

MINUTES
RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
December 7, 2023 at 6:36 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Councillor Zac de Vries; Kevin Brown; Purnima Govindarajulu; Jeremy Gye; Chris Lowe and Brian Wilkes

Regrets: Stewart Guy and Tim Ennis

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

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 de Vries provided a Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED by S. Guy and Seconded by B. Wilkes: “That the Agenda for the December 7, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by J. Gye and Seconded by C. Lowe: “That the minutes of the November 16, 2023 Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be adopted.”

CARRIED

REVIEW OF DRAFT BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The consultants facilitated a discussion on the first draft of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS), the following was noted by committee members:

- The BCS does not reference the Climate Plan, this important document should be embedded in the BCS to ensure both plans are cohesive and support each other.
- More substantive rationale is needed to justify the recommendations. Critics may not support the BCS without more detail; this is especially true with hubs and corridors.
- Stewardship, regulation and policies are all important aspects of conservation, having further details on the pros and cons of each aspect would be beneficial.
- The Development Permit Area regulations could be strengthened.
- Metrics of success for stewardship are necessary, it is not possible to stop degradation without them. Private property regulation needs to be put in place as well.
- The manner in which the word “consider” is used in the document may be problematic, a stronger word or better definition of what “consideration” means is favorable.

- Having committee consensus on a reasonable number of top priorities would help determine the prioritization of the recommendations. Some may be short or medium term priorities, while others may be long term initiatives. Determining what recommendations will have the biggest effect to protect and enhance biodiversity is an important step.
- Objective six includes improving public understanding, there is not a metric to know if this is being accomplished and it is hard to measure. All recommendations should be specific and measurable or monitoring success will be a difficult or impossible endeavor.
- High level targets are necessary, understanding top priorities is of utmost importance.
- There is no mention of Saanich advisory committees in this document, there are several initiatives that should have input from the committees and public input.
- Precautionary principles should be followed by all.
- While finding metrics of success for some recommendations may be difficult, they are integral to demonstrate the benefits. If the public cannot understand why they should be undertaking initiatives to improve biodiversity, then regulations will be necessary.
- Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping would provide beneficial data which is much needed.
- Recommendations related to the key goals are supportable. There are many recommendations and a limited amount of resources, this needs to be better balanced.
- Having committee members identify the recommendations which they believe to be the most important may be a good way to determine prioritization. An overarching set of recommendations to focus on which align with the goals will help staff.
- Creating a “Local Conservation Fund” or similar tax to support conservation would be beneficial in many ways, funds could be used to support local initiatives.
- Including more detail on the desired condition of ecosystems would help achieve goals.
- Marine hubs and corridors should be included with more detail as well.
- Integrated Stormwater Management Planning is underway, this may include protecting the most important watercourse aspects. There are some protections currently.
- Protection of the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) is of utmost importance. This boundary could be better recognized in the document including desired future condition.
- Hub and Corridor protection through a Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA) designation may help promote biodiversity, this could include high level mapping and a concept of restoring ecosystems. The hubs, corridors and connectors need to be better understood with quantifiable data and metrics for enhancement and restoral.
- Stronger environmental protection will be needed with additional density. Protection of soil is especially important as more large concrete foundations are being built.
- Mitigating threats through both regulation and education will be the best way forward.
- Using the word “consider” is problematic, this may not result in meaningful action.
- Stewardship will play an extremely important role in the strategy.
- The previous Saanich EDPA was flawed and caused issues. Ensuring the accuracy of mapping and administration of any potential future protection areas is necessary.
- Surrey has had success with an EDPA, we may be able to learn from their examples.
- Targets should all include a desired future condition to measure progress.

The consultant stated the following during discussion:

- Prioritizing the document is difficult, the recommendations were highlighted in green to indicate importance, these could be moved to a more prominent location.
- An overarching vision will be added to the document in the next version.

Staff stated the following during discussion:

- Public engagement on the strategy will happen early in the new year, following a review of the *Housing Act* and related regulations which will need to be implemented by Saanich. The BCS should not create conflicts with the Act and its regulations.
- The Urban Forest Strategy and the BCS will support each other through many aligned goals, engagement will happen at the same time, but they are separate strategies.

Committee members will send the recommendations which they see as the most important to the Chair to collate for the consultant. This may help identify the top priorities for the strategy.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from P. Govindarajulu, the meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary