive of actions to address issues that would otherwise diminish community health and wellbeing.

Benefits of working towards greater resilience include better preparedness for natural hazards (such as flooding and heat domes), as well as creating community cohesion and providing for the health and safety of all members of society. Having a resilient and healthy natural environment brings the added benefit of having highly desirable places to live, providing

habitats for wildlife, and benefitting from the many ecosystem services⁴ that natural environments provide.

Achieving a Resilient Saanich will involve cooperation across society. As an initial step, Council has asked for this enabling and unifying framework for environmental policies and programs. Application of the Framework will be District-wide, as decisions and actions impacting the natural environment (directly or indirectly) are found in multiple departments. The Principles and Goals are intended to apply equally to policies and procedures affecting both public and private lands in Saanich.

⁴ See Glossary ([add to Glossary](#))

Background to the Environmental Policy Framework

Saanich introduced an Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA) bylaw in 2012. This bylaw was created to ensure that new subdivisions or structures would not harm native species/ ecosystems and natural features. The bylaw proved controversial and was later rescinded, although many in Saanich were in favour of retaining the policy.

This discussion prompted Saanich Council to look for ways to accomplish the goal of environmental protection throughout the community, with broader public support. An overarching framework for improved coordination of environmental programs and policies was initiated. In November 2017, Council passed a motion:

“That Council direct staff to bring Council a report as soon as possible on the potential of developing a Saanich program which includes the topics of Climate Adaptation, a Biological Conservation Strategy, and Stewardship Program to serve as a policy framework for other Saanich environmental policies and programs, and a new Environmental Development Permit Area be considered part of this program; and that the Diamond Head report recommendations be considered a component of this report.”

The **Resilient Saanich Technical Committee** was established as an independent technical committee of natural resource practitioners and specialists. The purpose of this Committee, as outlined in its [terms of reference](#), is to *“provide independent analysis, recommendations and other input as might be helpful to Council, Staff and consultants to shape and inform the **development of an Environmental Policy Framework.**”* Tasks assigned were:

- ◆ Rationalize existing and new environmental policies and programs into the Framework;
- ◆ Develop a new Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and enhanced Stewardship Program to serve with Saanich’s new Climate Plan as the strategic pillars for the Framework
- ◆ Evaluate the strength of the Environmental Policy Framework (EPF) and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) to replace the EDPA.
- ◆ Identify a range of potential policy tools, possibly including a new EDPA, for managing the environment in Saanich.

2. The Environmental Policy Framework

2.1. Guiding Principles

The Environmental Policy Framework Guiding Principles set the tone and direction for Saanich’s policies and practices. These principles are consistent with the District’s [Strategic Plan](#)⁵ and OCP Goals.

The eleven Guiding Principles of the Environmental Policy Framework are:

1. **Recognize the intrinsic value** of nature.⁶
2. **Respect and include Indigenous knowledge**, worldviews and perspectives in environmental decisions and actions.
3. **Use evidence-based decision-making** to support adaptive environmental management.
4. **Adopt the precautionary approach**⁷ in environmental decision making.
5. **Lead by example** through innovation and improving on best practices.
6. **Look beyond Saanich’s borders** to achieve results at a bioregional scale.
7. **Address climate** adaptation and mitigation in all that we do.
8. **Collaborate** with diverse interests to achieve multiple environmental benefits.
9. **Provide transparency** with open environmental data for public oversight and research.
10. **Enhance community capacity** and knowledge to create a passionate, informed and skilled community that participates in building a more resilient Saanich.
11. **Support fairness and inclusion** in all forms of environmental policy and engagement.

Section 4.3 and Appendix C discuss how these Guiding Principles can be used as a “policy filter” to review new and existing policies and programs.

⁵ District of Saanich Strategic Plan 2019-2023. **Note that this may need to be updated.**

⁶ This means nature has value in its own right, independent of the value or utility humans give it.

⁷ The International Institute for Sustainable Development notes that, “In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.” <https://www.iisd.org/articles/deep-dive/precautionary-principle>

2.2. Environmental Policy Framework Goals

The two Framework Goals describe the desired results from implementing this Environmental Policy Framework.

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

Goal 1 aims to enhance biodiversity and other essential ecosystem functions. It addresses direct action to protect, rehabilitate, and enhance the natural environment in the face of changing climates.

Examples of District of Saanich actions that would support this goal include:

- ◆ Rehabilitation of natural park lands
- ◆ Daylighting of streams
- ◆ Identification and protection of sensitive ecosystems (add to glossary), as well as riparian and marine foreshores
- ◆ Enhancement of the urban forest
- ◆ Support for Pulling Together volunteers and other stewardship initiatives on public and private land
- ◆ Private land restoration (backyards and larger holdings such as UVic, Royal Oak Burial Park)
- ◆ Citizen science monitoring
- ◆ Promoting sustainable agriculture
- ◆ Reducing sources of pollution
- ◆ Promoting more “environment-friendly” developments through education, incentives and/or regulation
- ◆ Improving ecosystem mapping in parks; develop protection management plans for parks and nature reserves
- ◆ Encouraging backyard biodiversity through voluntary stewardship

Achieving this goal will also require the commitment of residents, businesses, and landowners to be active stewards.

Goal 2. Foster complementary and coordinated policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives that are aligned with the Environmental Policy Framework Guiding Principles.

Goal 2 promotes a culture of environmental stewardship and resilience within Saanich Council, staff, and the public. The Guiding Principles will assist in evaluating existing District policies and provide guidance for the development of future policy.

Examples of actions that would support this goal are:

- ◆ Assessing existing regulatory, management, and administrative tools to identify gaps and inconsistencies with the Guiding Principles
- ◆ Inter-departmental cooperation to evaluate and address the environmental impacts of policy decisions, and enhance their environmental benefits
- ◆ Ensuring resources are effectively used to achieve good environmental outcomes
- ◆ Increasing community understanding of policies, plans, programs, bylaws, and partnerships encompassed by the Environmental Policy Framework

3. Measuring Outcomes

Progress towards meeting the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework will be measured primarily through the success of the policies and programs it informs (achieving the objectives of each of the policies and strategies).

In addition, it will be important to track the overall progress towards a more Resilient Saanich and report this to the public.

Goal 1 urges on-the-ground action towards a more Resilient Saanich. Progress can be measured through a State of Saanich Environment report, repeated every five years. This report might look at indicators such as:

- ◆ Hectares of Saanich parks that have been rehabilitated or enhanced (including clearing of invasives)
- ◆ Urban forest canopy cover
- ◆ Kilometres of stream restoration/enhancement
- ◆ Sensitive ecosystems in “protected” status

Goal 2 urges the District to align its programs and policies to meet Goal 1. Indicators of progress could include:

- ◆ Percentage of staff who have received training on the Framework Guiding Principles and Goals
- ◆ Number of policies that have been created (or updated) using the Framework Policy Filter.
- ◆ Extent to which the thematic plans are meeting their objectives
- ◆ Public awareness of the Environmental Policy Framework

4. Implementing the Environmental Policy Framework

The Environmental Policy Framework is intended to apply to the entire body of Saanich policies and practices that—directly or indirectly—touch on the natural environment.

The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee recommends the following steps to begin implementation of this Framework.

1. Council should adopt the Environmental Policy Framework and direct that it be implemented District-wide.
2. Provide training so that every staff person becomes familiar with the importance and purpose of the Environmental Policy Framework, and so that the Framework Guiding Principles and Goals become part of the District culture.
3. Amend the OCP to reflect the Environmental Policy Framework, ensuring that the OCP adheres to the Framework Guiding Principles and Goals. This change could be incorporated into the current (2023) OCP update.
4. Amend the 2020 [Climate Plan: Renewable and Resilient Saanich](#) to reflect the Environmental Policy Framework.
5. Conduct an environmental policy gap analysis (see Section 4.1) to identify new (or updated) policies, bylaws and strategies that will support the movement towards a more resilient Saanich.
6. Develop/update additional thematic policies and strategies as required and ensure that all associated objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) (Section 4.2).
7. Identify existing Saanich policies, bylaws and strategies that touch on the environment, and review these policies, bylaws and strategies through the Policy Filter (Section 4.3).
8. Encourage and support public actions that support framework goals (Section 4.4).

4.1. Policy Gap Analysis

The Environmental Policy Framework is intended to help coordinate the many municipal policies meant to protect Saanich’s natural environment. However, it is unknown how

completely existing policies address the breadth of existing and emerging environmental concerns in the municipality.

To address this uncertainty, an environmental policy gap analysis is needed to:

- ◆ Catalogue existing and emerging threats to Saanich’s natural environment
- ◆ Identify existing Saanich policies meant to protect the environment and those aspects of Saanich’s natural environment not currently addressed by policy

This high-level gap analysis can also identify policies with multiple environmental benefits.

A preliminary gap analysis approach is shown in Appendix C.

4.2. New and Updated Policy Areas and Strategies

Additional and updated policy areas will be needed to fill in identified gaps. These must be designed to conform to the principles in the Framework and focused on achieving its Goals.

The following thematic policy areas have been suggested. Some strategies may be a subset of broader strategies; for example, a Park Management Strategy may be part of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, or green space conservation may be in several strategies, etc.

- ◆ 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
- ◆ Park Management Strategy (rehabilitation, invasive species management)
- ◆ Agriculture (includes sustainable practice & food security)
- ◆ Green Economy
- ◆ Transportation (environmental aspects)
- ◆ Governance and Administration

Appendix D provides examples of how these policy areas needed to fill gaps could be developed.

4.3. Policy Filter

Saanich has a large number of existing policies and programs that directly or indirectly affect the natural environment.

The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee has developed a Policy Filter to provide staff with a method to evaluate new and existing policies or programs to determine how closely they fulfil the intent of the Framework Principles and Goals. More information on the Policy Filter is found in Appendix E.

4.4. Public Actions Supporting a Resilient Saanich

Actions by residents (and non-residents) of Saanich will influence the ability to achieve a more Resilient Saanich. The District will play a role in helping residents to learn about ways to protect and enhance the natural environment at home and in the community.

Examples of positive actions that residents could take include participating in programs such as Pulling Together, creating more biodiverse backyards, and making choices that reduce carbon emissions.

5. Appendices

(Note that the appendices are a “work in progress” and incomplete at this time.)

A. Glossary

Thomas working on

B. Resilient Saanich Technical Committee

Members

Staff support

C. Gap Analysis

Information to be added

D. Sample Thematic Plans

Each of the thematic policy areas will be addressed by a plan or strategy that adheres to the Framework principles and have an outline that typically includes the following elements. This is where SMART⁸ objectives will be found along with strategies and actions. The following outlines information that could be included.

Policy Area Plan or Strategy - guide

(the outline can vary depending on the policy area) - pick and choose

1. Relevant Landscapes and Scales - situation assessment
2. Evaluation of ecosystem health and functional condition
3. Indigenous interests and relevant knowledge
4. Desired future condition
5. Data gaps
6. Policy gaps
7. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) assessment
8. Policies and program objectives
9. Strategies (approaches)
10. Tools
11. Action Plan (tasks, timelines, lead department, resources)
12. Monitoring and Assessment

⁸ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound

Example of Draft Outline: Thematic Plan for Water

Draft for illustration purposes

Water and Water Management

Note: it is expected that any thematic plan would be developed either by staff or a consultant, but using public engagement.

Situation Assessment

- ◆ Look at on a regional and watershed scale
- ◆ Climate change may alter the seasonality, distribution and abundance of rainfall
- ◆ Long periods of summer and fall drought to be reconned with
- ◆ Water can be assessed in three ‘streams’ (so to speak): drinking water and sewage, stormwater management, and overall watershed health
- ◆ Drinking water arranged at a regional scale, but sewers are District of Saanich; Saanich has small jurisdiction over water supply but responsibility for sewage, which is where water supplied goes after use.
- ◆ Stormwater flows may change and create additional flood risks or overwhelm capacity
- ◆ Watershed health critical for aquatic life and related biodiversity, especially during low and peak flow conditions that may threaten during critical life stages
- ◆ Key watersheds are Colquitz and its tributaries, Tod creek and Cecelia Creek
- ◆ Marine shorelines are addressed in a different Thematic Plan

Desired Future Condition

- ◆ Watersheds yield water at rates that prevent extreme flow conditions, both too high and too low. Watersheds have continuous riparian zones vegetated with native species. Water meets provincial quality guidelines.
- ◆ Reduce stormwater runoff rates and increase run-off delays.
- ◆ Drinking water sources are secure

Policy and Program Objectives

- ◆ Watersheds:
 - Set critical flow design parameters

- Set surface water quality objectives aimed at protecting aquatic life and appropriate monitoring program
- Inventory riparian zones and develop revegetation plans for areas requiring it
- ◆ Drinking water and sewer
 - Reduce per capita water use to below 200L/day
 - Find and repair leaks in the pressurized water distribution system
 - Find breaks and repair sewage system and evaluate its capacity to accommodate population growth
- ◆ Stormwater Management
 - Reduce stormwater runoff rate by 40% in rural Saanich and 60% inside the Urban Containment Boundary
 - Require pervious pavers and surfaces where feasible. Incent the use of these.
 - Wide implementation of rain gardens and exfiltration ponds
 - Proper maintenance and clean-out of catch basins

Gap and SWOT

SWOT Table:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing strategies for the three streams will off the bests hope for sustainability of water resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address groundwater, which may require a separate strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get water management properly organized now, rather than scrambling to do so in a panic as water resources becomes a crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking too long to undertake these strategies or not resourcing them adequately may result in failures in one or more streams

Gaps:

- ◆ Incomplete inventory of groundwater and understanding of aquifer health; more research needed
- ◆ Incomplete record of water quality and flow data for the key watersheds in Saanich (Colquitz/Bowker). Routine flow and quality monitoring needed.
- ◆ etc

Strategies and tools

- ◆ Develop watershed management plan for the Colquitz and its tributaries. Include appropriate land development restrictions in riparian zones, and rehabilitation plans for degraded areas in the watershed that are necessary to protect these drainages. Ensure there is an implementation phase that is costed and properly resourced.
- ◆ Develop a strategic approach to improving water infiltration across the District. Where necessary, enact bylaws to ensure the strategy is carried out.

Action plan

- ◆ Council approval of the Thematic Plan and authorize implementation
- ◆ Set up a steering group among staff with cross department representation to prepare for and implement the Thematic Plan
- ◆ Then, just do it

Monitoring and assessment

- ◆ Establish criteria for measuring success: measured reductions in storm run-off, measured reduction in per capita water use
- ◆ Establish a routine for reporting back to council on progress.
- ◆ Council hold staff accountable for completion

E. Policy Filter

A means of evaluating new policies or programs is needed to determine how closely they fulfil the intent of the principles. The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee suggests two approaches. The one chosen may depend on the nature of the policy or program.

1. A simple approach is to use the proposed criteria in the table to determine if a policy has a high, medium or low relevance to each principle. A neutral category is added for policies or programs that have no relevance to a principle, and there is a category for evaluating if a policy or program might work against a principle. The final evaluation of a policy or program would be to weigh the determinations for all the principles to draw a conclusion about how close, overall, a policy or program comes to fulfilling the intent of the principles and achievement of Goal 2.
2. A more numerical approach is the use of a scoring scale for adding numerical scores to the criteria in the table for each principle. In this approach, scores are added and the sum of scores gives a numerical means to evaluate how close a policy is to complying with the principle. If a proposed policy or program scores high, it complies closely with the principles in the EPF, and will contribute to a more Resilient Saanich. In the example below, a scoring scale of zero to three is used, but any scale is usable. In this example, policies and program initiatives that score 27 are in full compliance with the principles, and can be adopted as consistent with the Environmental Policy Framework. Policies and program initiatives that score in the mid-range could be re-examined to see where they could be enhanced before adoption. Policies and program initiatives that score low may need to go back to the generating department for a re-think on how it can conform more closely to these principles. Policies and program initiatives that score very low are probably not adoptable because they will not advance, and may work against, achievement of a Resilient Saanich.

Add the policy filter and revise to match principles list.

DRAFT (v8) Briefing note from the Stewardship Working Group (WG) to the RSTC 2023-04-12

The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) was mandated to assess opportunities for enhanced environmental stewardship in Saanich as outlined in the [Terms of Reference](#) (last updated October 2021) for the Resilient Saanich process.

The intent of the brief is to provide recommendations to Saanich staff and the consultant preparing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy regarding concepts to be considered when developing an enhanced stewardship plan for Saanich. The Stewardship WG will also be compiling a list of examples of stewardship programs from elsewhere that could be adapted by Saanich to achieve these RSTC recommendations. Some examples are provided herein, but an expanded list will be provided under separate cover.

Finally, attempts have been made to utilize terminology consistent with the Society for Ecological Restoration (Gerwing *et al.*, 2021)¹, though these attempts are not fulsome.

Background

Stewardship can be defined and characterized in a number of ways. In the context of this document, we have defined stewardship as the efforts taken to protect, maintain, restore, and enhance biodiversity and associated ecosystem functions.

More broadly, stewardship can include the following characteristics:

- Purpose:
 - Aims to enhance the environment through motivated community participation
 - Programs can originate as government-led or community-led.
 - Government-led should include active engagement with or participation by the community. It should create a sense of ownership, which will in turn nurture other stewardship actions.
 - Community-led activities may have strong motivations, but may lack capacity and need logistical support from government.
- Who:
 - Actions by members of the community to protect or enhance biodiversity. These actions may be:
 - Voluntary and unpaid
 - Encouraged by incentives (fiscal or other)
 - Required through legislation or regulation which says gov't led actions should include community? i.e. there is nothing about gov't staff working alone under Purpose
 - Actions by District staff and other paid personnel
 - Can range from individual actions to larger group projects

¹ Gerwing, T.G., V.C. Hawkes, G.D. Gann and S.D. Murphy. 2021. Restoration, reclamation, and rehabilitation: on the need for, and positing a definition of, ecological reclamation. *Restoration Ecology* 30(7). <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.13461>

Commented [cj11]: v7 represents Judith's effort to edit and update the doc

v8 incorporates a few subsequent comments from Stewardship WG members

Commented [CL2]: There is debate amongst the Stewardship WG as to whether "voluntary" should be included in the definition of stewardship.

Commented [JC3]: This needs to be consistent with the language in the RSTC Glossary.

- ♦ Where:
 - Can be on public or private property.
 - Is often placed-based rather than issue-based
- ♦ What:
 - Can vary in complexity and scale
 - Can be:
 - Direct (e.g., removing trash, removing invasive plants, planting trees, establishing pollinator meadows) or
 - Indirect (e.g., environmental education) – which does not directly “improve” the environment.
 - Can include physical labour, applying specialized skills for planning and organizing reclamation, rehabilitation and restoration efforts, and citizen science-related data collection and dissemination.

Enhanced stewardship efforts in Saanich must be:

- ♦ Well-planned:
 - Have clearly articulated objectives
 - Build on existing stewardship and citizen science programs
 - Seek out and utilize the knowledge and enthusiasm of Saanich citizens and local experts
 - Have quantitative targets and metrics to evaluate stewardship success over time and space
- ♦ Resourced:
 - Proactively coordinated by adequately resourced staff for both public and private lands
 - Enable and support community-led initiatives (e.g., with financial or in-kind support)
- ♦ Inclusive and broad-reaching:
 - Recognize that people have varied reasons to participate in stewardship including desire to protect the environment, social connectedness, non-monetary recognition, etc.
 - Provide opportunities for people who do not own property in Saanich to participate
 - Encourage community and individual participation in biodiversity and environmental stewardship through education and outreach
 - Develop and maintain strong partnerships with and among diverse groups including:
 - Environmental and stewardship community groups and community associations
 - Academic institutions
 - Other levels of government (e.g., VIHA)
- ♦ Impactful:
 - Fulsomely applied on public park land to ensure Saanich is leading by example

Commented [BW4]: MUST metrics need to be in place for all individuals practicing stewardship on their own property? Or just if you want to be supported somehow? Don't want to create a deterrent.

I have the same query around MUST for the Resourced category.

- Targeted to areas at risk of imminent loss, biodiversity hotspots and public and private land hosting ecosystems and species at risk
- Consider biodiversity beyond vascular plants, including soil and aquatic life
- Prioritize native species and natural ecosystem functions, but recognize that non-native species can still have stewardship/biodiversity value in the urban landscape
- Consider all spatial scales, from targeted initiatives (e.g., Bowker Creek) to district-and region-wide efforts (e.g., hub/spoke corridor protection and enhancement).
- ◆ Environmental protection during land development:
 - Ensure the built environment minimizes impact on the native biodiversity Saanich is trying to protect and enhance
- ◆ Educate developers and landscaping professionals about the value and benefits of biodiversity and environmental protection, use of native species and non-native species that support biodiversity needs and incentivize their participation

Further details about these recommendations are provided below.

Voluntary Stewardship versus Regulation

While voluntary and enthusiastic stewardship should be a critical component of the upcoming Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, voluntary efforts alone will likely be insufficient to protect and enhance biodiversity in Saanich. There are some situations where regulation will be required to minimize biodiversity loss, for example to restrict development, retain trees, protect riparian areas, minimize impervious surfaces, and promote connectivity.

The RSTC recognizes that balancing voluntary and regulated stewardship in the context of continued development will be politically challenging, but this does not preclude the need for both approaches. Bylaws must be developed to ensure that they are not inadvertently punitive or too restrictive to homeowners, and must not discourage voluntary stewardship.

Areas for environmental development protection should be identified in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy with full rationale, and should not be limited to sensitive ecosystems. Factors to be considered should include: the need to protect, maintain, restore, reclaim or rehabilitate hub/spoke biodiversity corridors, creating buffers around protected and riparian areas, and protecting ecosystem integrity in Rural Saanich.

The RSTC also recommends consideration of a Stormwater Utility Fee similar to the one in place in the City of Victoria. Such a utility can incentivize property owners to reduce impermeable surface area and manage stormwater on site with the goal of reducing impacts to the stormwater system and the creeks into which it drains. Much biodiversity in urban creeks has been lost due to flashy flows, and restoring more natural flow patterns is foundational for aquatic biodiversity restoration.

Consideration should also be given to regulating building and other built environment designs to ensure they are not detrimental to biodiversity protection. Potential examples include use of

non-reflective window glass that deters bird strikes, ensuring lighting is not a detriment to night-time wildlife activity, creating green roofs, etc.

Finally, the RSTC will be closely following the update of Saanich's Urban Forest Strategy to determine its scale of biodiversity protectiveness. This strategy is limited to trees and will likely not fully protect or enhance other types of biodiversity nor ensure the built environment is suitably protective of biodiversity.

Objectives, Targets, and Metrics

Stewardship objectives should relate to the underlying objective of stewardship as defined above (*i.e.*, the efforts taken to protect, maintain, restore, and enhance biodiversity and associated ecosystem functions). They will vary based on the scale and spatial coverage of any given stewardship program.

Any enhanced stewardship programs that the District of Saanich advocates for or promotes must have clear rationale and defined objectives. Without an understanding of why a program exists and what it intends to achieve, building enthusiastic and informed participant support and measuring support will not be possible.

Examples of enhanced stewardship objectives include:

- 1) Restoration, reclamation, and rehabilitation of
 - a. sensitive ecosystems to the extent possible
 - b. urban watersheds
 - c. marine foreshore
 - d. native species, or non-native species suitable to maintain ecosystem function in a changing environment
- 2) Maintenance and enhancement of tree canopy; biodiversity hub and spoke corridors
- 3) Establishment of backyard biodiversity enhancement as a public priority
- 4) Use of nature-based solutions, e.g., for stormwater management and infiltration, heat island reduction

While the list of objectives above is certainly not exhaustive, it does cover many of the broad biodiversity conservation concerns identified by the RSTC to date.

All stewardship programs must also have clearly defined targets, but developing targets will be challenging for some. For example, sensitive ecosystem rehabilitation or restoration targets would likely be different for public versus private lands. In parks, the target may be to restore sensitive ecosystems to natural state or restore ecosystem function with habitat and non-native species that provide equivalent ecosystem services. However, restoration of all private lands within Saanich's Urban Containment Boundary to a full natural state is not feasible, and reclamation (as per Gerwing *et al.* 2021)¹ should be the target. While residents should be encouraged and incentivized to restore sensitive ecosystems on their properties where possible, a more realistic private land target could be to simply enhance backyard biodiversity in support of expanded hub/spoke corridors.

Examples of targets include, but should not be limited to:

- 1) Increasing tree canopy by 5% per year

Commented [cj15]: Bev - The updated DPA will include these initiatives, thankfully, because they are architectural. But nothing about plants and soil other than very high level comments about trees.

Commented [KB6]: This doesn't seem to fit either in the context of (voluntary) stewardship or this particular section. If we are discussing voluntary tree stewardship then we should focus on tree planting and protection of large mature trees. For the former, stewardship actions include voluntarily planting trees, or voluntarily maintaining newly-planted street trees until established. For the latter, one needed stewardship action is community science to monitor and document the condition of older mature trees that provide ecological goods and services. Saanich should want that information and be prepared to facilitate it. A second way is one which I keep mentioning but it never enters our document - volunteering to have a notable tree on one's property designated as significant as per the tree protection bylaw. The owner sacrifices some control over their property (like a covenant) but has the opportunity for matching grants from the municipality to maintain the trees. That is an incentive to the landowner to maintain a big tree. The related stewardship/biodiversity/urban forest aspect is that significant trees can be a focal point for better understanding of Saanich's urban forest and history. Unfortunately, Saanich has done a miserable job of making the program achieve its potential and it may be ignored in the upcoming urban forest strategy. We should mention the program because it has a voluntary stewardship component and its incentive program is unique among North American cities!

Commented [cj17]: Bev - We should also stick our nose into the DPA updating process.

Commented [BW8R7]: Agreed

Commented [cj19]: I agree with Kevin - concept of significant tree covenant with incentive to properly maintain should be added in the doc somewhere.

Commented [JC10]: This needs to be consistent with the language in the RSTC Glossary.

- 2) Daylighting 100m of creek per year
- 3) Eliminating 75% of invasive species from parks
- 4) Eliminating 100% of priority invasive species from parks and non-park public lands
- 5) Soil retention on property, neighbourhood, and district scales
- 6) 70% of native species in your backyard
- 7) 50% of residential properties with 25% native species by 2030

Enhanced stewardship programs should also include quantitative metrics, and like objectives and targets, metrics will vary by program. Without metrics, the ability to assess success of efforts over time and space will not be possible. Suggested stewardship metrics include, but should not be limited to:

- 1) Tree canopy and/or native species coverage area
- 2) Change in seral stage (e.g., to assess success of reducing lawn and enhancing (ideally) native shrub coverage under urban tree canopy)
- 3) Number of rare and endangered species present
- 4) Permeable area
- 5) Effectiveness of stewardship programs (e.g., ha of natural ecosystem restored/rehabilitated through the Pulling Together program)

Some of the above targets and metrics must be addressed during Saanich's current update of the Urban Forest Strategy.

Existing Stewardship Programs

There are many excellent stewardship programs already in place in Saanich or that have been developed elsewhere and could be implemented in Saanich.

Some programs (such as Pulling Together, the native plant salvage program & PLUS (propagation, learning, using, sharing) are Saanich-driven and funded. Some are largely independent of Saanich, led by community groups or NGOs, such as the Naturescape, Green Shores programs, and Habitat Acquisition Trust's Good Neighbours programs. Others (such as the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary model) are on District land and receive funding from Saanich, but are administered and managed by a non-profit society.

Overall, there is strong RSTC support for these programs. The Stewardship WG, Saanich staff, and other contributors will be compiling a list of other programs that will be provided for consideration to the consultant developing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

The Stewardship WG feels there are a few broad gaps or issues with existing programs that should be addressed to achieve enhanced stewardship success including the following.

- 1) Strategic approaches
 - Saanich lacks a municipal-level stewardship plan. This plan will likely be identified as a need in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and should ensure efforts and stewardship target locations are prioritized, actions are not duplicated, and common objectives are achieved across municipal boundaries. This plan should also consider all spatial scales, from targeted initiatives (e.g., Bowker Creek) to district-and region-wide efforts (e.g., hub/spoke corridor protection and enhancement).

- ♦ The plan could consider whether a new private property stewardship coordinator is necessary to engage residents who live within areas identified for hub/spoke biodiversity corridor reclamation, rehabilitation or restoration, or whether existing volunteer efforts should be redirected to specific prioritized sensitive ecosystem areas rather than general invasive species removal in parks.

2) Clear direction

- ♦ There is a lack of clarity about whether ongoing development by Saanich of stormwater and other environmental management plans consider stewardship and/or biodiversity. The Environmental Policy Framework will trigger staff to consider stewardship and/or biodiversity opportunities in all their planning activities.
- ♦ There is a backlog in producing park management plans, which leads to lack of direction for ecosystem restoration

Commented [cjl11]: Bev - Hopefully DPAs will be subject to the Policy Filter, but we'll have to push for that

3) Data and information

- ♦ There is little use of citizen science and open data programs to increase community involvement and guide biodiversity and broader environmental policy improvements over time.
- ♦ There is a need for good invasive species mapping.

4) Staff capacity

- ♦ A lack of staff capacity to:
 - ensure natural state covenants are maintained effectively
 - enforce existing bylaws such as the bylaw prohibiting the feeding of native wildlife (e.g., deer)
 - provide 1-on-1 advice to residents on biodiversity enhancement and stewardship opportunities on a site-by-site basis. Saanich already has arborists that do site visits to advise on tree removal and the district would benefit from a similar, if not enhanced and more advisory, level of service for environmental stewardship
 - support community efforts, e.g., volunteers wanting to assist with invasive species mapping. The Pulling Together program has existing staff support for work within parks but, even so, has a waiting list of projects. Expanded support for existing programs might help Saanich enhance native biodiversity.

5) Communications and outreach

- ♦ A lack of proactive promotion, outreach, coordination and uptake(?) for the native plant salvage program & PLUS, Naturescape, Green Shores (or similar), Significant Tree Program, and citizen science (e.g., iNaturalist and significant tree programs) programs.

6) Funding and fiscal incentives

- ♦ A lack of a Local Conservation Fund. Such funds, often based on parcel taxes, have proven successful throughout BC in providing funding support to biodiversity

conservation groups. Guidance on how to set up such funds can be found at <https://www.cdfcp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Conservation-Fund-Guide-2nd-Edition-2017.pdf>. The RSTC acknowledges that changes to property taxes are complicated to implement and would require substantive bylaw consultation, development and revision.

- A lack of subsidies or incentives to participate in private property stewardship. Examples of potential subsidies or incentives include:
 - Subsidized native plant supplies (e.g., LEAF in Ontario - <https://www.yourleaf.org/>)
 - Reductions in property taxes based on percentage of native species or tree canopy rehabilitation/restoration/coverage and/or reductions in impermeable surfaces (e.g., City of Victoria's stormwater utility Rainwater Rewards - <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/water-sewer-stormwater/stormwater.html>). The RSTC acknowledges that changes development, taxes are complicated to implement and would require substantive bylaw consultation, development and revision.

Commented [KB12]: Saanich's Significant Tree Program!!!! If we don't hammer that home, no one will, including the Parks Dept. It exists and needs some energy and love!

Commented [BW13R12]: Can we add it somehow?

7) Recognition

- There is a need for:
 - Enhanced public acknowledgement of residents who successfully achieve Naturescape, Green Shores or similar program objectives in newsletters, media and elsewhere
 - Certification for residents who go above and beyond in stewardship efforts. Examples that could be adapted for Saanich include programs from Portland, Oregon (<https://backyardhabitats.org/>), Edmonton (<https://natureedmonton.wordpress.com/welcome/about-edmonton-master-naturalists/>), the Habitat Acquisition Trust (<https://hat.bc.ca/goodneighbours>)

Stewardship During Development and Landscaping

There is currently a lack of consideration for stewardship and biodiversity protection opportunities when private property development or updated landscaping takes place. Many developers, landscapers, and landowners do not understand the value of ecosystem and biodiversity protection or that development does not have to have adverse impacts.

One option is for Saanich to implement a workshop or create a video that all development applicants (professional and otherwise) must attend/watch prior to submitting an application. This workshop/video would inform applicants of Saanich's rationale and objectives for biodiversity enhancement and protection, the value of doing so, and provide examples of successful projects that have protected, enhanced, reclaimed, rehabilitated, or restored biodiversity.

There are few incentives for developers to protect and enhance biodiversity in their projects. The Stewardship WG has two ideas for how developers could be incentivized:

- 1) A Developer Environmental Steward certification program could be developed. Saanich would then encourage property owners to work with certified developers. Such a program is likely best administered by an independent agency, with certification processes and standards developed by an external body. Certification criteria could

Commented [BW14]: Current negotiations for exg landscape retention usually lead to a reduction in the parking requirement and/or increased building height but these go against Local Area Plans and infuriate (rightfully so) neighbourhood residents, especially as the residents contributed to making the LAP.

include previous success at implementing projects that achieve stewardship objectives, with the more successful projects a developer has, the higher their certification is (e.g., gold, silver, bronze developers). This could be included as one of Saanich's annual environmental awards.

- 2) A Built Green-like certification program consisting of biodiversity and ecosystem service attributes could be developed and applied at a property level. The Township of Esquimalt's Green Building Checklist, the City of Surrey's Sustainable Development Checklist, and the City of Toronto's Green Standard checklists have some criteria that Saanich could adapt.

As noted above, there is also likely some benefit in mandating through regulation some aspects of building and built environment designs to ensure they are not a detriment to biodiversity protection.

Finally, many landscapers and Master Gardener associations would benefit from enhanced education on the benefits of the use of native species, and better selection of non-native species, when unavoidable. Such education could tie into the above-mentioned environmental steward certification or LEED-like certification programs.

Generating Enthusiastic Participation

Enthusiastic participation in stewardship will be fostered by addressing many of the gaps and issues noted above. However, there are additional barriers to stewardship participation.

Saanich faced criticisms when implementing the EDPA.² Some residents felt there was a double-standard when requiring private property native species stewardship when native species biodiversity and ecosystems services were not maintained in adjacent Saanich Parks or on other non-park public lands. Others felt that sensitive ecosystem designations were improperly assigned to their properties.

To set a positive stewardship example for private landowners, Saanich needs to demonstrate that it is committed to enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem condition in all public lands (parks and other lands). In doing so, Saanich will likely need additional staffing but will also need to rely heavily on the work of volunteer stewards.

Many Saanich residents do not own land and may not have yards they can steward. Therefore, opportunities to participate beyond backyard biodiversity must also be promoted and made available to non-landowners. Programs such as Pulling Together can be particularly effective in this regard.

In addition, relying solely on "sensitive ecosystem" definitions and terminologies should also be avoided when identifying areas for prioritized stewardship and/or environmental protection regulation, as few sensitive ecosystems actually remain intact in Saanich. Other justifications for flagging areas for biodiversity conservation (e.g., hub/corridor enhancement) will be necessary, and these justifications must have community support to succeed.

Commented [cj115]: Bev - A similar program exists in Esquimalt. However, some applicants lie outright on them & Esquimalt does nothing. Someone knowledgeable needs to review the landscape component of DPAs, during the application development - typically done by a Planner & not a plant savvy person in Parks. The problem arises when the DP is granted and then its discovered that the landscape design cannot be installed as shown for a bunch of reasons the Planner didn't have enough knowledge to notice, and/or the architecture wasn't fully worked out and in 'massaging' the building design the landscape is depleted.

Commented [JC16]: For information: Victoria Master Gardeners Association is working to promote sustainable horticultural practices. They could be a good ally in making this happen.

Commented [BW17R16]: Thanks!

Commented [BW18]: Especially City Hall!

² Diamond Head Consulting. 2017. District of Saanich Environmental Development Permit Area Independent Review. 77 pp.

Native vs Non-native Species

While the RSTC prefers restoration of native species and natural ecosystem services, it is not feasible to do so in all instances. In addition, the changing climate means locally-native species may not be the most appropriate for creating sustainable ecosystem services. Therefore stewardship efforts must recognize the biodiversity value of many (but certainly not all) non-native species, and encourage and incentivize stewardship regardless of whether full native restoration is possible. As noted above, landscape architects, trained landscapers and their suppliers could become valuable promoters of native species use, and advisors on the best selection and diligent use of non-native species, when unavoidable, and on practices that prevent the proliferation of invasive species.

Restoration and rehabilitation of native species on private property should be acknowledged and celebrated, while the appropriate use of non-native species should not be discouraged. Development of a guide to “beneficial” non-native species would be helpful. “benefits” will be site-specific but will include social, cultural and ecosystem benefits.

Staffing and Coordination

Proactive coordination and promotion will be required to achieve enhanced stewardship in Saanich. Saanich staff already coordinate stewardship, but with a primary focus on parks. These efforts seem well-resourced from a volunteer perspective, but because existing staff are already at capacity, they do not have the ability to most efficiently utilize all volunteer resources.

Saanich parks staff also cannot keep up with the removal of invasive species in parks, let alone fulsomely enhance and restore biodiversity across all parks, or even at all on non-park public lands. Saanich also does not have a stewardship coordinator capacity for private land, but does have staff that review development proposals, in part from a stewardship perspective. Programs such as Pulling Together, the native plant salvage program & PLUS, Naturescape, Green Shores and citizen science programs (e.g., iNaturalist) will never achieve their full potential without much more proactive coordination and promotion. There are also many unrealized biodiversity enhancement opportunities on Saanich rights-of-way and boulevards that could be enhanced by existing volunteer groups (e.g., Pulling Together), community associations, or neighbouring homeowners.

Accurate and regularly updated ecosystem and biodiversity mapping will be critical for the development and tracking of many biodiversity conservation metrics. It does not appear that Saanich has a sufficient GIS staffing complement or budget to regularly update mapping and track metrics.

Additional staff would help to address stewardship by harnessing the enthusiasm and energy of the public. The RSTC believes Saanich needs significantly more staff capacity to improve biodiversity in parks and non-park public land, proactively develop, encourage, and incentivize stewardship programs on both public and private lands, and update associated mapping and success metrics. The RSTC’s previous recommendation that Saanich develop a business case for hiring a private and non-park public land stewardship coordinator was meant to flag this need for more staff. The RSTC recognizes that recent departmental reorganizations within Saanich may realize some efficiencies and build on successes to support increased stewardship on public and private lands.

Commented [KB19]: We have no knowledge of what drove the reorganization and what it means for the natural environment. I would delete this paragraph

Commented [JC20R19]: Keep or delete?

Non-staff organizations could also be leveraged or contracted to promote biodiversity conservation in Saanich. Potential organizations to approach include Habitat Acquisition Trust, the Victoria Master Gardener Association, and existing naturalist groups. There is also potential for Saanich to support community-led initiatives.

Ultimately, the upcoming Biodiversity Conservation Strategy should be used to determine the need for new staff and/or funding, or whether leveraging external organizations could suffice.

Commented [KB21]: I think the potential role of community-led (and Saanich-supported) initiatives needs highlighting further up in the note or needs to be better developed here. There are different models for promoting stewardship- differing roles of municipal govt and community organizations/NGOs. This sentence seems to acknowledge only things that are Saanich-driven rather than community driven (and possibly supported by Saanich)

DRAFT