

# Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



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# Elk/Beaver Lake Watershed Management Plan endorsed by Council.



By Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services, District of Saanich

Elk/Beaver Lake is a widely-utilized recreational natural feature in Saanich that has suffered from poor water quality since the 1970's, including algal blooms in more recent years. As a result, recreational and habitat values have been significantly impacted.

Saanich Council has endorsed the new Elk/Beaver Lake Watershed Management Plan. The Plan was developed under a CRD-led process that built upon several years of an intergovernmental and community partnership to research water quality and solutions specific to this sub-watershed of the Colquitz River.

The Plan outlines several actions for the CRD, Saanich, community stewards, and landowners towards improving the water quality reaching the lake. The actions speak to the vision, goal, and objectives:

The vision for Elk/Beaver Lake watershed is to have a healthy and diverse lake ecosystem that supports environmental values, safe recreation, and community activities for generations to come.

Saanich's main areas of influence will be improving land management to reduce phosphorus and stream restoration which will involve partnering with the community and other governments.

Specifically, the Elk/Beaver Lake Watershed Management Plan envisions that Saanich will:

- Maintain open, vegetated streams and ditches;
- Contact local landowners and groups about best management practices to reduce phosphorus-laden runoff;
- Improve public awareness and encourage enrollment of farms in provincially-supported agricultural practices and programs to reduce nutrient use;
- Work collaboratively to establish a series of connected wetlands to buffer the lake;
- Support landowner and community efforts to improve stream and riparian habitat of Haliburton, Hamsterly, and O'Donnell creeks; and
- Collaborate with senior government to improve buffering from the highway.

The CRD is implementing an in-lake remediation system, hopefully having it fully operational by spring 2022.

**The primary goal is to improve water quality in Elk/Beaver Lake.**  
The objectives are:

|                                                                                  |                                                                                         |                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improve <b>land management</b> practices to reduce phosphorus entering the lake. | Improve <b>watershed</b> structure and function to reduce phosphorus entering the lake. | Improve <b>lake</b> health and function to reduce phosphorus within the lake. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

For more details about the Plan and the entire initiative, please visit <https://www.crd.bc.ca/project/elk-beaver-lake-initiative>.

# Help the Planet by Avoiding Food Waste

By Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Planner,  
District of Saanich

Did you know that food waste is a climate change issue? Food is a smaller source of greenhouse gas emissions in our community than fossil fuel use for transportation and buildings, but it is still significant, especially from a consumption-based emissions perspective. Food accounts for 19% of our community consumption-based emissions. Only 7% of food emissions are from transportation – there are more emissions associated with food: from production to processing to disposal.

To become more climate friendly with our food we can:

- Reduce food waste
- Choose lower-carbon foods – emphasize plant based foods
- Support local farms to improve food security

Visit [lovefoodhatewaste.ca](http://lovefoodhatewaste.ca) for helpful tips and ideas for food planning, shopping, storage, and recipes for using up all those good things in your fridge!

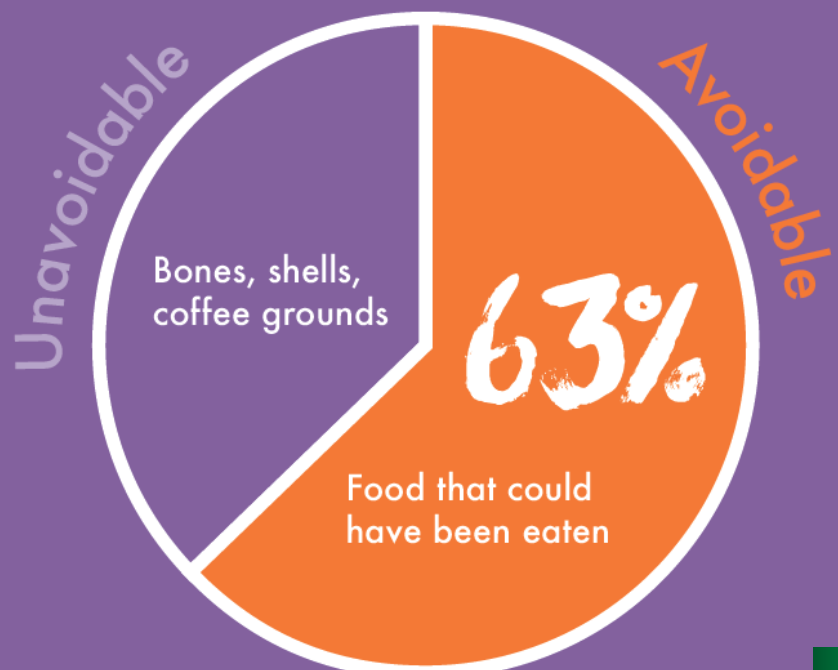
## From Love Food Hate Waste Canada:

- 63% of the food Canadians throw away could have been eaten.
- For the average Canadian household that amounts to 140 kilograms of wasted food per year – at a cost of more than \$1,100 per year!
- For Canada as a whole, that amounts to almost 2.2 million tonnes of edible food wasted each year, costing Canadians in excess of \$17 billion!

## 5 WAYS WITH



# AVOIDABLE HOUSEHOLD FOOD WASTE

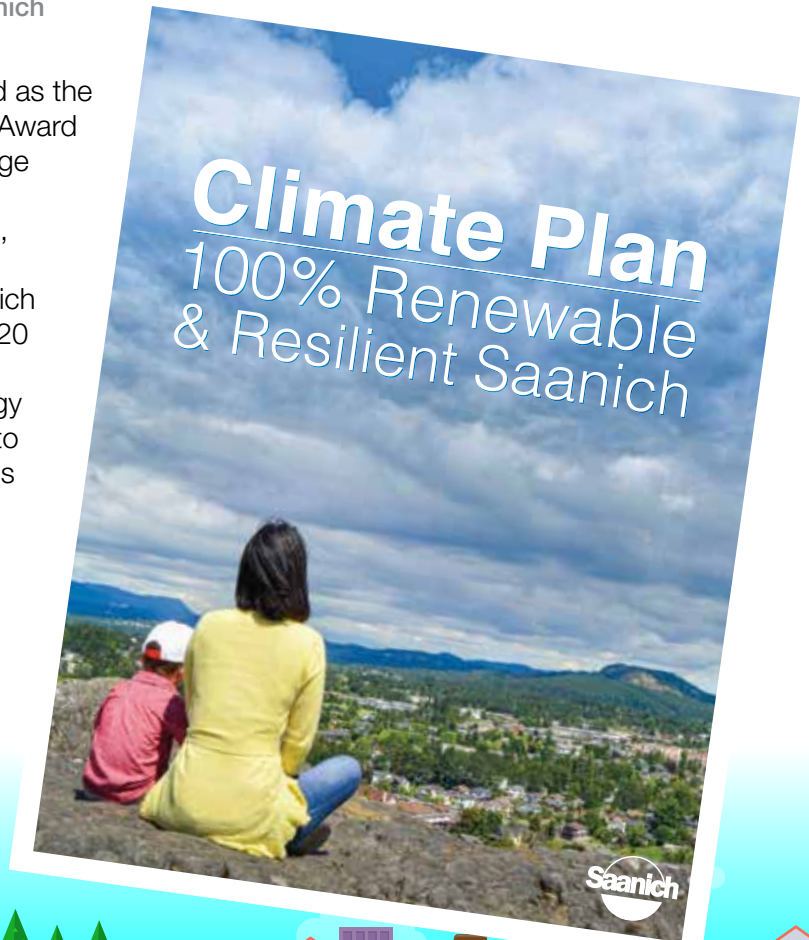


# Saanich's Award-Winning Climate Plan

By Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Planner, District of Saanich

The District of Saanich's Climate Plan has been selected as the winner of the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) 2021 Award for Planning Excellence in the category of Climate Change Planning! CIP's Awards for Planning Excellence honour exceptional planning projects judged on their innovation, impact on the profession, implementation potential, and overall presentation. This is the third award for the Saanich Climate Plan, following the Planning Institute of BC's 2020 Silver Award for Excellence in Policy Planning, and the Community Energy Association 2020 Climate and Energy Action Award. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of the Climate Plan and congratulations to the other nominees and winners.

Regardless of the awards, we have much work to do to meet our community climate targets, with lots of important efforts underway. Visit [saanich.ca/climateplan](https://saanich.ca/climateplan) to learn about current action, progress reports, and how you can get involved.



# Historic Partnership in the Salish Sea

By Dianna Stenberg, TLC Deputy Executive Director

This spring, members of the **WSÁNEĆ** community joined The Land Conservancy (TLC) volunteers and staff, and UBC Faculty of Forestry's Dr. Tara Martin on **SISÇENEM** (Halibut Island) to explore the island's dramatic seasonal bloom.

Supporting Garry Oak, Arbutus, and Douglas-fir woodlands, and open wildflower meadows, the 9.67-acre island off the coast of Sidney Island was recently purchased by TLC to protect its cultural and ecological significance. TLC is working with the **WSÁNEĆ** Leadership Council to draft a conservation covenant and develop a management plan that will incorporate Indigenous land management principles and provide access for cultural, educational, and monitoring purposes, before transferring title of **SISÇENEM** to the **WSÁNEĆ** for long-term stewardship. The transfer will be historically significant as the first of its kind between a land trust and Indigenous community in Canada.

Garry Oak and associated ecosystems support many of Canada's species at risk including Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) and Slender Popcorn Flower (*Plagiobothrys tenellus*). The island's spring meadows were carpeted with **KL̓O,EL** (Great Camas; *Camassia leichtlinii*), White Fawn Lily (*Erythronium oregonum*), and Chocolate Lilies (*Fritillaria affinis*). Due to the lack of deer browse on **SISÇENEM**, researchers have identified an abundance of native species with cultural significance such as **KEXMIN** (Barestem Desert-parsley; *Lomatium nudicaule*) and **KL̓O,EL** (Great Camas; *Camassia leichtlinii*). Saanich



locals are likely familiar with these species, but part of what makes **SISÇENEM** remarkable is that these mature plants – some more than 80 years old - have not experienced the effects of deer.

You can join TLC, the **WSÁNEĆ** Leadership Council, and Dr. Martin in helping to protect this remarkable island. While the acquisition has been fully funded by a generous donor, TLC is raising funds to complete restoration work on the island and register the protective conservation covenant. Gifts made are currently being matched dollar for dollar!

[www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca).



Community on **SISÇENEM** photo credit Alex Harris



# Plant a Grocery Store for Pollinators

By Maia Watson, Saanich Parks Student Technician

When my stomach grumbles and the fridge is empty, I solve the problem with a quick trip to the grocery store. However, pollinators don't have it as easy – they rely on an abundance of flowers for their energy source. With fewer natural areas in urban environments, finding their preferred bloom can pose a challenge for many native pollinators in our region.

Pollinators are defined as any organism that moves pollen between plants, and includes bees, flies, butterflies, beetles, and birds. They are crucial to ecosystem health and biodiversity because they help many plants produce seeds and fruits; used to either reproduce or feed wildlife. Did you know that two-thirds of the world's crop production relies on pollinators? The crops that they pollinate supply nutrition that is vital for human health.

Many pollinators are threatened by habitat loss, pesticide exposure, pests, climate change, monoculture farming, and various diseases. To help pollinators, Saanich Parks plants pollinator-friendly species that extend the pollen and nectar season, ensuring that pollinators have food throughout the year.

Would you like to help native pollinators? You can by planting native plants that flower throughout the season, ensuring a consistent food supply for these tiny but vital creatures. Here are a few of our favorites that serve as a flower "grocery store" for our native pollinators.

If you receive sunshine in your garden or on your patio, Woolly Sunflower and Goldenrod will put on a gorgeous yellow show.



Woolly Sunflower



Goldenrod

Plants that thrive in both the sun and part shade are Hedge-nettle and Mock-orange. Hummingbirds can't resist Hedge-nettle, and butterflies and bees love Mock-orange.



Hedge-nettle

Red Columbine and Self-heal are great fits for a damper, sunny and open forested location. Expect hummingbirds and bees to come visit these vibrant flowers.



Red Columbine



Mock-orange



Self-heal

Along with planting pollinator friendly plants, avoid pesticide use ([saanich.ca/pesticide](https://www.saanich.ca/pesticide)), and allow parts of your garden to be less tidy to enhance habitat for ground nesting bees. Continue to support local food producers by shopping for local groceries and of course, educate others about the importance of pollinators.

When we care for pollinators and their habitats, we are kept healthier as well. Please join us, and grow your Natural Intelligence by learning more about native pollinators and the flower “grocery stores” they depend on.

# Blenkinsop Meadow Pollinator Project at Lochside Trail

By Francesca Loro,  
Stewardship Coordinator, Peninsula Streams Society



Have you heard the buzz on the Lochside Trail? Flowers are blooming and creating a veritable paradise for both pollinators and people!

The Blenkinsop Meadow Pollinator Project, which began in 2018, is a restored half-acre plot adjacent to the Lochside Regional Trail that is providing habitat for a diverse range of pollinators, including native bumble bees and solitary bees.

On June 21st, Peninsula Streams kicked off International Pollinator Week by inviting the Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the MLA for the Saanich South riding, District of Saanich Mayor Haynes, local farmers and business owners, the North Quadra Community Association, BC Hydro, and project volunteers to the meadow.

Experts from Peninsula Streams, Pollinator Partnership Canada, and Saanich Native Plants were on hand to share their knowledge about the pollinators and native plant species and reflect on the project's history, current activities, and future plans. We were honoured to have Tiffany Joseph of the **WSÁNEĆ** Leadership Council attend to give a blessing and talk, and reflect on how the project relates to Indigenous and colonial food systems.

Planning is underway to plant more native species with the help of our project partners from Saanich Native Plants. Dr. Lora Morandin of Pollinator Partnership Canada has been conducting regular

monitoring to determine the change in diversity and quantity of pollinator species. Results show that in 2021, there are more than 10 times the number of bees compared to pre-restoration numbers, including pebble bees, sweat bees, bumble bees, and long-horned bees!

Throughout the summer, we have prioritized weeding of invasive species, particularly of Canada Thistle and clover, and plan to form a stewardship group composed of project volunteers.

Next steps for the meadow include design and installation of permanent interpretive signage, a gate, and a viewing area with a path, as well as more planting and weeding work parties.

We are also looking for small groups of dedicated volunteers to work on weeding, planting, and general maintenance at the Blenkinsop Meadow. If this interests you, please email us at [PeninsulaStreams@gmail.com](mailto:PeninsulaStreams@gmail.com)







# The South Island FarmHub turns one!



Regional. Seasonal. Delivered to you.

By Jaya Scott, Social Media and Communications Coordinator, South Island FarmHub

Since the start of the pandemic, the South Island FarmHub has not only fed more than 15,000 people in the region but has also generated more than \$260,000 worth of sales for local farmers and food processors - and we're just getting started!

The South Island FarmHub was launched with support of the Rapid Relief Fund in the wake of the first-wave of COVID-19. It was created by the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable and the Victoria Community Food Hub Society to fill a crucial gap in our local food system between farmers and the community. Island farmers had planned and planted their crops for restaurant business which evaporated - some lost up to 40% of their usual sales. At the same time, food inequalities were exacerbated. Families and individuals whose food security was precarious suddenly faced further barriers to accessing good food, from transportation to affordability. The FarmHub stepped in to link local farmers with folks eager to buy their food - citizens, chefs, charities, and non-profit organizations. Through the Rapid Relief Fund and further grants,

the FarmHub has also been able to subsidize the cost of local food for more than 25 local charity and school partners.

When the FarmHub launched a year ago, we asked farmers what they needed from us - they just asked for a way to sell their food. Since then, we've innovated, providing produce pickup for Peninsula farmers at an aggregation point in central Saanich, opening an online farmer's market with wholesale and home customer channels, offering regional produce boxes, and expanding our partnerships to work with local food producers. We now carry everything from cucumbers to bagels to kombucha and jam. Up and down the Saanich peninsula, the FarmHub continues to support our food producers and make fresh local food accessible.

*Want to grow a robust regional food system with us? Visit [www.sifarmhub.ca](http://www.sifarmhub.ca) for subscription and a-la-carte ordering options, for wholesale and home delivery customers. Join us in supporting our local food economy!*



# Youth and Community Engaged in Restoration and Stewardship of Small Urban Watersheds

By Pradnya Sawant, World Fisheries Trust

Interns and volunteers are rolling up their sleeves this summer through fall to do instream, riparian, and estuarine restoration and monitoring in some of Victoria's key small watersheds. These activities are funded under the Conservation Economic Stimulus Initiative (CESI) administered by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF).

The Victoria Small Watersheds (VSW) project team is led by Coastal Collaborative Sciences (CCS), a Division of World Fisheries Trust, in partnership with the Peninsula Streams Society (PSS) and focuses on training young people in restoration and stewardship activities, while providing environmental benefits to the community.

The VSW team is leading and participating in instream, riparian, wetland, and estuarine habitat assessment and restoration, salmonid and amphibian surveys, water quality monitoring, data entry, data analysis, technical report writing, community outreach, and more. The project activities take place at several locations within the Colquitz River, Craigflower Creek, and Gorge Creek watersheds. Additional activities may be considered to respond to First Nations' interests. There may also be outcomes based on feedback from stakeholders.

One of the focus areas in the upper Colquitz is Haliburton Brook and its watershed. Interns and volunteers will assist with the continuation of the Haliburton Urban Biodiversity Enhancement and Restoration Project (UBER) at the Haliburton Community Organic Farm. They will be involved in the design and implementation of restoration plans including: invasive vegetation control, native species plantings, in-stream restoration, environmental monitoring, and assessment. These ongoing efforts will be carried out at the watershed level with the support of municipalities, landowners, community volunteers, and stewardship groups such as the Beaver Elk Environmental Stewards (BEES).

If you have a particular interest in participating, informing, or contributing to the watershed restoration planning process for Haliburton Brook, please reach out to the Haliburton Watershed Working Group at [haliburtonwwg@gmail.com](mailto:haliburtonwwg@gmail.com).

For general inquiries about the Victoria Small Watersheds CESI project please reach out to Heather Wright at [info@coastalcollabsci.org](mailto:info@coastalcollabsci.org) or through the WFT office at 778-430-7585.



# EVENTS



## Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community/parks/events-in-park/trails-treks.html>

Any questions please call Jason at 250-475-5427 or email at [jason.jones@saanich.ca](mailto:jason.jones@saanich.ca)

### Easy Walks 55+(FREE registration required)

#### Mondays | 9:30 am to 10:30 am

Meet new friends while enjoying easy-paced, 1 hour group social walks. Interesting circular routes follow pavement and well groomed trails. No steep hills. Please wear solid, supportive shoes. Sorry, no dogs on these walks.

#### Aug 16 | Cedar Hill to Camosun

Meet near main entrance to Cedar Hill Rec Centre, Cedar Hill Rd.

#### Aug 23 | Copley/Colquitz Area

Meet in parking lot for Copley Park West, by tennis courts, off Vanalman Avenue

#### Aug 30 | University of Victoria

Meet by tennis courts, Henderson Recreation Centre parking lot, Cedar Hill Road.

### Gentle Walk & Talk 55+

(FREE registration is required)

#### Tuesdays and Thursdays | 9:30 am to 11 am

Enjoy fresh air, beautiful scenery, friendly chat and gentle exercise as we take different walks through Saanich parks and trails. Walks follow mainly chip or gravel trails but may have some steep sections. Sorry, dogs not permitted.

#### Aug 17 | UVic Alumni Chip Trail

#### Aug 19 | UVic Alumni Chip Trail

Meet at Henderson Rec Centre, by main door, 2291 Cedar Hill X Rd

#### Aug 24 | Sayward Hill

#### Aug 26 | Sayward Hill

Meet at Lochside Park, off Cordova Bay Rd, past Mattick's Farm

#### Aug 31 | Mystic Vale

#### Sep 2 | Mystic Vale

Meet at Cadboro-Gyro Park, beside the bathroom building

### Sunday Walks

(FREE registration required)

Discover the beauty of Saanich parks and nature in your backyard. Guided walks are open to adults of all ages. Please wear sturdy footwear and bring drinking water. Walks go rain or shine. Leashed, well-socialized dogs are welcome. New\* | registration is required.

#### Aug 15 | Gordon Head/Braefoot

Meet near main entrance to Gordon Head Recreation Centre, off Feltham Road

## Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca) 250-479-0211

### Nature House (Drop-In)

Monday - Friday | 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and every third Sunday 12-3pm

We are pleased to announce the Nature House has reopened on a limited schedule with COVID-19 social distancing and enhanced cleaning and sanitizing protocols in effect.

Come in and explore the touch table, learn how snakes encounter the world around them, and investigate how bats 'see' in the dark. Whether you meet the local wildlife, visit the bee hive, or read a book, this learning hub will engage your senses as you connect with the fascinating ecosystems found at Swan Lake. The Nature House is wheelchair accessible. Admission is by donation.

### Guided Bird Walks (Drop-In)

Every Sunday | 9:00 am to 10:30 am

Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and dress for the weather. Meet in the large parking lot for this informal walk around the lake area. Donations are appreciated.

## Victoria Natural History Society

Visit [www.naturevictoria.ca](http://www.naturevictoria.ca) for more programs

### Saturday Morning Birding (most Saturdays)

Check the Calendar to find out the week's location and time ([http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518)). All experience levels welcome. Non-members can participate up to three times.

## The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC)

Visit [www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca) for more details

### 2021 VIRTUAL Passport to Nature

This program features 9 free events throughout the year! Designed to connect TLC donors and the public with nature, TLC's Passport to Nature includes virtual site tours, species identification lectures, nature journaling webinars, and more! This year TLC is offering a companion Naturalist Activity Book for Kids with activities for all ages.

## Compost Education Centre

Visit [compost.bc.ca](http://compost.bc.ca) for more programs

### Parent and Child Workshops

Monday - Friday | 10:30 am to 11:30 am

Workshops explore the compost cycle, worms and soil health and involve story, song and movement for the little ones. Tickets are \$10 and include you and your child! (<https://www.eventbrite.ca/o/compost-education-centre-kids-workshops-3442593641>).

#### Aug 26 | Garden Tour!

Join us for a guided tour of our garden to learn about composting, growing your own food and more!



Join the *Our Backyard* mailing list!



Keep up to date on local community stewardship projects and environmental issues. Subscriptions to this quarterly newsletter are free and available in electronic or paper version. To subscribe, please send your contact information to the editor or visit [saanich.ca/ourbackyard](http://saanich.ca/ourbackyard).

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Front cover photo: Goldenrod in summer bloom at the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary's pollinator garden.

Photo credit: Maia Watson.