

**MINUTES**  
**RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

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

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

Regrets: Councillor Zac de Vries and Stewart Guy

Guests: Judith Cullington and Carly Bilney, Secretariats

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

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**TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT**

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**CARRIED**

**REVIEW OF DIAMOND HEAD CONSULTING DRAFT STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT**

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

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

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

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

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

**CARRIED**

## **REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

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

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

## **NEXT MEETING**

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

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Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary