

**MINUTES**  
**NATURAL AREAS, PARKS AND TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams  
770 Vernon Avenue  
Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 4:03 p.m.

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff, Julian Anderson, Jane Cameron, David Little (via Teams)  
Evan Papps, Wendy Trotter and Kathleen Woodruff

Regrets: Darrell Wick and Catherine du Bois

Staff: Nathalie Duchaine, Manager Community Development/Business Systems (via Teams, 4:05 p.m.); Alix Link, Manager of Urban Forestry, Natural Areas, and Community Stewardship; Jacqueline Weston, Asset Management Program Manager; Julie Lommerse, Senior Park Planner (via Teams, 4:10 p.m.); Amelia Needoba, Principal & Senior Forester, Diamond Head Consulting (via Teams) and Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk

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**ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES**

**MOVED by J. Cameron and Seconded by E. Papps: "That the Minutes of the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee meeting held April 11, 2024, be adopted as circulated."**

**CARRIED**

**CHAIRS REMARKS**

- The Capital Regional District (CRD) is considering the introduction of the Indigenous Guardian program, which promotes Indigenous land management and stewardship rooted in cultural responsibility. This program is seen in other parks. This initiative could be incorporated into the existing Park Ranger program.
- The CRD and First Nations continue to build relationships and strive to work together.
- The CRD manages over 200 programs.

**DRAFT NATURAL ASSETS INVENTORY**

The Asset Management Program Manager gave a presentation on the Draft Natural Assets Inventory (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Future work could incorporate on-site data about physical conditions instead of relying on a desktop assessment.
- Some Canadian local governments have done natural asset inventories, but few have created management plans.
- Saanich was guided by the Canadian Standards Association who published a standard for natural assets inventories.
- Saanich collaborated with the Natural Asset Initiative (NAI) to identify, value, and account for natural assets.
- Agricultural areas are included in the natural asset inventories. A clearer explanation on this topic could be added to the report.
- Both Saanich-owned and private lands are included.
- This is a first step of developing an inventory. Updates to the plan will be provided every

- five years. Newly available data will be incorporated as the inventory expands.
- Staffing resources and funding for ground truthing could be prioritized in future financial planning.
  - Currently, there are a limited number of primary sources for the benefit transfer method. As this field expands, improved data for valuing natural assets will become accessible.
  - The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy will address natural assets on private lands. This information will be conveyed.
  - Air and soil are not typically considered as a natural asset as they are not “owned” or “managed”.
  - Further clarification could enhance the understanding of the natural assets in Saanich parks.
  - More detail could be provided on the categories and definitions for the physical condition of natural assets.
  - Saanich attended a meeting of the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council in which this project was discussed. Feedback and materials were gathered from consultations on various projects concerning natural assets. Further discussions are anticipated.
  - This report is an inventory of assets only, not a plan for how to further manage them.
  - The value of nature extends beyond financial considerations. Natural assets offer value to communities and enhance overall well-being.
  - Heat domes and flooding could be clarified and added to the report.
  - Best practices conducted by the town of Gibsons BC could provide valuable insights.
  - Development plans could take into account the value of natural areas.
  - Annual reports to Council could include progress and estimates of annual service value lost when natural areas are compromised.
  - Saanich's public website on natural asset management will be scheduled for regular updates.
  - Calgary, AB is a leader in natural asset valuation. Reviews are underway regarding the integration of annual service values into decision-making for development applications and cost-benefit analysis for project design.

\*\*\*D. Little exited the meeting at 5:25 p.m.\*\*\*

## **URBAN FOREST STRATEGY PRESENTATION**

The consultant gave a presentation on the Urban Forest Strategy Presentation (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- The District-wide canopy cover data collected in 2019 serves as a baseline for projecting canopy gain or replacement over the next 40 years. Factors such as the proportion of land slated for redevelopment and average tree sizes were also taken into account.
- The rate of change and historical data from the past decade were analyzed to understand the factors contributing to tree loss. Additionally, instances of tree removals were monitored, with a focus on identifying priorities and determining where strategies could be effectively implemented to ensure successful tree retention efforts.
- The integration of up-to-date scientific knowledge regarding the future of trees in a changing environment is appreciated.
- The goal is to enhance the efficiency and success rate of tree retention efforts. Various tools and strategies have been proposed, and considerations are currently being evaluated.
- Homeowners and developers could be provided with tools and education to understand the importance of retaining trees and incorporating them into development plans. Other jurisdictions could offer insight. Incentives could be explored.

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**PEOPLE PETS AND PARKS PLANNING UPDATE**

The Senior Park Planner gave a presentation on People, Pets and Parks Planning Update (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- QR codes on park signs could link to the website for bylaw education, however replacing signs with broken links could be costly and problematic.
- The definitions of "leash" and "under control" could be clarified to ensure proper interpretation.
- Wildlife protection could be emphasized on signs, not just human safety.
- Waste in the parks continues to be an issue.
- Efforts are underway to plan the placement of fences in sensitive and communal areas.
- Signage and enforcement measures are planned for this summer, with a specific focus on playgrounds, sports areas, and signature parks.
- Property acquisition could be explored for the establishment of dog parks.
- Early registration discounts for licensing your dog are offered. Providing holders with benefits like discounts at pet stores and other incentives could be considered.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion from E. Papps the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for June 8, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

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Councillor Judy Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk