

MINUTES
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
February 16, 2023 at 6:31 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