
Good Neighbours

Saanich Biodiversity Partners

Pilot Project Final Report

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Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services

Good Neighbours Saanich Biodiversity Partners

Pilot Project

Project Overview:

This pilot project was funded by a grant through Fraser Basin Council for Local Governments to Advance Biodiversity Conservation on Private Land. The project was focused on community-based biodiversity conservation and restoration with private landowners, aiming to achieve two primary objectives: a) Establishing a new community partnership centered on biodiversity conservation and restoration within Saanich. b) Developing and implementing a case study/pilot program in collaboration with Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT).

HAT's 'Good Neighbours' program methodology provided a strategic framework for landowner engagement, ensuring that time, effort, and resources were directed towards properties prioritized by District of Saanich as identified in their Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Report and focus area fit within their "Biodiversity Habitat Network" goals.

HAT's approach to this project was grounded in well-established stewardship practices and informed by current techniques and feedback from previous program participants. HAT's landowner engagement strategies drew on guidance from The Landowner Contact Guide for BC, published by the Province of BC, and incorporated engagement principles outlined by Doug McKenzie-Mohr in *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing* (New Society Publishers, 2019).

Outcomes | Results

HAT established two project objectives to reach its goal. The following progress has been achieved under each objective:

Objective 1: Identified priority issues, key landowners, shared objectives and community partners to engage in the Good Neighbours – Saanich Biodiversity Partners Pilot Project.

‘Reached Out and Collaborated’

Outcomes:

- Conducted 5 collaborative planning meetings with Saanich staff to identify partner roles, key issues, and high-priority properties. Also conducted 5 monthly check-in meetings with Saanich staff to update on progress.
- Identified 1 project focus area to target outreach based on a selection criterion that considered ecological value (rare or endangered habitat, species at risk, SEI), biodiversity metrics, connectivity to protected lands.
- Mailed out 200 landowner survey postcards to gather information on key landowner issues, degree of stewardship interest, and identified barriers to effectively target outreach campaigns and identify interested landowners. Received 57 (at least 28% return rate) completed surveys to guide stewardship activities.
- Included W̱SÁNEĆ Indigenous knowledge and SENĆOŦEN language through educational materials, input and participation with Dominique James and elders in her community. Also collected information and guidance from the Saanich Biodiversity Strategy consultation to identify areas of shared priority.

Objective 2: Increased community awareness and knowledge of importance of stewarding biodiversity, local water quality, and species at risk in Saanich.

‘Educated and Empowered’

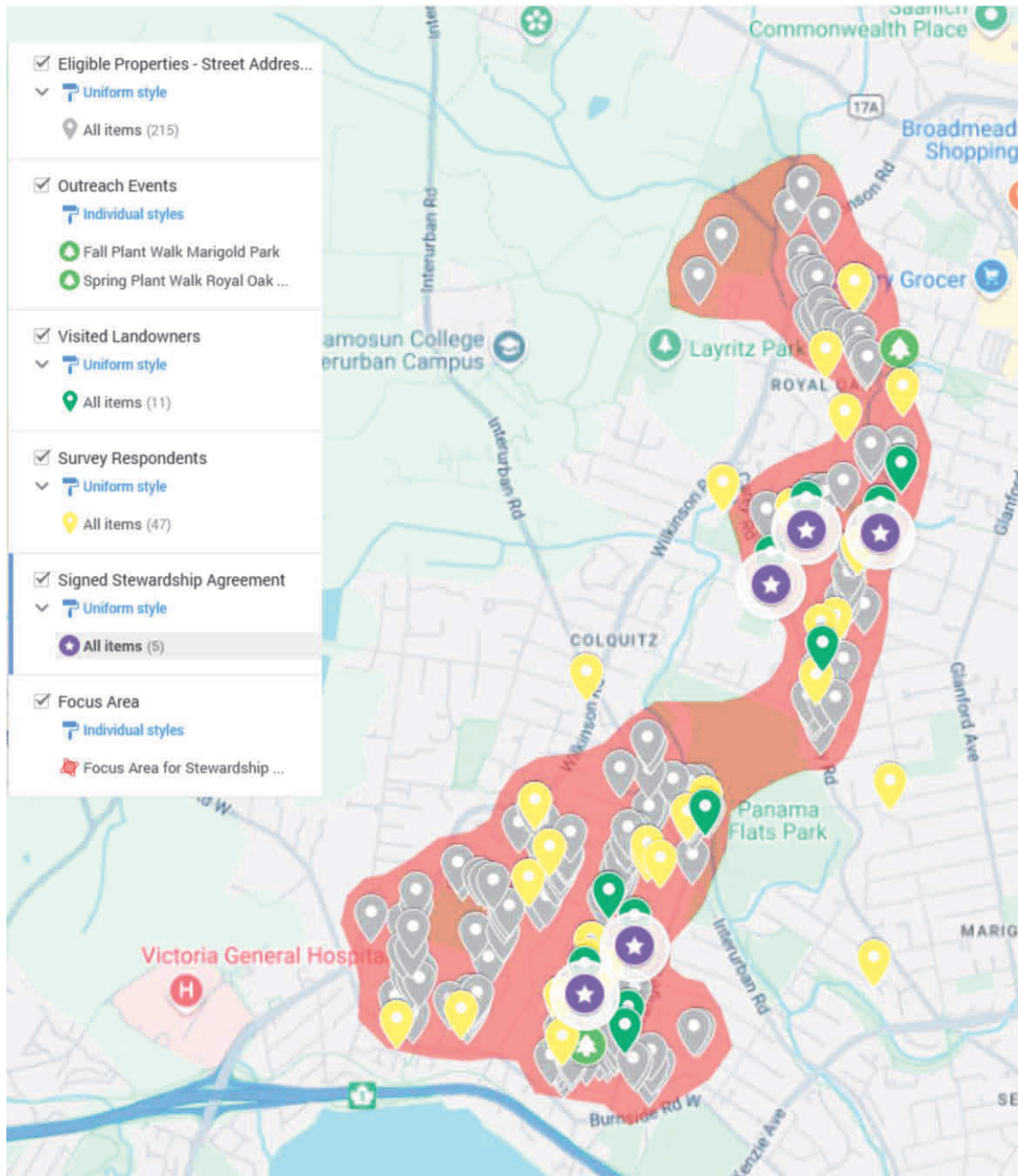
Outcomes:

- Informed approximately 500 local residents in the focus area about the Good Neighbours pilot project goals by attending 1 Saanich outreach event, 200 mailing the survey with info sheet and event poster, and providing press release materials for a Saanich press release, 2 social media posts, 1 HAT website blog post, 1 dedicated project web page, 1 HAT newsletter article, 1 Saanich community event, and 10 posters and 200 post cards distributed/posted in the target neighbourhoods.
- Co-hosted 2 public community guided plant walk & talk events at local Saanich Parks in focus area to build appreciation for ecological values of the biodiverse ecosystems in the park and the leading watershed. Dominique James shared W̱SÁNEĆ Indigenous knowledge and SENĆOŦEN language teachings about plants, animals, and creation stories, and values-based knowledge sharing.

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- 36 Participants attended these community walks, were provided with stewardship resources, had the opportunity to learn about SENĆOŦEN plant names and knowledge, and connect with neighbours in their community.
 - Provided 25 landowners with biodiversity stewardship resources, best practices, and further learning opportunities.
 - Visited 11 Saanich landowners (Good Neighbours to Saanich Biodiversity) to provide free and confidential land assessment service identifying priority Stewardship Actions, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, and resources in the Stewardship Information Package.
 - Provided 10 Saanich landowners with Site Assessment Reports that detailed step-by-step instructions for Stewardship Actions including prescriptions for native plantings, organic gardening practices, invasive species identification and removal best practices, species at risk identification, and pollution prevention.
 - Provided 6 free bird box kits for Bewick's wrens and violet-green swallows to program participants for wildlife habitat enhancement.
 - Provided free invasive species removal to 6 landowners to address the barriers faced by stewards. Removed invasive species including Himalayan blackberry and English ivy from 100m² of landowner properties, clearing 5m³ of invasive biomass.
 - Provided 1 landowner with an expert consultation to address soil erosion and sustainable landscaping on their property.
 - Collaboratively designed and developed new Saanich-specific Biodiversity Partner Signage.
 - Signed Habitat Steward Agreements with landowners and installed signs on 5 target properties.
 - Distributed 180 printed resources on Biodiversity Stewardship actions such as: Native Plant Gardening, Invasive Plant species removal, meadows, wildlife habitat enhancement, and more.
 - Sub-contracted third-party review contractor Dana Johnson to who conducted independent survey of participants.

Project Results Map

Saanich Biodiversity Partners Good Neighbours Pilot Project Results Map



Stewardship Survey Results

The pre-project survey is an essential part of the program to determine localized perceptions of and barriers to stewardship and develop solutions for landowners. Results from the mail-out survey revealed District of Saanich landowners found the following factors were **at least somewhat of a barrier** to engaging in stewardship on their properties:

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- **Cost** to complete the work (hiring labour, equipment, plants, disposal) - 72% of respondents
 - **Lack of Time** (working, family commitments) - 68% of respondents
 - **Knowledge of how to implement stewardship activities** (need advice/guidance) - 60% of respondents

Other barriers of note include not being aware of land stewardship programs (46%), and lack of physical ability (27%). This suggested that greater time and resources for hands-on learning may need to be invested with each Habitat Steward and that an assistance program may be critical to helping landowners reach stewardship goals.

Long-term Community Benefits:

- Increased community participation, engagement, appreciation, and caring for natural habitats.
- Improved community health and well-being through outdoor activity and interactions with nature (restoration activities & outdoor walks, and interpretive hikes).
- Increased community knowledge and awareness of ecological systems, species identification, and best land use practices.
- Provided technical guidance and support for participating Habitat Stewards.
- Provided economic benefit by working toward protecting some properties from flooding and erosion and increasing property values by preserving and enhancing aesthetic property values.
- Reduced likelihood of insect and plant pest populations through natural control mechanisms (bat habitat).
- Enhanced long-term financial capacity of residents and the municipality by preventing expensive mitigation for loss of ecological functions where restoration occurred (e.g., flood control, wind protection, climate moderation, farm productivity, resiliency to disease and pestilence, etc.).

Long-term Biodiversity Benefits:

- Increased resiliency to climate change by increasing functionally protected areas (under stewardship), increasing connectivity, providing buffers around protected sites, improving functional connectivity between sites, increasing habitat heterogeneity and species diversity, controlling invasive species, and reducing pressures on biodiversity.
- Protection and enhancement of habitat for wildlife (spawning, residence, feeding, migration).
- Maintained, enhanced, and/or protected carbon sequestration function of biodiverse habitats that mitigated atmospheric carbon dioxide and moderate local climate.
- Identification and stewardship of Species at Risk (Endangered & Threatened) occurrences.
- Increased community/park visitor appreciation and care for threatened natural systems.
- Preserved indigenous genetic biodiversity-maintained ecosystem resiliency as climate changes.

The Value of Continuing Relationships & Partnerships

Following landowner site visits, many of these landowners will better understand how they benefit from adopting sustainable land use practices such as increased property values, reduced fire or flood risk, improved pollination, reduced cost maintenance or inputs such as mowing, chemical fertilizers, or pesticides. This program model has proven valuable in also supporting and encouraging permanent land protection in the form of covenants, and by connecting Habitat Stewards together, we have seen increased participation in long-term community stewardship initiatives among residents.

HAT and District of Saanich have developed a very positive and effective partnership to ensure shared collaborative and strategic effort in effectively delivering this project.

Challenges and Limitations

Overall, we did not face any major unexpected challenges. As the Good Neighbours program name has become more broadly recognized throughout Saanich, we are challenged by our limited resources to meet an increased interest of landowner participation.

Project Design and Direction

The 'Good Neighbours' Landowner Contact Stewardship Program, established by HAT staff in 2001, is a uniquely designed initiative within the region, distinct from other similar programs operating across the province. Its structure is informed by HAT's depth of expertise, integrating Community-Based Social Marketing techniques, extensive program delivery experience, rigorous research, expert insights, and recognized best practices. While the District of Saanich introduced specific goals around project design, direction, and focus areas, these presented challenges to navigate alignment with HAT's established stewardship programming thoughtfully.

Overwhelming Interest and Perceptions of Local Government

In response to the overwhelming interest, we prioritized the most ecologically valuable properties for visits. In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of HAT's projects, we intend to plan multi-year projects that can provide a sustained effort in particular communities to effectively build relationships, develop strategic plans, implement best practices and measure impact over a longer period of time to ensure our projects are as effective as possible.

This program is successful, in part, because it is not delivered solely by a local government, but instead by an independent community organization. This creates a sense of a "neutral third party" for the landowner - regardless of their personal views on local government politics or service delivery, more landowners feel a willingness to participate in the program.

Timeline limitations

One of the primary challenges encountered during the course of this project was the constrained timeline. Establishing trust-based relationships with landowners is a process that requires time and dedication, and the accelerated timeline occasionally posed difficulties in achieving this goal. Nevertheless, we successfully cultivated positive relationships with a significant number of program participants. We remain committed to supporting their ongoing efforts and providing encouragement within the scope of our capacity.

Indigenous Engagement

Funding constraints imposed limitations on the project timeline and the structure of the design phase, reducing the opportunity for meaningful collaboration with Indigenous partners, including W̱SÁNEĆ and Lekwungen community members, whose traditional territories form the landscape for this initiative. Despite these challenges, the funding supported the recruitment of Dominique James as a contractor in the role of W̱SÁNEĆ Land Steward and SENĆOŦEN Language Specialist at HAT. Joining the project after its design phase, Dominique brought invaluable expertise and perspectives from a W̱SÁNEĆ standpoint, as well as teachings on SENĆOŦEN language. Incorporating such contributions during the planning phase of land, water, habitat, and territory-related initiatives is essential to honoring the rights, titles, values, cultures, and sovereignty of Indigenous communities within this region.

Project Evaluation

In March 2025, a third-party contractor assessed project delivery effectiveness and measure changes in landowner behaviour by conducting an independent evaluation through one-on-one interviews and surveys. This evaluation methodology provides ongoing input to improve and enhance our program.

Recommendations for Future Community Partnership Projects

As this initiative was a pilot project, both HAT and the District of Saanich gained valuable insights and identified several key recommendations for future efforts. HAT's insights include:

- Allocating time and funding for Indigenous engagement prior to project initiation, ensuring collaboration on project focus areas, design, and delivery.
- Integrating Indigenous priorities from the outset of the project design phase. This could involve referencing published materials on culturally significant factors, such as places and place names, species and their interactions, ecological communities, ecosystem services, ceremonies, and stories. Spatially incorporating this information into the project focus area ensures greater cultural relevance. These resources are readily available online from Indigenous nations' websites or as printed publications available for purchase through local bookstores, museums, and school boards.
- Ensuring the project design phase with community partners is established in the initial budgeted phase. While funders may require specific deliverables during the grant application process, effective communication can address these challenges and allow for collaborative project development.
- Cultivating trust-based relationships with Indigenous partners by encouraging Saanich staff to engage informally and without predetermined goals or agendas.
- Participating in Indigenous-led ecological restoration initiatives, volunteering for cultural events, and co-hosting events with Indigenous nations or organizations whenever possible.

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- Recognizing that successful collaborative projects benefit all parties involved by meeting the shared goals and visions of all collaborators.
 - Budgeting time and funding for hands-on stewardship support to ensure practical implementation.
 - Allocating resources for the removal and disposal of invasive species or providing alternative disposal support where needed.

Final Steps for the Project:

At this time there has not been additional funding secured to continue this pilot project. Both collaborating organizations intend to:

- Collaborate on a transition plan for communications to landowners about the end of the project.
- Continue to provide support to Saanich Good Neighbours Biodiversity Partners when requested within the capacity of each organization.

Ongoing Relationships – Future of the Partnership Project

HAT will continue collaborating with new Habitat Stewards, volunteers, District of Saanich staff, and community groups to ensure that environmentally sustainable land care stewardship remains a priority for local residents. Participants will share the knowledge and skills gained through this project, fostering further community engagement and inspiring neighbors to support conservation efforts in Saanich. When additional funding becomes available, HAT aims to continue the collaboration with District of Saanich to extend the scope of this project, enabling more landowner site visits and increasing the number of Habitat Steward Saanich Biodiversity Partners.

Appendix 1: Community Outreach Materials & Media Coverage

Good Neighbours: Saanich Biodiversity Partners




Good Neighbours: Saanich Biodiversity Partners is a collaborative pilot project with the District of Saanich and Habitat Acquisition Trust. The primary focus is providing Saanich residents with additional support to undertake backyard stewardship for boosting biodiversity.

Support for residents may include:

- individualized on-site stewardship consultation with landowners
- site report with goals, recommended actions, and resources
- hands-on training of effective stewardship techniques
- experiential stewardship workshops and walks

Who is eligible for support?

We are starting small, and focusing on Saanich residents around Marigold Park, Knockan Hill Park, South Valley Park, Dunbar Park, Copley West and East Parks, and the south end of Quick's Bottom Park.

See this map with our focus area in red. Do you live here? You may be eligible for a site visit and support! Please complete the survey below or contact us for more information.

Complete the survey!

SCAN ME!



You can also visit: hat.bc.ca/survey



Get in Touch

(250) 995-2428

hatmail@hat.bc.ca

202-661 Burnside Road E
Victoria, BC






Do you want to be a good neighbour to nature?

You have been selected to participate in our survey because your property falls within a habitat corridor of special significance to biodiversity in Saanich.

In this region, most of the natural land is privately owned. **Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT)** is partnering with the **District of Saanich** to support landowners like you to care for the land you live on.

Complete the survey!

SCAN ME!



You can also visit:
hat.bc.ca/survey

Or phone:
(250) 995-2428

**HABITAT
STEWARD**



Saanich Biodiversity Partner

The survey **takes about 7-10 minutes**, and asks you questions about your opinions and practices in caring for your land.

Complete by November 30 2024 to be entered into a **prize draw for a \$50 gift card to Satinflower Nurseries**.

Thank you for participating!

Get in Touch

If you would like more information or if you would like a printed copy of the survey mailed to you (at no cost) please contact us.

(250) 995-2428

hatmail@hat.bc.ca

202-661 Burnside Road E
Victoria, BC

Visit online: hat.bc.ca/goodneighbours and bit.ly/SaanichNaturalEnvironment to learn more

Above: outreach materials sent/given to landowners in the project focus areas.

[Victoria Buzz news article](#)

[Saanich News article](#)

GUIDED PLANT WALK



HAT
Saanich

DATE: Sunday November 24 2024
TIME: 11:00 AM-1:00 PM
LOCATION: Marigold Park, Saanich
RSVP required as space is limited

For more info and to register:
hat.bc.ca/goodneighbours

HABITAT STEWARD



This property has been recognized as valuable habitat by **Habitat Acquisition Trust**. Contact HAT to learn more.

Saanich Biodiversity Partner

visit saanich.ca/naturescape or call 250 475-5522 to learn more about this program

HABITAT ACQUISITION TRUST | 250.995.2428 | HAT.BC.CA

Above (left) & below: promotional posters for Saanich guided plant walk. Above (Right): Habitat Steward sign.

SENĆOŦEN GUIDED NATIVE PLANT WALK

with Dominique James



DATE: Sunday March 16 2025
TIME: Plant walk 10am - 12pm
Optional Ivy Pull 12pm - 2pm
LOCATION: Royal Oak Trail
RSVP required as space is limited

REGISTER HERE
hat.bc.ca/volunteer

HAT
Saanich

Brought to you by Good Neighbours Saanich Biodiversity Partners Pilot Project