

MINUTES
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
April 20, 2023 at 6:34 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Councillor Zac de Vries; Kevin Brown; Purnima Govindarajulu; Chris Lowe; Stewart Guy; and Bev Windjack

Regrets: Tim Ennis; Jeremy Gye and Brian Wilkes

Guests: 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

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 April 20, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by B. Windjack and Seconded by C. Lowe: “That the Minutes for the February 16, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

MOVED by C. Lowe and Seconded by S. Guy: “That the Minutes for the March 9, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK DRAFT

The Secretariat provided an updated version of the Environmental Policy Framework; committee members were asked to provide feedback on the document. The following was noted:

- The definition of “Natural Environment” has been difficult to agree on. Key elements of the definition need to be agreed upon. This term is broad, and it is important to consider all aspects while keeping it simple enough for all to understand.
- K. Brown (working group member) has proposed a very detailed description.
- The first version included a more broad definition which may not be descriptive enough to ensure that all readers have the same understanding of the definition.

During committee discussion, the following was noted:

- The natural environment can include both native and non-native species. Invasive species are not part of the natural environment.
- Aligning the definition with other Saanich plans (such as local area plans) is important.
- More inclusion of description of non-native/non-invasive species would be beneficial.
- There may be benefit in having the longer description proposed by K. Brown as it is more descriptive and ensures that there is a clear understanding of a complex term.

The Secretariat and the working group will discuss the feedback from the committee and update the document before bringing it back to the committee.

PRESENTATION OF DRAFT CONNECTIVITY MAPPING – BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Diamond Head consulting provided the Draft Connectivity Map (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted:

- Urbanization tends to be focused in lowland areas near the ocean or water bodies which are the areas that support the highest levels of biodiversity. As cities are developed, these valuable habitats are lost and the connected network becomes fragmented.
- The ability to access these areas is impeded, isolation of populations can cause them to become genetically unhealthy due to inbreeding. The prey/predator dynamics can become unbalanced due to inbreeding and constrained movement.
- Connectivity is critical to allow access to habitats for populations to interbreed.
- The focus of this mapping is on terrestrial species, to help protect and connect the most valuable habitat, focus resources, and maximize the value of the natural areas and their ability to support as many species as possible, especially those that are at risk.
- Biodiversity of an island depends on its size, the amount of edges/shoreline, how species move. Biodiversity remnants in a terrestrial setting act in a similar fashion depending on their tolerance for and ability to move through urban areas.
- Major hubs in the Habitat Connectivity Network (HCN) provide interior habitat and refuge for wildlife. These are most likely to maintain biodiversity due to less disturbance.
- Minor hubs are defined as smaller areas, which have more interface edges. This includes some rural areas that have been intermixes with urban/forest landscapes. They have less protected refuge areas however they are important stepping stone areas.
- Unique habitat features (such as wetlands or Garry Oak communities) can exist within minor or major hubs, and these hubs may or may not be connected by corridors.
- Major corridors are a linear natural habitat that connects major hubs together. They are wide and continuous, with a target of greater than 30m wide. They are often fragmented by barriers such as roads. Many follow streams and their riparian setbacks.
- Minor corridors are narrow (10-30m wide) spaces fragmented by urban barriers, they provide natural cover for mammals tolerant of urban activity, birds and flying insects.
- Agricultural lands are protected for agricultural use, typically a monoculture of plants free of hard barriers with low cover and a risk of toxins such as pesticides/herbicides.
- Urban matrix is the natural areas intermixed within an urbanized landscape. These are small patches of habitat such as single or small groups of trees, non-native habitat features (such as garden areas), which are habitat for flying and urban tolerant species.
- The goals of the strategy include:
 - Understand the amount of remaining habitat in Saanich and how fragmented it is.
 - Increase public education and awareness of natural habitat within the urban landscape.
 - Prioritize habitats that will support biodiversity and identify missing travel corridors
 - Understand where habitat patches are isolated.

- Provide mapping that can inform land use planning, conservation and restoration efforts.
- Considerations will be made for habitat type, biodiversity, agricultural lands, land ownership, streams, and riparian setbacks as well as project scale.

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- The maps provide a high-level snapshot, while it is nice to get lots of information on the maps, there is also a need to ensure that the information provided is digestible.
- The maps help to inform where Saanich is currently, this information will allow for future opportunities to create policies and monitor implementation and progress in future.
- The perception of missing information will be hard to overcome.

DEBRIEFING OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY OPEN HOUSES

The Chair provided an update on the recent Biodiversity Conservation Strategy open houses.

- An in person event took place on April 18, 2023 with just under 100 people attending, as well as a virtual open house on April 19th with approximately 50 attendees.
- Feedback was gathered from attendees and will be used to inform the strategy.
- Many comments centred around mapping and ongoing concerns related to private property. Many residents have lingering concerns about the previous Environmental Development Permit Area, or the current lack thereof.
- A BCS and a Urban Forest Strategy questionnaires are available online.
- Comments and feedback from all venues will be reviewed by Diamond Head, to be summarized and then provided to staff and RSTC for further consideration.

REVIEW OF STEWARDSHIP WORKING GROUP DRAFT

The committee briefly reviewed the Stewardship Working Group Draft, the working group has discussed many aspects in great detail, comments were included on the draft document. Due to time constraints committee members were asked to send any further comments to the working group for further consideration at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from K. Brown the meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary