AGENDA
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
December 19, 2023, 6:30 – 8:30 PM
Held in Committee Room 2 at Saanich Municipal Hall and 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**
   - December 7, 2023

4. **Receipt of Correspondence**
   - Attachment

5. **Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (1 hour)**
   - Lead: Eva Riccius and Diamond Head Consulting

6. **Environmental Policy Framework (15 min.)**
   - Lead: Tory Stevens, Eva Riccius

7. **Environmental Gap Analysis (15 min)**
   - Lead: Kevin Brown

8. **Committee Memo (25 min)**
   - Lead: Tory Stevens

9. **Final Remarks (5 min)**
   - Lead: Councillor de Vries and Eva Riccius

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

RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Via Microsoft Teams
December 7, 2023 at 6:36 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Councillor Zac de Vries; Kevin Brown; Purnima Govindarajulu; Jeremy Gye; Chris Lowe and Brian Wilkes

Regrets: Stewart Guy and Tim Ennis

Guests: Mike Coulthard and Alison Kwan of Diamond Head Consulting (DHC);

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

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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

Councillor de Vries provided a Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

> **MOVED by S. Guy and Seconded by B. Wilkes: "That the Agenda for the December 7, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved."**

> **CARRIED**

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

> **MOVED by J. Gye and Seconded by C. Lowe: "That the minutes of the November 16, 2023 Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be adopted."**

> **CARRIED**

REVIEW OF DRAFT BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The consultants facilitated a discussion on the first draft of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS), the following was noted by committee members:
- The BCS does not reference the Climate Plan, this important document should be embedded in the BCS to ensure both plans are cohesive and support each other.
- More substantive rational is needed to justify the recommendations. Critics may not support the BCS without more detail; this is especially true with hubs and corridors.
- Stewardship, regulation and policies are all important aspects of conservation, having further details on the pros and cons of each aspect would be beneficial.
- The Development Permit Area regulations could be strengthened.
- Metrics of success for stewardship are necessary, it is not possible to stop degradation without them. Private property regulation needs to be put in place as well.
- The manner in which the word "consider" is used in the document may be problematic, a stronger word or better definition of what "consideration" means is favorable.

- Having committee consensus on a reasonable number of top priorities would help determine the prioritization of the recommendations Some may be short or medium term priorities, while others may be long term initiatives. Determining what recommendations will have the biggest effect to protect and enhance biodiversity is an important step.
- Objective six includes improving public understanding, there is not a metric to know if this is being accomplished and it is hard to measure. All recommendations should be specific and measurable or monitoring success will be a difficult or impossible endeavor.
- High level targets are necessary, understanding top priorities is of utmost importance.
- There is no mention of Saanich advisory committees in this document, there are several initiatives that should have input from the committees and public input.
- Precautionary principles should be followed by all.
- While finding metrics of success for some recommendations may be difficult, they are integral to demonstrate the benefits. If the public cannot understand why they should be undertaking initiatives to improve biodiversity, then regulations will be necessary.
- Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping would provide beneficial data which is much needed.
- Recommendations related to the key goals are supportable. There are many recommendations and a limited amount of resources, this needs to be better balanced.
- Having committee members identify the recommendations which they believe to be the most important may be a good way to determine prioritization. An overarching set of recommendations to focus on which align with the goals will help staff.
- Creating a "Local Conservation Fund" or similar tax to support conservation would be beneficial in many ways, funds could be used to support local initiatives.
- Including more detail on the desired condition of ecosystems would help achieve goals.
- Marine hubs and corridors should be included with more detail as well.
- Integrated Stormwater Management Planning is underway, this may include protecting the most important watercourse aspects. There are some protections currently.
- Protection of the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) is of utmost importance. This boundary could be better recognized in the document including desired future condition.
- Hub and Corridor protection through a Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA) designation may help promote biodiversity, this could include high level mapping and a concept of restoring ecosystems. The hubs, corridors and connectors need to be better understood with quantifiable data and metrics for enhancement and restoral.
- Stronger environmental protection will be needed with additional density. Protection of soil is especially important as more large concrete foundations are being built.
- Mitigating threats through both regulation and education will be the best way forward.
- Using the word "consider" is problematic, this may not result in meaningful action.
- Stewardship will play an extremely important role in the strategy.
- The previous Saanich EDPA was flawed and caused issues. Ensuring the accuracy of mapping and administration of any potential future protection areas is necessary.
- Surrey has had success with an EDPA, we may be able to learn from their examples.
- Targets should all include a desired future condition to measure progress.

The consultant stated the following during discussion:
- Prioritizing the document is difficult, the recommendations were highlighted in green to indicate importance, these could be moved to a more prominent location.
- An overarching vision will be added to the document in the next version.

Staff stated the following during discussion:
- Public engagement on the strategy will happen early in the new year, following a review of the *Housing Act* and related regulations which will need to be implemented by Saanich. The BCS should not create conflicts with the Act and its regulations.
- The Urban Forest Strategy and the BCS will support each other through many aligned goals, engagement will happen at the same time, but they are separate strategies.

Committee members will send the recommendations which they see as the most important to the Chair to collate for the consultant. This may help identify the top priorities for the strategy.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from P. Govindarajulu, the meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

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Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary

Preet Chaggar

From:	Jeffrey Brooks
Sent:	Wednesday, December 6, 2023 11:00 AM
To:	biodiversity
Cc:	Council; Mayor Dean Murdock
Subject:	(External Email) Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

I have read the DRAFT Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and find it very poor. Yes, it is a beautiful document, probably will win various awards as is often the case with Saanich documents.

I offer this commentary with all due respect, as an interested private person with no conflicts of interest.

Truth be told, I found the Saanich State of Biodiversity Report wanting as well. As the RSTC stated in their memo to council, as a minimum that document had to show what we have, where it is and what state it is in. It did none of these. None.

In like manner, I believe the Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy document is similar. It falls woefully short in so many areas.

In the latter part of my professional career I ran a very successful consulting company, consulting to pharma and biologics manufacturers. This was highly regulated. Our documents covered complex issues but they had to be clear and most of all excellent science and engineering. Every document we produced led off with the regulatory requirements that had to be met along with a list of reference documents. These had to be current and relevant.

To me, the Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy is no different. It does lead with a list of reference documents. The trouble is none of these

is up to date. I did review several and they are no longer relevant. Not at all. (1996? 1997?)

Yet the Draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy we are reviewing here is anchored on these obsolete outdated documents, plans and policies:

You need go no farther than the Table of Contents: (But you could!)

So the BCS is anchored by the documents, plans, policies dating back to 1996 listed in the table of contents.

I suggest it is unprofessional to cite these documents at this point, without at least a qualifying statement that the above documents etc were carefully reviewed, scrutinized and found to be still relevant at the present time, years, decades after the were written. There is no such statement.

If not a qualifying statement then a disclaimer to indicate the risks and limitations of using old documents as references: Something like, Warning: This 2023 BCS is based on very old outdated obsolete documents, the result may not be good science but parts of it could be. Reader beware. (Very unprofessional)

The keystone document has to be the Official Community Plan 2008. It's 2023. That plan states (pg 7-2) "While there is no mandated time period for reviewing plans, it is common practice to undertake a comprehensive update every five to ten years."

We were provided a draft update of the OCP. In substance, it differs little in content from the 2008 Plan but it does have nice pictures of indigenous family steaming mussels. (Reconciliation) Pg 1-2 states: "Official Community Plans were adopted by Saanich Council in 1979, 1984, and 1993." BTW the provinces mandate that every municipality have an OCP. Also the OCP and Local Area Plans will have to be revised to be compatible with the **new BC Housing Act**.

IMO, all of these have to be revised and in place before attempting to finalize a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. It is really "back to the drawing board" or "hurry up and wait". No point in Council receiving this BCS at this time. Very premature.

The Way Ahead: Can we pause the accepting process to allow involvement of the RSTC? That won't change the fact the BCS is based on old obsolete documents etc, but you could maybe produce a new BCS that is a stand alone document, reflecting good science. I have attended via video several of your recent meetings. I can attest to the fact you were ignored, totally left out of the process leading up to this BCS. At inception, the RSTC mandate was clear. Council, Saanich needed your professional expertise to guide this process. In the end they didn't get that at all. You were IMO effectively shut out.

On the other hand, had the RSTC been involved, as you should have been according to the mandate, you would have seen to it what we would have today would be good science. But you weren't involved. Your counsel was disregarded every step of the way in preparing the State of Biodiversity Report and now this, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

What we have here today is not good science. It is one more very professional-looking document which will probably win awards etc. It's beautiful. Just don't look under the hood. ("When the tide goes out...you see who's wearing a bathing suit." Warren Buffet)

I can say I am not surprised. This is another case among many where Saanich spends $$ on consultants, doesn't let them do their job and doesn't listen to them.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Brooks

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Jeffrey Brooks
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	Recommendation	Details	Votes
1.	1.1	Provide public access to the most recent terrestrial ecosystem mapping via the GIS portal, SaanichMap.	-
2.	1.2	Regularly update terrestrial ecosystem data as new information becomes available. Continue to refine the precision of terrestrial ecosystem polygon boundaries through ground-truthing and air photo analysis.	6
3.	1.5	Develop a long-term monitoring program using the field plot locations completed during the State of Biodiversity Report. Regularly assess these field plots to identify changes in biodiversity	2
4.	1.7	Update stream presence and classification. Update the mapping used to identify the Streamside Development Permit Areas (SDPA). Make this information available via the GIS portal, SaanichMap	2
5.	1.8	Revise and update stream mapping to include both connected and disconnected water features.	2
6.	1.9	Accurately map the locations of connected and disconnected wetland systems and make this information available via the GIS portal, SaanichMap	2
7.	1.11	Update and map the known locations of species and ecological communities at risk and provide this information to the BC CDC	1
8.	2.1	Recognize the importance of the Biodiversity Habitat Network as high-value areas and prioritize these for protection and enhancement.	2
9.	2.2	Work to protect land in the Biodiversity Habitat Network using a variety of tools such as land acquisition.	1
10.	2.5	Investigate financial mechanisms to support acquiring unprotected areas in the Biodiversity Habitat Network	1
11.	3.1	Remove development permit mapping from the OCP and instead refer to the GIS portal, SaanichMap, for up-to-date linework and DP areas.	-
12.	3.2	Adopt and implement the draft Urban Forest Strategy.	2
13.	3.5	Consider a Marine Development Permit Area (DPA) or zone to mitigate waterfront development impacts and restore degraded foreshore zones. This may include..etc.	4
14.	3.6	Consider a development permit area or zone for the protection of the natural environment. This may include..etc.	4
15.	3.15	Develop an incentive program to support protection of natural features through development inside the UCB	1
16.	3.22	Encourage and provide incentives to land developers for incorporating green infrastructure to capture and clean stormwater (i.e. green roofs, bioswales, green walls and planters)	1
17.	4.1	Collaborate with First Nations to incorporate their values and caring for lands and waters into Saanich's biodiversity management	4
18.	4.2	Develop park plans to help manage natural area parks in Saanich. Begin by creating a priority list.	5
19.	4.5	Adopt a policy to maintain a no net loss of natural areas from public lands with no net loss applying to both ecological value and habitat area	-
20.	4.7	Create freshwater sources in natural parks such as wetlands and ponds	-
21.	4.8	Review and revise the Invasive Species Management Strategy	-
22.	4.9	Continue to implement deer control measures, where appropriate, to minimize their impact to restoration sites and other key impacted ecosystems. Review and consider the CRD Deer Management Plan	2

23.	4.13	Reestablish natural features within road boulevards, passive parks, and public landscaped areas	1
24.	4.15	Identify and rehabilitate degraded natural areas on District-owned lands	3
25.	4.16	Continue to protect and restore Garry Oak ecosystems on public lands	1
26.	4.17	Identify and remove barriers to fish migration. Coordinate with non-profit organizations and stewardship groups.	2
27.	4.18	Identify opportunities to daylight and restore natural stream reaches that are culverted	1
28.	5.1	Consider developing incentives for installing green infrastructure on residential properties.	1
29.	5.2	Promote the naturescaping program and guidelines for residential properties. Develop hands on learning opportunities through Recreation Centers and other partner organizations	1
30.	5.4	Complete a review of existing environmental and natural state covenants and their condition. Notify landowners of their obligations.	1
31.	5.8	Encourage the replacement of turf grass with low-maintenance herbs and pollinator-friendly vegetation through education and incentives	1
32.	6.4	Promote and expand programs to encourage biodiversity stewardship and education on private lands	2
33.	8.1	Consider creating a "State of the Environment Report" with regular updates. This report may include..etc.	1
34.	8.2	Identify and monitor for the presence of indicator species.	1
35.	9.1	Provide sufficient staffing resources to implement the recommendations within this Strategy	1
36.	9.2	Commit funding to adopt high-priority recommendations within a 5-year span.	2

White – RSTC priorities

Green – DHC green
Dark Green – Both RSTC priority and DHC priority
Recommendations that received 3+ votes

Saanich Environmental Policy Framework DRAFT

Initial draft prepared by the
Resilient Saanich Technical Committee for District of
Saanich Staff April 21, 2023

Revised by District of Saanich Staff December 2023

Territorial Acknowledgement

The District of Saanich is within Coast and Straits Salish territory, the territories of the ləkʷəŋən peoples, known today as Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, known today as W̱JOȽEȽP (Tsartlip), BOḰEĆEN (Pauquachin), SȾÁUTW̱ (Tsawout), W̱SIḴEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEȽ (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

Cover image: Sea blush © Judith Cullington

1. Introduction

1.1.   A Coordinated Approach to Environmental Stewardship

The Environmental Policy Framework (EPF or the Framework) provides guidance to create a coordinated approach for environmental projects, programs and policies led by Saanich.   It outlines Guiding Principles and Goals to assist District staff to align environmental policies and programs to support a Sustainable and Resilient Saanich. It reinforces a strong and united culture of environmental protection and enhancement among staff in their work related to the natural environment.

As outlined through Council's direction (November 6, 2017) and in the Terms of Reference of the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (original adopted August 9, 2021 with revisions October 25, 2021 and August 22, 2022) the strategic pillars of the Framework include the Climate Plan, a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, and an enhanced stewardship program. The Terms of Reference also allow for the potential development of a new Environment Development Permit Area (EDPA).

The RSTC through their Terms of Reference further suggested that the EPF should be broad enough to "encompass all aspects of District work related to the environment including the need to update existing bylaws, policies and programs as well as new ones." The TOR further states that "some work will have a direct focus on the environment and others may have a different operational focus that nevertheless have the potential to impact or influence the environment in significant ways."

A draft document was prepared by the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) with support from Judith Cullington. The draft was presented to staff in April 2023. As outlined in the RSTC Terms of Reference, the Committee was to prepare a draft for staff's consideration. Under the direction of the CAO, staff from across the District reviewed the draft and provided input during summer 2023. The RSTC's draft has been revised to incorporate staff feedback to create a practical and implementable framework which is presented in this document. Of note, the proposed framework is focused on:

- The Climate Plan, Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and an enhanced stewardship program,

- New and revised environmental policies and programs, and

- Supporting staff in their ongoing work on projects and policies that relate to the environment across departments including those that impact the environment while focused on other objectives.

Natural environment

Saanich's physical setting contains a mix of marine shoreline, freshwater lakes, natural watercourses, and diverse rolling topography with elevations ranging from sea level to 355 m. The landscape includes glacially scoured rock outcroppings, farmland, dense woodlands, and an extensive system of open space and parkland. Approximately half the Municipality is urban and half rural/agricultural – a dual role that has influenced its character and development (Saanich Draft OCP, May 2023).

In this document, "natural environment" encompasses entities and processes:

- all living and non-living things occurring naturally within the District of Saanich,

- the interactions of all living species, climate, weather and geologic and abiotic processes.

As stated in Saanich's Official Community Plan[1] (OCP) vision, a healthy natural environment is a fundamental priority for Saanich Council and residents:

"*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 draft OCP policies (December 2023), Saanich-wide plans and strategies, department specific plans and strategies, and committees of Council such as the "Sustainability and Climate Action" and "Natural Areas, Parks and Trails" committees.

In addition, Saanich residents place a high importance on a healthy natural environment. This is demonstrated by their strong interest and involvement in maintaining and enhancing the natural environment on their own properties and through assisting with environmental stewardship on public lands through Saanich's Pulling Together Program, Park Ambassadors, and other environmental stewardship programs.

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[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.

