

**MINUTES**  
**RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and Via MS Teams  
770 Vernon Avenue  
December 19, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

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

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

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Tim Ennis and Purnima Govindarajulu

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

Councillor de Vries provided 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 December 19, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”**

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- A discussion on identifying an accessible location on the Saanich website for the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) information and materials would be useful. This topic will be added to the end of the agenda.

**The Motion was then Put and CARRIED**

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by S. Guy and Seconded by J. Gye: “That the minutes of the December 7, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved as amended.”**

**CARRIED**

Note: A change on page 2 was noted that quantifiable data and metrics for enhancement and restoral should be changed to restoration.

## RECEIPT OF CORRESPONDENCE

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- The intent and actions within the Draft Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) may not be fully understood by all groups.
- Building more scientific evidence and including more information in the BCS is needed.

## BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Senior Manager of Parks gave an update on the changes made to the BCS and the following was noted:

- The volume of recommendations could use some prioritizing. This can be accomplished by determining what will have the greatest impact within a 5-year period.
- The tables of the draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy are broken up into 3 colours.
- Light green is the recommendations the consultant believes to be the most important, dark green is the agreed priorities between the strategy and RSTC members and white are the priorities submitted by committee members.

The following was noted during the committee discussion:

- Hiring students to assist staff with the workload could be a solution.
- All recommendations in the draft table will remain. Selected recommendations will proceed to the executive summary to demonstrate their importance.
- Stating “regularly update mapping” in the executive summary could be valuable.
- Developing park plans to help manage natural areas in Saanich is important. Having a network and hubs available on GIS could be a useful tool.
- A 2-to-3-year plan could be implemented to improve the efforts and start rehabilitating in a measurable fashion. This could include restricting access in certain sensitive areas.
- The word consider could be changed to implement in the marine regulation section.
- Until there is more quantifiable data the effectiveness of the BCS it will be hard to monitor.
- A suggestion was made to use the targets and their key ecological attributes identified by the biodiversity working group for monitoring. These have been provided to the consultant.
- Invasive species continue to affect the quality of native biodiversity. New developments are not the only threat to these sensitive areas. Invasive species are one of the biggest threats that also need to be monitored and minimized where possible.
- An environmental development protection area (EDPA) may be a challenging component as the previous EDPA was highly problematic. This term could be associated with the past and misunderstood by the public. If protection is to be put in place, a new technical term could be Natural Environment Protection Area or similar.
- It was acknowledged that the committee has not had the time to discuss a replacement EDPA in depth.
- Some ecosystems on private property have high value and should be protected.
- With the *Housing Act* soon to be implemented, it is difficult to determine what can be protected on private land, however efforts should still be made.
- Information concerning what Saanich has identified as areas for high density as well as how many homes will be built in these areas compared to the Provincial housing targets could assist with prioritizing projects. Areas of high growth may require more protection.
- The Official Community Plan (OCP) has identified primary growth areas, seeing these areas overlaid with the draft habitat network showed minimal conflict.
- Implementing a precise metric would assist in protecting the environment, the example of Mount Tolmie was given. The value in protecting what remains on this land is imperative.
- An open dialogue with the First Nations about restoration and protection is crucial.
- Ranking priorities through economic and cultural indicators of ecosystem health fits well. If removed, these indicators may inaccurately indicate completion.

- Priority items will be what move the dial the furthest on protection and restoration.
  - A realistic approach to goals is important for success.
  - Transparency identifying resources required for implementation is crucial.
  - Some objectives could be combined for efficiency.
  - Identifying priority lands will help with both acquisition and rehabilitation of degraded areas.
  - Many hubs and corridors within the region are protected through existing permit areas.
  - The ideal habitat corridor is at least 50 metres wide.
  - Questions concerning the definitions and implementation should be expected.
  - Offering assistance for stewardship programs and focusing on management plans for parks allows for expediting priorities.
  - A clear understanding of funding for each recommendation would be practical.
  - Wildfires are a concern, a strategic plan to protect hilltop natural area parks is critical.
  - The concept of a biodiversity habitat network is an overarching goal in the BCS.
  - Understanding Indigenous values and building relationships to connect with local communities is also an overarching goal.
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- Items identified as a priority that will have the greatest impact within a 5-year period were:
    - Regularly update ecosystem data (i.e., terrestrial, aquatic, marine, invasive species, and species at risk) as new information becomes available. Continue to refine the precision of terrestrial ecosystem polygon boundaries through ground-truthing and air photo analysis.
    - Identify and prioritize areas within the Biodiversity Habitat Network for protection and enhancement.
    - Acquire and restore the land within the Biodiversity Habitat Network.
    - Implement a Marine Development Permit Area (DPA) or zone to mitigate waterfront development impacts and restore degraded foreshore zones.
    - Implement a development permit area or zone for the protection of the natural environment.
    - Develop park plans to help manage natural area parks in Saanich. Begin by creating a priority list.
    - Promote and expand programs to encourage biodiversity stewardship and education.
  - The updated draft will be available in early 2024.

\*\*\* The consultants exited the meeting at 7:50 p.m.\*\*\*

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The Senior Manager of Parks and committee member T. Stevens gave an update on the Environment Policy Framework and the following was noted:

- The draft was updated with the comments from the committee. No major changes were made from the last version with the exception of the conceptual diagram on page six.

**MOVED by J. Gye and Seconded by S. Guy: “That the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee endorse the draft Environmental Policy Framework document as presented.”**

The following was noted during discussion:

- The diagram may not fully reflect the importance of the overarching role of the EPF.

**CARRIED**  
**with B. Wilkes OPPOSED**

## ENVIRONMENTAL GAP ANALYSIS

Committee member K. Brown provided an update on the Environmental Gap Analysis and the following was noted:

- The draft was edited following comments from the last meeting.
- The Gap analysis can be included on the website. This is a living document that staff could update as needed to ensure gaps are addressed.

## COMMITTEE MEMO

The Chair provided a verbal update on the possibility to send a memo to Council, the following was noted:

- A letter from the Chair outlining thoughts could be sent to Council. All members are invited to provide feedback to Council as individuals when the BCS report is scheduled.
- The BCS will be continually monitored and staff will provide progress reports.
- A clear plan to track future happenings would be appreciated.
- Feedback could also be offered to Council for consideration of future committees.
- Densification and population growth outlined by the *Housing Act* make these initiatives more urgent as the growth may have negative impacts on ecosystems.

## INCLUSION OF DOCUMENTS ON THE SAANICH WEBSITE

Committee member K. Brown requested that the documents created by the committee are made accessible on the Saanich.ca website. Staff will work to have these added.

## FINAL REMARKS

Councillor Z. de Vries and the Senior Manager of Parks thanked members of the committee for their time and all the significant work that was put into the Resilient Saanich process over the past three years.

It was noted that edits to the BCS will be completed early in the new year, with the strategy being made available to the public for input in the spring.

## ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from S. Guy, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

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Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary