

Sustainable Gabriola Minutes, COVID Zoom Meeting

March 28, 2021 3 p.m.

Facilitator: Fay Weller

Note-taker: Deborah Ferens

Present: Fay, Deborah, Bob, Steve, Ivan, Hal, Dyan, Tom, Charlotte, Nancy, John, Suzi

1. Welcome
2. BC Ferries – Steve
Steve drew our attention to the BC Ferries Website for the draft ferry schedule for the 2 new ferries next year and that BCF is asking for feedback. He noted that there is a lunch gap when the ferries will sit on each side for 35 minutes. This is due to the lower crew capacity on the smaller ships.
3. Gabriola Housing Matters – Dyan
The working group is finished the work of compiling the results of the 3 surveys on housing. Response was very good. A report has been produced with detailed information and a 4 part strategy including: Biodiversity; Freshwater Conservation; Managing Growth; Affordable Housing. The working group will present the report to the Housing Advisory Planning Commission on Thurs April 1 with the intent of making a recommendation to the next Gabriola LTC meeting on April 15.
Many thanks went out to the working group for the enormous amount of work and pulling together such a comprehensive report!
4. Climate Change – Deborah
 - a. Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that the federal carbon tax is constitutional and joined scientists and social movements in calling climate change “an existential threat to human life in Canada and around the world. The carbon tax is just one part of climate action needed and there is the danger of Big Oil continuing to debate the issue on their terms and greenwashing. The American Petroleum Institute one of the original architects of organized climate denial has come out in favour of the carbon tax
 - b. Nature Conservancy of Canada released a study on 77 ecological regions in Canada’s southern half. Eastern Vancouver Island is one of the nine most at risk areas in the country. It scores near the top in terms of unique biodiversity from a national perspective and also scores near the top in terms of the large number of species of global conservation concern. See attached link to NCC and article.
Action for consideration: Letter writing campaign to MPs. Deb will follow up with some research and consult with Dyan on crafting a (form) letter.
5. RDN Report
 - Social Needs Assessment for all of RDN – Dyan encouraged everyone to do the survey. Dyan’s observation is that the survey seems tone deaf to rural concerns.
 - Regional Growth Strategy consultation – Bob’s update on the Nanaimo Airport expansion. Area A OCP bylaws need to be changed to allow the expansion. 3rd reading not yet given. Public Hearing April 15 at 3 pm.
6. Textile Initiative – Fay
Submission from 13 designers producing 6/7 items each based on assessments such as design concept and marketability. More research on usable products to be announced after April 3. (Deb’s screen froze so missed some talk)
7. Cell Towers – Bob
The LTC seems unwilling to make any changes since they adopted the Model Procedure. Trustee Langereis is taking the issue to the Islands Trust Regional Planning Committee. Many thanks to Bob for ongoing focus on this issue.
8. Ferry Hill – Ivan & Steve
Issue of ferry hill safety and the possible extension of the village pathway which ends at the post office under the current funding.
UBCM grant – funds will be administered by the LTC who applied for the grant. Waiting for information to move forward with a possible involvement of Pam Shaw from VIU Planning school and 3 students re: ferry hill project & plan.
9. Island of the Arts (IOTA) – Charlotte
See link <https://www.artsfest> Charlotte drew our attention especially to the opening speaker – Shelagh Rogers “21 things you may not know about the Indian Act”.
10. GILSS – no report
Monthly march meeting cancelled. Next meeting April 26, 4:30 pm
11. Parkinson Disease – John
Contact Doug McKnight
12. Gabriola Community Vaccination
Not yet scheduled. Won’t happen until after April 12. Site: Community Hall. Gertie will be providing shuttle between South end fire hall (parking) to the Community Hall.

Next Sustainable Gabriola Meeting: Sunday, April 25, 2021 at 3 pm,

Facilitator: Deb Ferens

Note-taker: Nancy Heatherington-Peirce

Unique study pinpoints key places to stem biodiversity loss in Canada's south March 3, 2021

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has released the first comprehensive look at where nature in southern Canada needs to be protected in the face of habitat loss and climate change. The assessment looks into “crisis ecoregions,” and other high-priority natural spaces.

This study is the first of its kind in Canada. The information can be used by anyone who is making decisions about land use or is interested in learning more about the conservation needs where they live. A user-friendly version of the study can be viewed at www.natureconservancy.ca/casc or Conservation Close to Home. People can input their postal code to see their ecoregion and learn more about the habitats, plants and animals that can be found there.

“Canadians have increasingly turned to nature as an escape from COVID-19 this past year. This study can help each of us learn more about the conservation needs in the places where we live and inform our decision making to help protect these places,” said Dan Kraus, senior conservation biologist with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. “We often have wildlife and habitats of national and global conservation concern in our own backyards, and in many places the next decade may represent the last opportunity we have to protect them”

The assessment identifies nine crisis ecoregions, where wildlife and their habitats are the most diverse and also under the greatest threat. These regions include many of our largest cities, such as Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria, along with many smaller areas, such as Red Deer, Yorkton, Brandon, Brockville, Trois-Rivières and all of Prince Edward Island.

“Over the last 150 years, many species and habitats in Canada have been declining,” says Kraus. “This decline has been more dramatic in southern Canada, where most people live and where there is a long history of settlement and related agricultural, urban and industrial land uses. The assessment shows the impact of our human activities on the nature around us, and the critical need to save these places now, before it’s too late.”

Kraus hopes communities can use the information to make better conservation and land use planning decisions.

“Protecting habitats in our most threatened regions of Canada goes beyond just conserving wildlife,” says Kraus. “Our wetlands, grasslands and forests provide nature-based solutions to our communities, including cleaning our air and water, mitigating the impacts of climate change and improving our quality of life. In some regions of southern Canada, we still have the opportunity to protect and connect large natural areas, while in others we need to ramp up our restoration efforts”.

Kraus says Canada’s current target of protecting 30 per cent of our lands and waters by 2030 is an opportunity to transform our country by protecting nature and the benefits that it provides to people. He feels these new protected areas need to include vast northern sites but also our wildlife and habitats in the most threatened regions and sites in southern Canada. “Our ambitions must be more than just how much we protect, but what we protect,” he says.

Facts

- The study, titled “Southern Canada’s crisis ecoregions: identifying the most significant and threatened places for biodiversity conservation,” has been published internationally in the journal *Biodiversity and Conservation*.
- The nine crisis ecoregions identified represent less than five per cent of Canada. They are located in Canada’s most heavily settled landscapes, where 70 per cent of people live. Over 60 per cent of Canada’s species at risk are found in these ecoregions, which generally have few existing protected areas or remaining natural areas.
- The assessment analyzes factors in 77 ecoregions across southern Canada, such as endangered species and habitats, land use and wildlife corridors. The assessment maps out some of the most important areas within each ecoregion that must be conserved in order to protect species at risk, wildlife corridors and other important places for nature.

Background information on each of the ecoregions and examples on why these areas are highlighted can be found below.

The Eastern Vancouver Island ecoregion stretches along the eastern slopes of the Vancouver Island mountain range to the Pacific Ocean. Major urban areas include Victoria, Nanaimo, Campbell River and Courtenay. The Eastern Vancouver Island ecoregion has a very high richness of species of conservation concern. There are over 55 national species at risk in the ecoregion, including Oregon vesper sparrow, dense-flower lupine, Edwards' beach moth and common sharp-tailed snake. The Eastern Vancouver Island ecoregion is important for national and global biodiversity. There are significant opportunities in this ecoregion to conserve and restore habitats for species at risk, migratory birds and marine wildlife. The forests are characterized by Douglas-fir, western hemlock and grand fir, with scattered examples of globally rare Garry oak ecosystems. The region supports more biological diversity than anywhere else in the province. It contains many of BC’s most significant estuaries.