The EPF's Guiding Principles and Goals are consistent with the Saanich Vision in the draft OCP (December 2023) and will guide Saanich's approach to protecting and enhancing the natural environment (Figure 1). Plans, policies, and programs within each theme area (such as climate action, biodiversity conservation, urban forestry, natural asset management and enhanced stewardship) will support Climate Action and Environmental Leadership (Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2027). This will ensure that Saanich stewards the environment, that its building typologies and infrastructure reflect Saanich's environmental and climate concerns, and that it continues to develop innovative solutions and implement best practices to reduce emissions, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, and protect the environment.
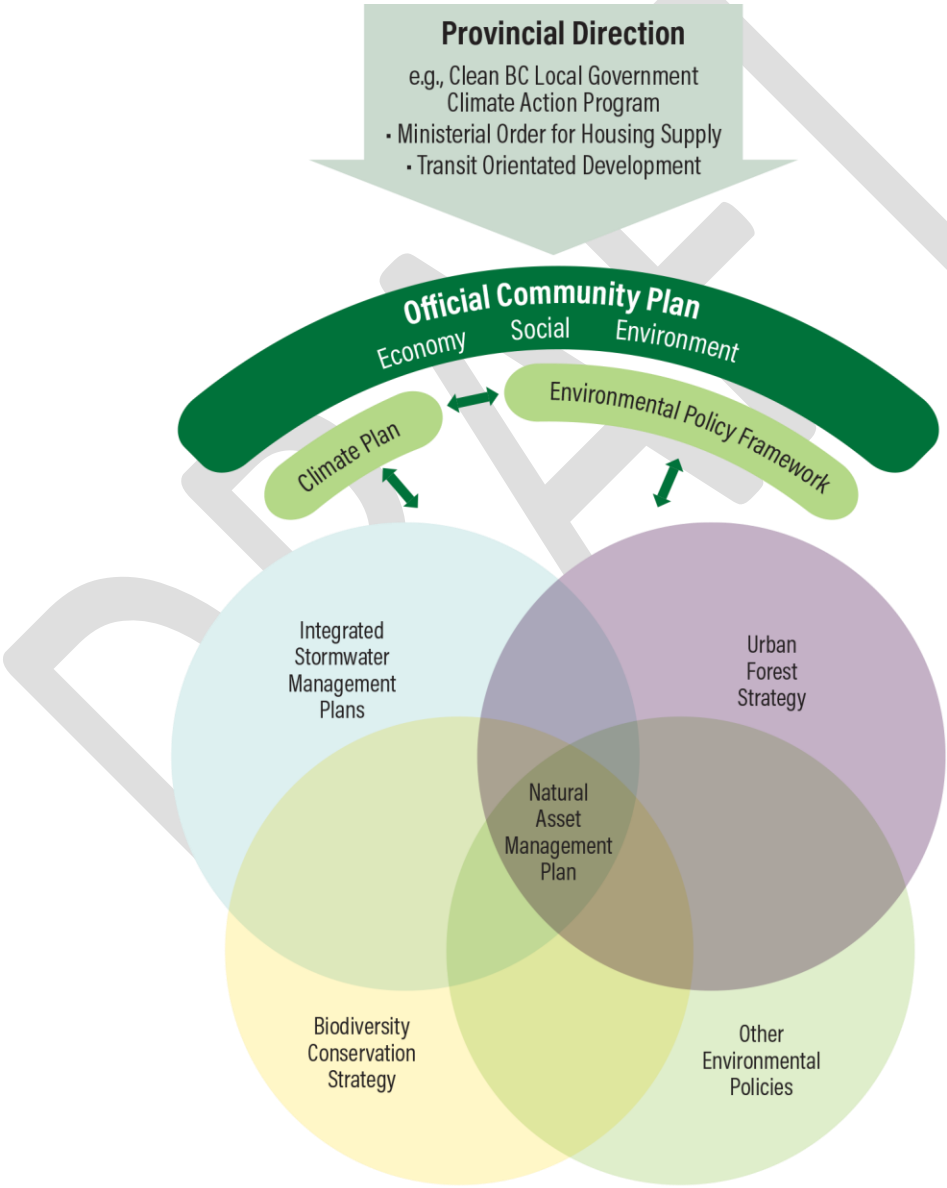

Figure 1: Conceptual diagram: Environmental Policy Framework

Saanich's Draft OCP (December 2023) states:

"Environmental protection and climate action are priorities for the District of Saanich and fundamental components of a healthy, resilient, and sustainable community. Maintaining adequate green space, biodiversity, and well-functioning natural areas is important to both ecosystem health and human health. It is also a central component of One Planet Living [note: this is a cornerstone policy of the revised OCP]."

1.2. Context

As noted in the territorial acknowledgement at the outset of this document, the Lək�ʷəŋən and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples have been caring for the land known now as Saanich since time immemorial. Their role as protectors of the land continues to be vital today. The District of Saanich recognizes that importance, entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (ÁTOL,NEUEL, "Respecting One Another") with the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council (WLC) formalizing Saanich's commitment to reconciliation and pursuing opportunities for collaboration including opportunities for indigenous people to practice traditional activities in Saanich. While the District has a formal MOU with the WLC, it remains committed to working with the Lək�ʷəŋən peoples known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations as well as with other indigenous people that live and work in the District.

As outlined in Saanich's OCP, Saanich is home to some of B.C.'s most unique and rare ecosystems and species. These include biologically diverse areas of Coastal Douglas- fir forests and remaining pockets of Garry Oak ecosystems. Saanich also has a rich marine foreshore, productive lakes and wetlands, and complex river systems. These support a diversity of plant, insect, fish, and wildlife populations and communities. Local indigenous people cared for land, water and the plants and animals that lived there to ensure that future generations could be sustained. Their relationship with ecosystems and all that they contain is one of respect.

Saanich's natural areas also provide important ecosystem services such as filtering water, purifying the air, supporting pollinators, regulating climate, and storing carbon that would otherwise contribute to climate change. Natural areas support the District's stormwater management by reducing flooding and filtering contaminants. Protecting and enhancing natural areas ensures that they will continue to provide these vital services. It also makes them more resilient to urban development, climate change, and other pressures.

The Resilient Saanich initiative is an integral component of the District's response to biodiversity loss, climate change, and the many threats facing its natural areas. Initiated in 2020, Resilient Saanich includes this Environmental Policy Framework to provide strategic

direction for new and existing environmental policies and programs with an initial focus on the Climate Plan, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, and an enhanced stewardship program. As these are completed, other environmental policies and programs will be drawn into this framework.

In September 2023, the Province provided Saanich with specific Housing Targets that through an Order in Council requires Saanich to provide 4,610 new units in five years (just over 900 a year, which is three times the current average). To fulfil this Order, Saanich is working on a number of ways to facilitate housing development. The EPF and associated plans and policies must work together with housing development policies and processes to ensure Saanich meets its Order and continues to be a community with strong environmental qualities and values.

2. Environmental Policy Framework

2.1. Guiding Principles

The Environmental Policy Framework Guiding Principles serve to guide Saanich's existing and new environmental policies and practices. Principles were developed by the RSTC and endorsed by the Committee in August, 2023. Staff have made revisions for comprehension and consistency with other policy directives. They are consistent with the District's [Strategic Plan](#)[3] and OCP Vision.

The eight Guiding Principles of the Environmental Policy Framework are:

1. *Recognize the intrinsic value of nature.*
   ➢ This is an ethical commitment to recognize and respect the right to existence of other life forms and the ecological processes that support us all.

2. *Build relationships and undertake appropriate actions of reconciliation with indigenous groups and First Nations. For example, action the* ATOL,NEUEL *Memorandum of Understanding with the* W̱SÁNEĆ *Leadership Council.*

3. *Use evidence-based decision making; adopt the Precautionary Principle when supporting science or data are not available.*

4. *Monitor implementation with clear metrics to ensure goals are achieved and commit to continuous improvement and innovation.*

5. *Work actively with neighbouring jurisdictions, organizations, and initiatives to achieve results at a bioregional scale.*

6. *Address climate adaptation and mitigation in decisions.*

7. *Collaborate with people of diverse interests and backgrounds to develop more durable, fair, and effective environmental policies and programs.*

8. *Ensure open, accurate environmental information to encourage an informed citizenry that participates in building policies and programs for a more resilient Saanich.*

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[3] District of Saanich Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

Section 4.2 and Appendix D discuss how these Guiding Principles can be used as a tool to assist in the development of new environmental policies and programs and to evaluate existing policies when being updated.

2.2.   Environmental Policy Framework Goals

Three goals are suggested to frame an approach to implementing the EPF.

Goal 1. Fulfil objectives of the Natural Environment Section of the OCP through a variety of programs.

Goal 1 aims to enhance biodiversity and essential ecosystem services through direct actions to protect, restore, and enhance the natural environment.

Examples of actions carried out by Saanich, partners and property owners that would support this goal include:

On-the-ground activities:

- Restoration and enhancement of natural parklands.
- Daylighting of streams where there is greatest positive benefit.
- Identification, protection, restoration, and enhancement of sensitive ecosystems including riparian areas and marine foreshores.
- Protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the urban forest.
- Restoration and enhancements of private lands (such as backyards) and larger holdings.
- Increased support for the Pulling Together, the Park Ambassadors Volunteer Programs, and other stewardship initiatives on public and private lands.
- Assessment of the condition of Natural State Covenants in Saanich.

Environmental education and outreach:

- Encouraging citizen science monitoring.
- Promoting sustainable agriculture practices.
- Promoting pollution source reductions.
- Promoting more "environment-friendly" developments.
- Encouraging backyard biodiversity.
- Fostering key strategic partnerships (ex. First Nations, HAT, School Districts, etc.).

Internal Saanich activities:

* Improvement of ecosystem and biodiversity monitoring and mapping in the District.

* Developing management plans for parks and natural areas that include protection, enhancement and restoration of natural areas and biodiversity.

* Completing a gap analysis following the outline in this document or another methodology.

Achieving this goal requires implementation of key strategies and plans including the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, the Climate Plan, the Natural Assets Management Plan, and the Urban Forest Strategy.

Goal 2. Foster complementary and coordinated policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives and align them with the Environmental Policy Framework Guiding Principles and the OCP.

Goal 2 promotes a culture of environmental stewardship and accountability within Saanich so that environmental impacts may be considered in operational actions and Council decisions. While environmental impacts are already considered in many projects and programs, this goal focuses on the need for a coordinated and aligned approach to minimize unintended consequences. The EPF Guiding Principles will help guide the development of future environmental policy. Of note is that consideration of the Principles should be carried out while also considering the social and economic pillars in the OCP. This will allow critical items such as the Provincial Housing Targets to be fulfilled while maintaining environmental principles.

Actions related to this goal are shared throughout the District and can be found within the Climate Plan, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (in development), the Urban Forest Strategy (in development), Natural Assets Management Plan (to be developed), and Integrated Stormwater Management Plans (in development). 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 using the suggested Policy Gap Analysis

* Embracing the use of the Policy Evaluation Tool (Appendix D) to demonstrate support of the Guiding Principles.

* Planning and preparing new environmental programs and policies.

* Promoting ongoing inter-departmental cooperation to evaluate and address environmental impacts of policy decisions and enhance environmental benefits.

- Promote District wide training on environmental protocol process and the use of the Policy Evaluation Tool and Policy Gap Analysis Tools.

3. Measuring Outcomes

Progress towards meeting the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework will be measured primarily through the outcomes of new environmental policies and programs and those that undergo revisions.

Goal 1 urges on-the-ground action towards a more Sustainable and Resilient Saanich through implementation of the objectives in the OCP. These will be achieved mainly through the implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, the Climate Plan, the Urban Forest Strategy, the Natural Asset Management Plan, and other plans as they are developed. Progress can be reported regularly through these individual plans and strategies or could be reported using a more central approach such as a State of Saanich Environment report, repeated at appropriate intervals. A centralized report might look at indicators such as:

- Hectares of Saanich that have been restored or enhanced (including clearing of invasives and restoration planting),
- Changes in urban forest canopy cover (positive or negative),
- Kilometres of stream restoration/enhancement and kilometers of stream in natural conditions,
- Sensitive ecosystems in "protected" status,

Goal 2 guides District staff to build and continue to align policies, strategies, regulations and incentives aligned with the EPF's Guiding Principles. Implementation of the Climate Plan, Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Urban Forest Strategy and the Natural Asset Management Plan are examples where staff can continue to work across departments to fulfil goals and actions. Indicators of progress could include:

- Projects and policies that affect the environment that have been developed following the Principles of the Environmental Policy Framework and/or to fill gaps identified via the Policy Gap Analysis Tool.
- Projects and policies that affect the environment that have been developed using an inter-departmental approach.
- Regular public reporting of progress on specific environment-related strategies and plans (or a centralized "state of environment" type of reporting).
- Public awareness of the environmental values noted in the OCP that Saanich is aiming to implement and realize.
- Percentage of staff receiving training on the Environmental Policy Framework and associated tools (gap analysis and policy evaluation).

4. Implementing the Environmental Policy Framework

The Environmental Policy Framework is intended to apply to new or revised policies and programs related to the natural environment. A phased approach to implement the Framework is recommended beginning with, but not limited to, the items that Council outlined in their direction in 2017: the Climate Plan, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, and an enhanced stewardship program. Further environment related policies and programs can be brought under the framework as they are developed or revised. Implementing this framework will include consideration of the Guiding Principles along with the Goals outlined in the previous sections.

The following steps are recommended for guiding implementation of this Framework:

1. Carry out a public engagement on this draft Environmental Policy Framework.

2. Present a final draft Environmental Policy Framework to Council for endorsement.

3. Orient staff District-wide to the Framework's Guiding Principles and goals including how to use them to guide new policy and program development. This would include an environmental policy gap analysis to identify new policies, bylaws and strategies required to fulfil the key environmental strategies, and the policy evaluation tool.

4. Apply the Environmental Policy Framework in the upcoming update of the Climate Plan: Renewable and Resilient Saanich.

5. Encourage and support public actions that relate to the primary pillars of the EPF (Climate Plan, Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and enhanced stewardship program).

6. Resource priority actions on public lands that relate to the primary pillars of the EPF.

4.1.   Environmental Policy Gap Analysis

The Environmental Policy Framework will assist in coordinating municipal policies focused on protecting Saanich's natural environment. An environmental policy gap analysis is a first step. A gap analysis would:

1. define what comprises Saanich's natural environment in appropriate breadth and detail,
2. document existing and emerging stressor/threats to Saanich's natural environment,
3. identify (and assess) existing Saanich policies meant to protect the natural environment and other policies which may damage the natural environment,

4. link environment components, stressor/threats, and policies, and
5. identify the gaps -- aspects of Saanich's natural environment <u>not</u> currently or adequately addressed by policy.

An initial gap analysis was carried out by staff in 2020 and shared with RSTC. The RSTC has proposed a more thorough methodology in a separate document entitled *RSTC Environment Policy Gap Analysis 2023*. More detail about how to use the RSTC methodology is provided in Appendix C. Also in Appendix C are some overarching gaps that have been identified by the Committee during their immersion in Saanich policy over the last several years. Staff may choose to use the suggested gap analysis or use an alternate approach.

*Policies include all District of Saanich instruments that are used to manage the environment. This covers policies, bylaws, strategies, programs, guidelines, etc.

4.2.   Policy Evaluation Tool

The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee developed a Policy Evaluation Tool to provide staff with a suggested method to evaluate new and existing policies or programs to determine how closely they fulfil the intent of the Framework's Guiding Principles.

Two options are provided: a matrix which could work well when reviewing existing policies and a set of questions that can be used to guide policy and program development. Both options are based on the Guiding Principles in Appendix D.

4.3.   Public Actions for a Sustainable and Resilient Saanich

Actions by residents (and non-residents) of Saanich influence the ability to achieve a more Sustainable and Resilient Saanich. The District plays a role in educating and supporting community organizations and residents in ways to protect and enhance the natural environment at home and in the community.

Saanich has a long history in environmental leadership driven by the interests and actions of residents and community groups. There are many examples of long standing community based projects that have positive impacts on the environment. The District has responded with key guiding policy such as the Official Community Plan, the 2010 Urban Forest Strategy, Invasive Species Strategy, and longstanding programs such as the Pulling Together Volunteer Program, and the Native Plant Salvage Program to name a few.

This Framework seeks to build on Saanich's environmental leadership through the implementation of the Climate Plan, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and an enhanced stewardship program, all of which will require community and resident involvement to carry out actions, along with future policies and programs that focus on the natural environment.

5. Appendices

A. Glossary

Backshore - the upper zone of a beach (or land above the OHWM) beyond the reach of normal waves and tides, landward of the beach face. The backshore is subject to periodic flooding by storms and extreme tides, and is often the site of dunes and back-barrier wetlands (Figure 1) (Greenshores)
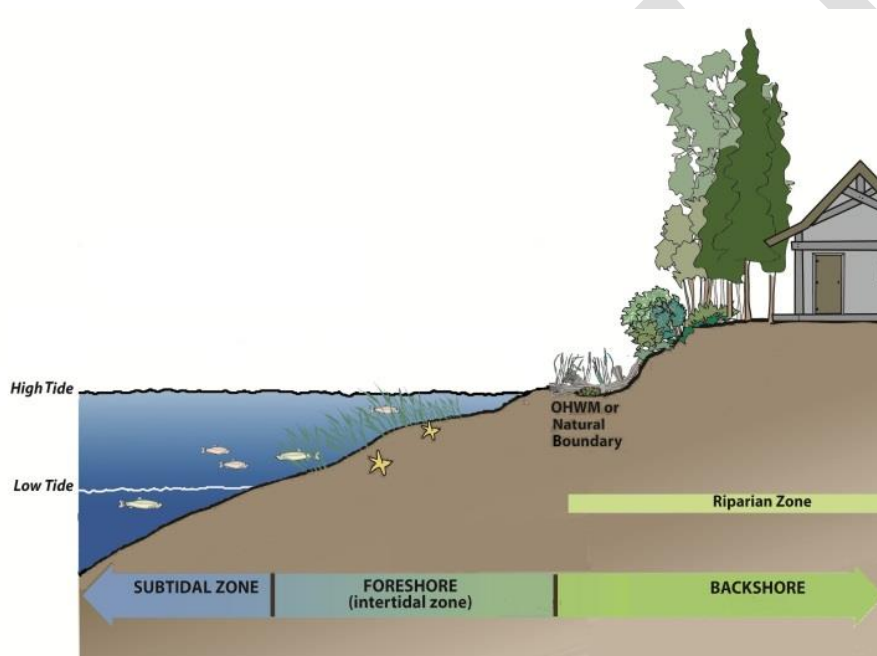
Figure 1

Biodiversity: a term used to describe the variety and variability of life on Earth. Biodiversity encompasses all living species and their relationships to each other. This includes the differences in genes, species and ecosystems. (State of Biodiversity Report, March 2023)

Biodiversity Conservation Strategy - a plan to enhance and protect the variety of native species and ecosystems in a given geographical area. (Saanich RSTC Fact Sheet #2)

Blue list - List of ecological communities, native species and subspecies in B.C. that are of special concern (formerly vulnerable). (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Ecosystem - A dynamic complex of plant, animal, and microorganism communities, climatic factors and physiography, all influenced by natural disturbance events and interacting as a functional unit, and subject to large scale and localized small scale processes. Ecosystems vary enormously in size: a temporary pond in a tree hollow and an ocean basin are both ecosystems. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Ecological Community - This term is used by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre and the NatureServe network. In B.C. it incorporates plant associations from the Vegetation Classification of the Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification, and other natural plant communities including both forested and non-forested ecosystems. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Ecological Connectivity - **the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth. (**Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals)

Ecological function - the natural processes, products or services that living and non-living environments provide or perform within or between species, ecosystems and landscapes

Ecological Integrity - A measure of the current ecological condition (structure, composition, and function) of an ecosystem as compared to reference ecosystems operating within the bounds of natural or historic ecological processes and disturbance regimes (Faber-Langendoen, *et al* 2012, Rocchio and Crawford 2011) (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Environmentally Significant Areas - natural areas that have been captured in environmental inventories due to their ecological values and special features. (District of Saanich)

Ecosystem Valuation - a process to make better-informed decisions by explicitly valuing both ecosystem degradation and the benefits provided by ecosystem services. By including ecosystem values, the company's aim is to improve corporate performance in relation to social and environmental goals and the financial bottom-line. (IUCN, 2011) (similar to natural capital valuation, natural asset valuation. Ecosystem accounting, etc.) (see def'n for Natural Assets Valuation)

Endangered - Facing imminent extirpation or extinction. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Eutrophication:

Eutrophication is the process of nutrient enrichment of a body of water usually resulting from anthropogenic activities (e.g. agricultural runoff, sewage discharges, etc.).

Source: BC Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection. 'Summary of Surface Water Quality Sampling on Sumas River'. 2004.

Eutrophication:

The process of increasing the nutrients, primarily nitrate and phosphate, content of natural waters, usually resulting in an increase in biomass and productivity of algae which may result in the depletion of oxygen concentration in the water leading to a fish kill, from natural erosion and runoff from the land or other anthropogenic sources.

Source: BC Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection. 'Glossary of Water Quality Terms'. Web – www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality

Extirpated - Species and ecosystems that no longer exist in the wild in British Columbia, but may, or do, occur elsewhere. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Foreshore - the area between high tide (or OHWM) and low tide water levels in marine systems (see Figure 1 on page 1), or between seasonal high water and low water levels on lakes (Figure 2-DFO). (Stewardship Centre for BC)
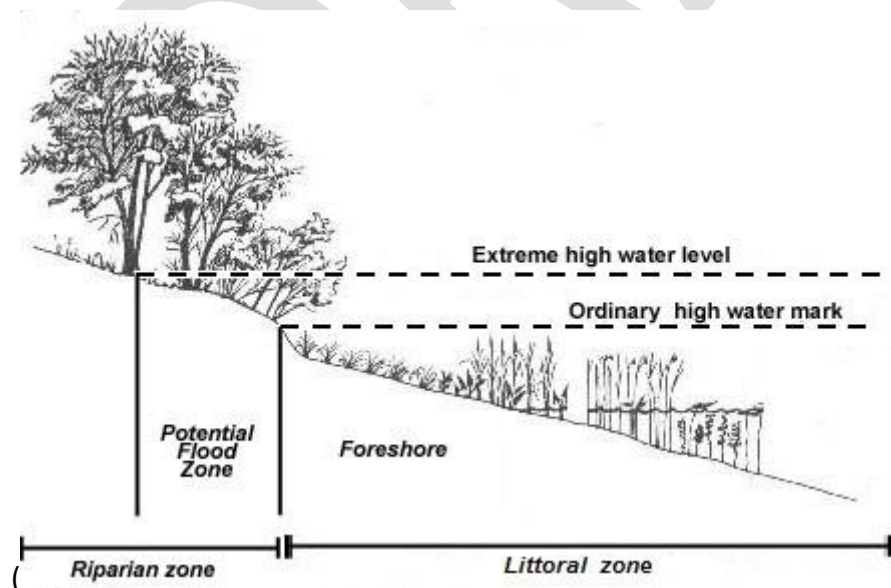
Gap analysis - **A set of techniques to examine and describe the gap between current performance and desired future goals. The comparison of actual performance with potential or desired performance; that is the current state and the desired future state. (Project Management Institute)**

Goal - A goal sets the direction and destination to achieving the vision. A goal guides decision-making. (RSTC Worksheet)

Green infrastructure – (Green Infrastructure Ontario)A broad category that includes natural assets and designed and engineered elements that have been created to mimic natural functions and processes in the service of human interests (District of Saanich, State of Urban Forest Report, 2023)

Imperviousness:

The property of a material through which water will not flow under ordinary hydro-static pressure.

Source: Site Engineering for Landscape Architects 2nd ed., Strom and Nathan.

Pub. By Van Nostrand Reinhold 1993.

Impervious Surface Area (ISA):

The area of a given lot or property that is covered by man-made structures such as rooftops, roads, sidewalks, driveways and parking lots that are covered by impenetrable materials such as shingles, asphalt, concrete, plastic, brick and stone. The ISA is often referred to as the built footprint.

Source: Green Shores for Homes, Washington and British Columbia. December 2015.

Pub, by the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (in collaboration with the Stewardship Centre for BC)

Impervious Surfaces:

Any human-made graded, hardened surface covered with materials comprised of asphalt, concrete, masonry, or combinations thereof. Draft OCP 2023

Indigenous knowledge - a set of complex knowledge systems based on the worldviews of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge reflects the unique cultures, languages, governance systems and histories of Indigenous peoples from a particular location. Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and evolves over time. It builds on the experiences of earlier generations and adapts to present conditions. First Nations, Inuit and Métis each have a distinct way of describing their knowledge. Knowledge-holders are the only people who can truly define Indigenous knowledge for their communities. (Indigenous Knowledge Policy Framework Initiative, Government of Canada)

Intertidal - In marine systems, the area between high tide and low tide levels (Figure 1). (Stewardship Centre for BC)

Landscape - A landscape is part of the Earth's surface that can be viewed at one time from one place. It consists of the geographic features that mark, or are characteristic of, a particular area. (National Geographic Society)

Natural assets (or municipal natural assets) – The stocks of natural resources or ecosystems that contribute to the provision of one or more services required for the health, well-being and long-term sustainability of a community and its residents. (District of Saanich Asset Management Policy)

Natural asset valuation: natural asset management values natural assets for the *services* they provide (Municipal Natural Assets Institute)

Natural boundary - the visible high water mark of any lake, river, stream or other body of water where the presence and action of the water is so common and usual, and so long continued in all ordinary years as to mark on the soil of the bed of the body of water a character distinct from that of its the banks in vegetation, as well as in the nature of the soil itself. (Land Act, Province of BC)

Natural Boundary - A physical boundary is a natural barrier between two areas. Rivers, mountain ranges, oceans, and deserts are examples (National Geographic Society).

Natural capital can be defined as the world's stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. It is from this natural capital that humans derive a wide range of services, often called **ecosystem services**, which make human life possible. (World Forum on natural Capital)

NAtural Environment?

Novel ecosystems - a system of abiotic, biotic, and social components (and their interactions) that, by virtue of human influence, differs from those that prevailed historically, having a tendency to self-organize and manifest novel qualities without intensive human management. (Hobbs et.al.)

Objective –specific steps taken to achieve the goal. A SMART Objective is Specific Measureable Attainable Realistic Time-bound (RSTC Worksheet)

Plant Community - A recurring plant community with a characteristic range in species composition, specific diagnostic species, and a defined range in environmental requirements (site and soil characteristics, hydrology, localized climate, etc.), and physical appearance or structure. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Policy framework - a formal statement that provides context and broad guidance with respect to policy themes or clusters. Also provides the supporting structure within which specific Treasury Board policies and other instruments can be understood in strategic terms. (Treasury Board glossary, Government of Canada)

Policy framework - a logical structure that is established to organize **policy** documentation into groupings and categories. It provides a set of principles and long-term goals that form the basis of making rules and guidelines, and to give overall direction to planning and development of the organization (IGI Global website).

Policy tools - approaches and techniques based on science and other knowledge systems, including indigenous and local knowledge, that can inform, assist and enhance relevant decisions, policy-making and implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels to protect nature, thereby promoting nature's contributions to people and a good quality of life. (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)

Principle - a moral rule or a strong belief that influences your actions (Canadian Oxford Dictionary)

Red list - List of ecological communities, native species and subspecies in B.C. that are at the greatest risk of being lost. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Rehabilitation - Rehabilitation acknowledges that vegetation will be permanently altered, but seeks to return a self-sustaining native plant community that is as close to the original as possible. (Society for Ecological Restoration International Science and Policy Working Group, 2004).

Remediation - Remediation is the process of stopping or reducing pollution that is threatening the health of people or wildlife (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Dept. of Commerce, 2021)

Restoration - Ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Restoration attempts to return vegetation to its original state. (Society for Ecological Restoration International Primer on Ecological Restoration 2004).

Riparian Zone - Riparian areas occur next to the banks of streams, lakes, and wetlands and include both the area dominated by continuous high moisture content and the adjacent upland vegetation that exerts an influence on it. (Forest Practices Code, Province of BC)

Riparian areas - areas are the areas bordering on streams, lakes, and wetlands that link water to land. The blend of streambed, water, trees, shrubs and grasses directly influences and provides fish habitat. (Province of BC Riparian Areas Regulation Brochure 2016)

Sensitive Ecosystem – a portion of a landscape with relatively uniform dominant vegetation which is considered fragile and/or rare. (Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory: East Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands 1993 – 1997, Volume 1: Methodology, Ecological Descriptions and Results)

Species at risk - An extirpated, endangered or threatened species or a species of special concern (formerly called vulnerable). (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Stewardship - taking responsibility to promote, monitor, conserve and restore ecosystems for current and future generations of all species. There are three types of environmental stewards: doers help out by taking action on the ground; donors help by donating money, land or other resources; and practitioners work to steer agencies, scientists, stakeholder groups or other groups toward a stewardship outcome. (Stewardship Centre for BC)

Strategy - a plan of actions to achieve the objectives. (RSTC worksheet)

Threatened - Likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

Thematic PLan

Urban Forest - Saanich's urban forest is the sum total of all trees and their associated ecosystems within the municipality. It is the entire collection of trees growing in parks and private lands, on commercial and institutional lands, along highways, roads, trails and paths, as well as throughout open spaces in the community. The urban forest is a critical component of

the functional green infrastructure system in Saanich, within both the Urban Containment Boundary and in Rural Saanich. The urban forest is more than just individual trees, it also includes a series of intact and fragmented ecosystems. (Saanich Urban Forest Strategy)

Wetland - Areas where soils are water-saturated for a sufficient length of time such that excess water and resulting low soil oxygen levels are principal determinants of vegetation and soil development. (Mackenzie and Moran 2004)

Yellow List - List of ecological communities and native species in B.C. that are at the least risk of being lost. (BC Conservation Data Centre)

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B. Resilient Saanich Technical Committee

Members

C. Gap Analysis

Introduction

The Environmental Policy[4] Gap Analysis (EPGA) is central to the Environmental Policy Framework (EPF). The approach outlined here is suggested by the RSTC.

Municipal policies may (1) intentionally seek to protect the natural environment, (2) incidentally address and benefit components of the natural environment, or (3) even conflict with stated desires to protect the natural environment. Over time, gaps or conflicts in policies protecting the natural environment may arise as new data or issues emerge, as community values evolve, and as policies accumulate. An EPGA is a way to periodically take stock of gaps and conflicts in municipal environmental policy.

An EPGA should identify if and how different components of the natural environment are addressed by existing policy, assess their effectiveness or impact, and guide policy improvement or development to address those gaps. An EPGA should facilitate policy analysis and communication within the District and broader community. It should be a "living" document, updated as policies change and understanding of local environmental issues increases.

More specifically, the EPGA should:
1. define what comprises Saanich's natural environment in appropriate breadth and detail,
2. document existing and emerging stressor/threats to Saanich's natural environment,
3. identify (and assess) existing Saanich policies meant to protect the natural environment and other policies which may damage the natural environment,
4. link environment components, stressor/threats, and policies, and
5. identify the gaps -- aspects of Saanich's natural environment not currently or adequately addressed by policy.

The powers of municipal government are limited to those granted by senior levels of government. That may constrain policy options for municipal government. Hence, assessments of the "adequacy" of municipal policies should explicitly note those constraints.

RSTC has proposed that specific gap analyses are appropriate for individual policy areas. A functional higher-level EPGA will complement and not conflict with individual gap analyses. A functional EPGA could potentially better identify policies with multiple environmental benefits (or impacts) and confirm what components of natural environment are not addressed by existing policies. Conversely, individual policy area gap analyses can provide more detailed analyses suitable for a given policy area.

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[4] By "policy", we refer to legislation, regulations, policies, strategies, guidance, or any other documents formally recording policy decisions approved by Council (e.g., Government of British Columbia. 2020. Policy approaches handbook https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc-government/regulatory-reform/pdfs/policy_approaches_playbook.pdf)

A well-constructed list of natural environment components and potential threats can also provide a checklist to aid in environmental assessments of "non-environmental" policies and specific projects.

The existing draft EPGA (EPGA2020) was prepared by staff in late 2020 and briefly reviewed by RSTC at that time but not revised. Given the subsequent development of related reports (State of Biodiversity (SOB), State of Urban Forest (SUF), Biodiversity Conservation (BCS) and Urban Forest Strategies (UFS) strategies), along with research done by RSTC members during the Resilient Saanich process, it seemed timely to re-examine and update EPGA2020.

Suggested revisions to EPGA2020 are itemized in a separate report, entitled: *RSTC Environment Policy Gap Analysis 2023*. Briefly, the revisions make the breadth and detail of "natural environment" and stressor/threats more complete and appropriately detailed; the list of Saanich policies that affect the natural environment (and how) could be more comprehensive; and the links between specific policies and components of environment clearer. They would make EPGA2020 more complete, transparent, useable, and updateable.

The separate report proposes a revised approach to the EPGA and includes:
1. Review of EPGA2020 and suggested revisions.
2. Tables containing (a) suggested updated components of the Saanich "natural environment", and (b) associated stressors/threats, (c) a table summarizing key points from each policy as it relates to natural environment, and (d) spreadsheet listing Saanich policies and showing their links to components of natural environment.
3. A longer version of this document which explains spreadsheet components and how they are linked; how policies might be assessed; and suggested next steps.

The separate report is not a completed revised EPGA. The list of policies and how to assess them is incomplete and the report does not attempt to summarize the status or condition of the natural environmental components, the magnitude or severity of stressors/threats, or set priorities for action. Ultimately, those assessments are essential but require data which may not exist. By providing a clear sequence of steps, underlying rationale, and specific "to-dos", however, we hope that the method described in the report will facilitate the timely completion of a more useable and updateable EPGA that benefits District staff and the broader community.

Below, there is a brief outline of the Key elements of the Gap Analysis approach elaborated in the separate *RSTC Environment Policy Gap Analysis 2023* report

Defining Natural environment components and potential stressor/threats

Definition of natural environment components

A necessary first step is to define and identify components of "natural environment" to facilitate linking environment, stressor/threats, and Saanich policies. What should be included in "natural environment" and how should it be represented?

There is a definition of natural environment in the OCP, but it is less specific than the definition preferred by the RSTC. In the context of the EPGA and EPF. "Natural environment" could include:

1. abiotic factors necessary for life;

2. physiography arising from planetary processes ;

3a. biota and ecosystems that occurred on southern Vancouver Island pre-European settlement and still could given adequate habitat;

3b. species which are introduced and which provide ecological goods and services (e.g., non-native trees) and which may become "naturalized";

3c. species whose natural range may expand to southern Vancouver Island with climate change.

RSTC considers invasive species to be a stressor/threat to native ecosystems but recognize that their roles and potential benefits may differ in future "novel" urban environments.

Stressors/Threats

Stressors/threats and the actions that produce them link municipal policies and components of the natural environment. Policies typically address actions that threaten (or could benefit) the natural environment.

Classifying stressor/threats in a way which relates both to components of environment and to local government policy is inherently complicated. For example:
1. the local natural environment can be impacted both by local actions that can be controlled locally and impacted by global stressor/threats that are not controllable locally.
2. local stressor/threats vary in their proximity to the stress they cause and can be difficult to clearly separate from their sources (e.g., human actions).
3. actions which are sources of stressor/threats may also be beneficial to biodiversity/ecosystems.
4. Our scientific understanding of what constitutes threats to biodiversity in urbanized landscapes is increasing dramatically.

Some municipal policies may have little direct impact on Saanich's natural environment but directly affect biodiversity and ecosystems elsewhere, as per the "ecological footprint" concept (Wackernagel and Rees 1996). Some policies with beneficial impacts could include encouraging salvage and reuse of building materials from deconstructed houses or requiring concrete used in municipal infrastructure to contain recycled aggregate and other "waste" materials and thereby reduce impacts of extracting and processing virgin materials elsewhere.

A full list of stressors and threats is included in the separate report entitled *RSTC Environment Policy Gap Analysis 2023*, tables 2a, b and c.

Saanich Policies

Approximately 260 Saanich bylaws, council policies, and other strategic documents were found on the District website. There may be other departmental policies which may not be on the public website. In the separate report *RSTC Environment Policy Gap Analysis 2023*, a start was made to describe these policies and how they might potentially affect or impact components of the natural environment, either positively or negatively. This task has been started but is not finished; it remains to be completed. There is enough done now to indicate how to complete the task.

Linking environment, threats, and policies

An EPGA should clearly link policies to environment and/or to stressor/threats. EPGA2020 does not. We suggest sorting policies by the component of environment they potentially impact or by stressor/threats they address. The relevance of policies to either environment or stressor/threats should then be assessed, as was begun in EPGA2020. Ultimately, these linkages would provide a snapshot of:

1. how existing municipal policies apply to the natural environment or to stressor/threats;

2. what aspects of the natural environment are not addressed by existing policy.

These are the gaps that a gap analysis is attempting to identify. Once identified, they can then be examined in more detail, and addressed.

A much fuller treatment, and explanation with examples is contained in the separate report on gap analysis, entitled *RSTC Environment Policy Gap Analysis 2023*. Please refer to that document for more details.

Additional Use

The Committee recognizes that there can be other approaches to identifying gaps in policy and programs in Saanich. One approach the Committee took was to confirm previously identified policy gaps using steps 1-3 of the gap analysis. The Committee was quickly able to identify twelve gaps, listed below, but this is by no means a complete list.
1. There is no District Species-at-Risk management plan. This gap may be addressed in the forthcoming BCS.
2. There remain gaps of accuracy and comprehensiveness in the District's environmental mapping. RSTC recommends new mapping.
3. There is a lack of policy and management plans to reduce biodiversity loss due to hyper-abundant mammals, such as deer, rabbits, feral cats, rats and raccoons.
4. There is no regulation protecting biodiversity on private property.
5. There is no policy explicitly addressing biodiversity conservation/enhancement on public right-of-ways and boulevards.

6. The District lacks adequate assessment data and understanding of the functional condition for some of its priority ecosystems and water ways
7. The District has limited soil conservation policy associated with development works on either private or public lands.
8. The District has limited policy to address outdoor lighting effects on biodiversity.
9. The District has limited policy to mitigate the negative impacts of urban noise on the health of humans and other life.
10. There is limited policy to enforce more sensitive siting or design of building footprints to maximize biodiversity and tree conservation on private property.
11. There is a lack of measurable outcomes, timelines, resourcing and metrics for many of the District's existing environmental policies and strategies.
12. There is not a robust, funded private land stewardship program to encourage and assist property owners to enhance 'backyard' biodiversity.

These are important gaps, which are identified in addition to the gaps revealed through the process described above of linking policy, stressors with environmental components. Both are legitimate approaches.

D. Policy Evaluation Tool

A means of evaluating new policies or programs is recommended to determine how closely they fulfil the intent of the Guiding Principles and achievement of Goal 2. The Evaluation Tool not only helps with the process of policy/program/strategy/incentive development but can also be used to demonstrate how various policies work in coordination to support the Environment Policy Framework and Resilient Saanich overall.

The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee has suggested two approaches:

1. A simple approach is to use the set of guiding questions related to the Principles as outlined below

2. An alternative 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.

Option 1: Guiding Questions

The set of questions below can be used to serve as a thought or process tool to help develop policies, programs, regulations, strategies and incentives. Meeting the Guiding Principles will promote the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework and environmental sustainability in the face of challenges such as climate change and habitat modification. The Evaluation Tool could also be used post-hoc on existing policies, programs, regulations, strategies, and incentives to ensure that they work in a coordinated way to achieve the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework.

1. *Recognize the intrinsic value of nature.*

   This is an ethical commitment to recognize and respect the right to exist of other life forms and the ecological processes that support us all.

Does the policy actively promote, protect and enhance biodiversity conservation and the sustaining abiotic and biotic processes (nature)?

2. *Build relationships and undertake appropriate actions of reconciliation with indigenous groups and First Nations. For example, action the* ATOL,NEUEL *Memorandum of Understanding with the* W̱SÁNEĆ *Leadership Council.*

Have relevant Nations and indigenous groups been involved in policy development (redevelopment)?

3. *Use evidence-based decision making; take precautions and use a continuous improvement approach when supporting science is absent or insufficient.*

Has a literature review and/or assessment of similar policies in other jurisdictions been conducted (if developing new policy)?

Has previous policy been evaluated (if updating existing policy) for effectiveness and/or challenges?

Has the capacity for monitoring and continuous improvement been built into the policy?

Are areas of uncertainty identified? Are precautions in place?

4. *Lead by example through innovation and improving on best practices for management of human activities in relation to the natural environment.*

Is policy development coordinated between all departments?

Are best practices identified and committed to?

Is there a clear commitment to continuous improvement?

5. *Look beyond Saanich's borders to achieve results at a bioregional scale.*

Has the policy been discussed with or borrowed from relevant neighbouring jurisdictions?

If relevant, does the policy have a positive impact on resilience at a bioregional scale?

6. *Identify and highlight co-benefits of addressing climate adaptation and mitigation.*

Does the policy meet or exceed actions identified in the Climate Plan?

7. *Collaborate with diverse interests and backgrounds to develop more durable, fair, and effective environmental policies and programs.*

Is public engagement relevant? And if so, at what level of IAPP?

Is the policy development relevant to using a diversity and inclusion lens as per Saanich's Diversity and Inclusion Plan?

8. *Ensure open, accurate environmental information to encourage an informed citizenry that participates in building policies and programs for a more resilient Saanich.*

Does the policy provide for improved environmental information? Can it be made public?

Option 2: Policy Evaluation Tool

Policy Evaluation Tool to promote adoption of Environmental Policy Framework principles

As part of the Resilient Saanich Program, Council requested a policy and program evaluation tool for reviewing new and existing programs and policies against Goal 2 of the Environmental Policy Framework (EPF)

Goal 2. Foster complementary and coordinated policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives and align them with the Environmental Policy Framework Guiding Principles and the OCP.

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

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

- Assess existing regulatory, management and administrative tools to identify gaps and inconsistencies.
- Develop a strategic approach that encourages effective use of limited resources.

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

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The Evaluation Tool below is designed to serve as a thought or process tool to help development of policies, programs, regulations, strategies, and incentives that adhere to the principles articulated in the Environmental Policy Framework. Adhering to the principles will promote the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework and environmental sustainability in the face of challenges such as climate change and habitat modification. The Evaluation Tool can also be used post-hoc on existing policies, programs, regulations,

strategies, and incentives to ensure that they work in a coordinated way to achieve the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework.

The RSTC suggests two possible approaches to evaluation of adherence to each principle and the one chosen will depend on the nature of the policy or program. A qualitative approach is to use the proposed criteria in the table to determine if a policy has a high, medium, or low adherence to each principle. A more numerical approach is the use of a scoring scale for adding numerical scores to the criteria in the table for each principle. For example, a high score would be equivalent to three points, a medium to two points etc. A neutral category is added for policies or programs that have no relevance to a principle, which may be scored as NA or a numerical score of zero. There is also a category for evaluating if a policy or program works against a principle which would be assessed as "negative" or be given a negative numerical score.

The final evaluation of a policy or program would be to weigh the determinations for all the principles and to assess how close, overall, a policy or program comes to fulfilling the intent of the principles and achievement of Goal 2. A numerical approach may be useful when comparing policy or program alternatives. Policies and programs that score high could be submitted to Council for adoption, with documentation from the Evaluation Tool to demonstrate support for the goals of the Environmental Policy Framework and ultimately to a Resilient Saanich. The Evaluation Tool not only helps with the process of policy/program/strategy/incentive development but also demonstrates to the public how the various policies work in coordination to support the Environment Policy Framework and Resilient Saanich overall. Policies and program initiatives that score in the mid-low range can be re-examined to see where they can be enhanced before adoption.

Note: for new policy initiatives, trials suggested the questions approach outlined in Option 1 seemed applicable. For evaluating existing policy, trials showed that using the approach in Option 2 was not time consuming and was very effective.

No.	Principle from EPF	Scoring Matrix for policies, strategies, regulations, and incentives. For brevity, "Policy" is used to denote all the initiatives in the table below				
		High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)	Neutral (0)	Opposes (negative 1 to 3)
1	*Recognize the intrinsic value of nature*	Actively promotes, protects and enhances biodiversity conservation and the sustaining abiotic and biotic processes (nature) by awarding recognition and incentives.	Indirectly supports biodiversity conservation with strong mitigation measures	Implements some mitigation or offset measures	Neither promotes nor negates biodiversity	Actively leads to loss of habitat and biodiversity
2	*Build relationships and undertake appropriate actions of reconciliation with indigenous*	Relevant nations involved in policy development from start to finish	Relevant nations engaged and support in principle	Relevant nations contacted but active support unclear/not clearly articulated	No engagement	One or more nations actively against this policy

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	groups and First Nations.					
3	*Use evidence-based decision making; adopt the precautionary approach when supporting science or data are not available.*[5]	To score at this level policy should meet all <u>relevant</u> criteria below. 1. If it is a new policy, a literature review and effectiveness assessment of similar policies in other jurisdictions has been completed. If updating existing	To score at this level, policy meets at least criteria 1 <u>and</u> 2 and either criteria 3 or 4 in the high category.	To score at this level, policy meets criteria 1 <u>and</u> 2 in the high category but not criteria 3 or 4.	To score at this level, policy meets either 1 or 2	The policy does not review past policies, published literature, nor does it apply the precautionary principle or available evidence. The policy may pose risks to environmental values in the pursuit of achieving other values.

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[5] Evidence-based decision-making and being precautionary in the absence of evidence can both support good decisions. Adaptive management is the continuous evolution of practices based on careful observation. Learn from the past and plan for the future.

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		policy, previous policy effectiveness has been assessed and challenges identified prior to policy redevelopment. (This is considered gathering evidence or baseline data to support policy development.) 2. The goals that the policy is intended to achieve are clearly articulated, and qualitative or quantitative metrics and timelines are identified to enable				

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		effectiveness assessment. 3. Capacity for monitoring and adaptively modifying policy built into the policy. 4. Areas where baseline data or outcomes are uncertain are clearly articulated in the policy, and the application of the "Precautionary Principle" is made transparent for public review.				
4	*Monitor implementation with clear metrics to*	Council leads or sets the example for Saanich. The outcomes that are	Council indicates it wants to lead, but does not.	Council has an opportunity to lead, but does not.	Council fails to lead. No outcomes or timelines.	Not learning from and repeating past mistakes.

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		High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)	Neutral (0)	Opposes (negative 1 to 3)
	ensure goals are achieved and commit to continuous improvement and innovation.	to be achieved are clear. Timelines are clear. Staff fully engaged in developing innovative policy proposals. Promotes full interdepartmental coordinated action to achieve outcomes. Specific best practices are listed and committed to.	Outcomes clear but timelines are vague, or vice versa; best practices vague. Staff only partially engaged in developing innovations. Departments and staff only partially coordinate. Policy or program has been done a few times before.	Outcomes and timelines vague. Best practices not specified. Staff not engaged in developing innovations. Poor interdepartmental coordination. Limited commitment to continuous improvement. Policy or program has been done frequently.	Best practices not specified. No staff engagement or interdepartmental coordination. No commitment to continuous improvement. Not an innovation if it's done routinely.	

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		Clear commitment to continuous improvement First time for this Policy or program.				
5	*Work actively with neighbouring jurisdictions, organizations, and initiatives to achieve results at a bioregional scale.*[6]	Policy has been discussed with neighbouring jurisdictions and has positive effect and impact[7], or policy is adapted from other jurisdictions. Policy has positive impact on	Policy may have an impact on other local jurisdiction and at a bioregional scale.	Policy may have impact on local jurisdictions but not at bioregional scale.	Policy has no relation to what adjacent jurisdiction are doing	Policy works against the direction other jurisdictions are going, or negates improvement on a bioregional scale

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[6] Essentially, southern Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands.

[7] Neighbouring jurisdictions means local governments that share a border with Saanich, or the CRD

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		High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)	Neutral (0)	Opposes (negative 1 to 3)
		resilience at bioregional scale.				
6	*Address climate adaptation and mitigation in decisions.*	Meets or exceeds full implementation of provisions of Saanich Climate Plan	Partly addresses adaptation and mitigation in Saanich Climate Plan	Addresses mitigation but not adaptation or vice versa.	Does not address the provisions of the Saanich Climate Plan	Will result in a net increase in GHG emissions
7	*Collaborate with people of diverse interests and backgrounds to develop more durable, fair, and effective environmental policies and programs.*	Policy developed in collaboration with relevant community organizations, ENGOs, developers, service clubs, advisory committees, school	Consultation and collaboration has taken place with most of the appropriate and relevant groups and people of diverse backgrounds	Consultation and collaboration has taken place with only a few groups or special interests and some of the outcomes are welcoming to	Policy was developed without external consultation or collaboration and no particular effort was made to be welcoming to people	Policy was developed with values and benefits in conflict with, or ignoring all, input provided at the consultation stages

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		High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)	Neutral (0)	Opposes (negative 1 to 3)
		districts, health authorities and special interest groups, etc. and policy outcome is welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds.	affected by the policy.	people of diverse backgrounds.	of diverse backgrounds.	OR Policy was developed solely with special interest groups directly affected by said policy No effort was made to ensure the outcomes were welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds.
8	*Ensure open, accurate environmental information to encourage an informed citizenry that*	To score on Aspect 1: 1. Accurate (vetted and assured by experts) baseline	Policy includes sporadic outreach, education and some dedicated staff support. The outreach may be	Public input not consistently sought, recorded or incorporated. No dedicated staff resources.	Policy developed by Saanich staff and approved by Council without public participation, but some outreach during	Policy developed by Saanich staff and approved by Council without public participation, but no resources for

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	participates in building policies and programs for a more resilient Saanich. This principle has two aspects: Aspect 1) making environmental and policy development information (data, maps etc.) available to the public to create an informed citizenry and	environmental data and information on criteria 1, 2 and 3 of Principle 3 above are clearly and openly communicated to the public in public forums and/or through online resources. 2. Data gaps and uncertainty is clearly articulated so that criteria 4 of Principle 3 above can be applied. To score on Aspect 2: 3. If relevant, input from the community is	only targeted to some segments of the community and not towards harder to reach groups within the community (e.g., just online engagement or resources).		the implementation phase.	communication at any phase of the project.

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	Aspect 2) soliciting information back from this informed citizenry to inform and improve policy. To score "high" all criteria on both Aspect 1 and 2 need to be met.	solicited, documented, and transparently incorporated into policy and if not incorporated, documentation is available on reasons why. 4. Policy includes provisions for dedicated staff and ongoing outreach, education during the implementation phase.				

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