

MINUTES
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
August 17, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Councillor Zac de Vries; Kevin Brown; Stewart Guy; Chris Lowe; and Brian Wilkes

Regrets: Jeremy Gye; Purnima Govindarajulu and Tim Ennis

Guests: Mike Coulthard and Alison Kwan 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 B. Wilkes and Seconded by K. Brown: "That the Agenda for the August 17, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved."

It was noted that the next meeting date has been changed to September 28, 2023.

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by C. Lowe and Seconded by S. Guy: "That the minutes of the June 15, 2023 Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be adopted."

CARRIED

DISCUSSION WITH DIAMOND HEAD CONSULTING ON BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY (BCS) ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

M. Coulthard and A. Kwan of Diamond Head Consulting (DHC) gave an overview of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) Actions and Strategies (document on file). The following was noted:

- The BCS is a living document which will be continually reviewed and updated.
- Feedback from Phase 1 of engagement has been included in the recommendations.
- The key points of the feedback received from the committee have been summarized.
- Some similar comments existed; these were highlighted as important aspects.
- The recommendations outline a plan to achieve the goals identified in the strategy.
- One priority of the strategy is making sure that items are aligned on the Urban Forestry Strategy, the Official Community Plan, the Environmental Policy Filter, and others.
- The high-level goals have been structured in an organized manner, not prioritized.

The following was noted during discussion on the organization of the Strategy Goals and Recommendations:

- The numbered list may be interpreted as prioritized; it was determined that this was not the intention. Priority could be determined using different metrics and indicators.
- Item 1 could be better characterized by stating “completing the inventory of Saanich”.
- The use of the term “connectivity” in the document is challenging, many areas lack connectivity. The definition is unclear and can be confusing; there should be a better understanding of the science and definitions behind the term.
- Although the list is not prioritized, it was noted that numbers 4 & 6 may be better placed higher on the list as they are both important aspects.
- Prioritizing public understanding of biodiversity and encouraging the creation of biodiverse spaces on private lands go together, you cannot have one without the other.
- There is an opportunity for a more qualitative approach, including understanding where the data gaps exist. An example of condition assessments for aquatic ecosystems was given as there is a data condition assessment of the Colquitz River done in the late 1990’s. Other lakes and streams have not been assessed, so we know that this important information is missing and monitoring progress is not possible.
- Biodiversity on agricultural lands needs to be considered, as the typical monoculture farming methods are harmful to biodiversity and pesticides destroy the environment.
- There isn’t a retrospective analysis of how effective the pulling together program is. We need better data to monitor and evaluate programs within the District.
- Preventing loss of biodiversity needs to be a priority ahead of restoration. Preserving the land and environments that are rich in biodiversity is of utmost importance.
- Better promoting backyard biodiversity in the community would be beneficial.
- The ranking system is not ideal as those items identified as low priorities will likely never get done. While they may get bumped up to a higher priority when the strategy is updated or refreshed, there is a potential they could be forgotten.
- Highlighting some as items as critical may be favorable, defining ranking is problematic.
- “Opportunistic recommendations” may be a better description than low priority.
- When considering the cost of implementing actions, we also need to factor in the cost of not doing them. While the cost to complete an action may seem high, there are many implications and negative things that could happen or be made worse by not completing them. An example of climate change was given and considering how not protecting biodiversity now may increase extreme weather events and related costs long term.
- The timeline to complete the actions will vary, the BCS will be reviewed and updated by staff periodically, likely every 5 years. New goals or actions will be added as needed.

RATIFICATION OF STEWARDSHIP BRIEF

Committee member C. Lowe gave an overview of the recent updates to the Stewardship Brief. Members were invited to provide comments prior to ratification of the document. The following was noted during committee discussion:

- The committee has reviewed the updated document as it was attached with agenda.
- This document has been reviewed and supported previously; however a formal motion has not yet been made. Formalizing support for the document is necessary.
- Thorough review and subsequent updates have led to a robust document which committee members believe to be thorough and informational.

MOVED by B. Wilkes and Seconded by C. Lowe: “That the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee endorse the Stewardship Brief and addendum as presented and that the documents be forwarded to Diamond Head Consulting.”

CARRIED

RATIFICATION OF COLLATED RESPONSE TO DHC BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY DOCUMENT

The Chair gave an overview of the responses to the DHC BCS document. Members were invited to provide comments prior to ratification of the document. The following was noted during committee discussion:

- Committee members expressed interest in having this document and other documents available on the Saanich website.
- The document has already been sent to DHC and considered prior to the meeting, this motion formalizes the process and confirms that the document sent was what the committee wanted DHC to receive.

MOVED by K. Brown and Seconded by C. Lowe: “That the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee endorse the Collated Response to the DHC Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Document as presented and that the document be forwarded to Diamond Head Consulting.”

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

DISCUSSION OF RSTC MOTIONS (2020-2023)

The Chair gave an overview of the motions passed by the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee from the beginning of the process up until June 2023. The following was noted during committee discussion:

- There were several motions made, this document summarises them and outcomes.
- The document provides a fascinating journey through what has been done by the committee to date, committee members thanked the Chair for preparing it.
- In June of 2021 the committee made a motion to use conservation standards approach, it was the consensus of member that this approach should be used going forward; however, the request never materialised.
- This document will allow for future investigation and understanding of the process.

Committee members T. Stevens and B. Wilkes will work together to update the document and bring it back to the next committee meeting.

UPDATE TO ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY GAP ANALYSIS

Committee member K. Brown gave an overview of the Environmental Policy Gap Analysis. Members were invited to provide comments prior to ratification of the document. The following was noted during committee discussion:

- There are lots of policies at Saanich, there is a benefit in identifying where gaps in environmental protection and preservation measures exist.
- The gap analysis was created by staff early in the Resilient Saanich process. Many policies have been updated, and some new policies created. An update to the analysis may be beneficial to ensure it is current.
- Determining opportunities for new policies is one benefit of gathering data gaps.
- Including more marine and terrestrial targets in policies would be beneficial.
- The analysis is a good place to determine what aspects of the environment do not have policies, or few policies to support conservation goals.
- This process will be complex and time consuming, but it needs to be updated as the 2020 draft was obscure and the committee now has new policies in place.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from B. Wilkes, the meeting adjourned at 822 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for September 28, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary