Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee
Special Meeting Agenda

Date:	May 22, 2025
Time:	9:30 am
Location:	Electronic Meeting

Pages

1. CALL TO ORDER 9:30 AM - 9:35 AM

"Please note, the order of agenda items may be modified during the meeting. Times are provided for convenience only and are subject to change."

2. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. BUSINESS ITEMS 9:35 AM - 11:00 AM

4.1 2024/25 Annual Report - Approval of Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee Section - Request for Decision 2 - 4

4.2 Major Project: Gabriola Island Comprehensive Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw Review - Resource Stewardship, Freshwater and Environmental Discussion and Options for Community Engagement - Staff Report 5 - 42

5. ADJOURNMENT 11:00 AM - 11:00 AM

REQUEST FOR DECISION

To:	Gabriola Island LTCs	**For the Meeting of:**	April 17, 2025
From:	**Trust Area Services**	**Date Prepared:**	March 28, 2025
SUBJECT:	**2024/25 ANNUAL REPORT – APPROVAL OF GABRIOLA ISLAND LTC SECTION**		

RECOMMENDATION: That the Gabriola Island LTC approves the attached text for inclusion in the 2024/25 Annual Report for approval by Trust Council and submission to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

1 PURPOSE: Committees are provided with their draft sections of the annual report for review and approval so that Trust Council is able to easily approve its annual report in June 2025 without further editing from staff or trustees at the Trust Council meeting.

BACKGROUND: Preparation of the Islands Trust Annual Report is undertaken by Trust Area Services Communications staff, reporting to the Executive Committee and consistent with Trust Council's Annual Report Policy 6.10.1. The Executive Committee approved the format and outline of the 2023/24 Annual Report at its meeting on February 5, 2025.

2 IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

ORGANIZATIONAL: Under Trust Council's Policy, all LTCs and Council committees are expected to review and approve their sections at regular meetings in order to have the report approved by Trust Council at its June 2025 meeting.

FINANCIAL: None.

POLICY: No implications for existing policy

IMPLEMENTATION/COMMUNICATIONS: The process for development of the Annual Report is outlined in Trust Council's Annual Report policy 6.10.i. Once each committee has approved its section, staff will create a draft Annual Report for review by the Executive Committee and then Trust Council consideration of approval in June. Upon approval by Trust Council, staff will send the Annual Report to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs and circulate it as indicated in Trust Council's policy.

FIRST NATIONS: Information about First Nations relations may be included within committee reports.

OTHER: None.

3 RELEVANT POLICY(S): Trust Council's Annual Report policy 6.10.i; *Islands Trust Act*

4 ATTACHMENT(S): Gabriola Island LTC input to Annual Report (draft)

RESPONSE OPTIONS

Recommendation: That the Gabriola Island LTC approves the attached text for inclusion in the 2024/25 Annual Report for approval by Trust Council and submission to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

Alternative: That the Gabriola Island LTC approves the attached text for inclusion in the 2024/25 Annual Report for approval (as amended) by Trust Council and submission to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

Prepared By: **Morgana van Niekerk, A/Communications Specialist**

Reviewed By/Date: **Renee Jamurat, Regional Planning Manager / May 15, 2025**

Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

The Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (GB LTC) held 8 regular business meetings in the 2024/25 fiscal year, as well as 3 Community Information Meetings, and 5 special meetings.

Work for this period focused on advancing the Gabriola LTC priorities to:

1. Identify community values and vision to inform the major project OCP review by completing the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process
2. Engage with the Gabriola community and Snuneymuxw First Nation on specific land use planning topic areas to support OCP policy development (major project)
3. Review of policies and procedures for bylaw enforcement on Mudge Island

Gabriola LTC advanced these priorities through the following key projects:

1. OCP/LUB Review major project
2. Development of a Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy

From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, the Gabriola LTC received and considered applications for 1 development variance permit, 3 development permits, 1 liquor and cannabis board referral, 1 bylaw amendment application, and 4 temporary use permits.

During the same time period, staff also reviewed 64 building permit referrals, 1 crown lease referral, and 3 subdivision referrals.

Another initiative of the Gabriola LTC for this period was relationship building with the Snuneymuxw First Nation. As part of this process, the Gabriola LTC engaged in leadership meetings with Snuneymuxw First Nation.

STAFF REPORT

File No.: Gabriola OCP Project

DATE OF MEETING:	May 22, 2025
TO:	Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee
FROM:	Narissa Chadwick Southern Team
COPY:	Renee Jamurat, Regional Planning Manager/ Stephen Baugh, Island Planner
SUBJECT:	Gabriola Major Project OCP Review – Resource Stewardship, Freshwater and Environment Discussion and options for community engagement

RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff prepare draft policy language related to resources stewardship, freshwater and the environment, as discussed at the May 22, 2025 LTC Special Meeting, for broader public review.**

2. **That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the OCP project summer 2025 engagement plan as presented in the staff report dated May 22, 2025.**

REPORT SUMMARY

There are two parts to this report.

PART 1 provides a review of policy options for the resources stewardship, freshwater and environment related content of the OCP. It incorporates feedback from the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process and feedback from the focus groups that were held related to resource stewardship, freshwater and the environment as well as survey results so far (there have been close to 300 responses to the survey to-date).

PART 2 provides options for a community engagement related to a community conversation on housing options and growth management. At their April 17th, 2025 the LTC requested additional engagement.

PART 1 FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK - BACKGROUND

At the November 7, 2024 LTC regular meeting, the LTC endorsed an engagement process that included topic focussed discussions. The purpose was to enable deeper discussion on topics in smaller groups of diverse individuals. Invitations to focus groups were sent to people who had previously expressed interest in a particular topic and groups and individuals identified by Trustees. Focus groups were limited to 12 participants. In-person attendance was encouraged. However, hybrid participation was available. Focus groups have been held for: housing, connectivity, economy, resource stewardship, freshwater and the environment.

Staff note that a number of focus group members provided additional feedback following the meetings. This feedback, in addition to feedback received at the meetings and through the survey, will be incorporated into the next draft of the OCP policies.

Resource Stewardship Focus Group

The resource stewardship focus group was held on April 3rd, 2025. The draft policies presented to the focus group were on Agriculture, Forested Land and Minerals and Aggregate Resources (see Attachment 1). There were six attendees with a variety of backgrounds from farming to traditional forestry on Gabriola Island. The discussion focused primarily on forestry and agriculture. How the focus group comments related to the changes made to existing OCP policies and approach is identified in Table 1 (Attachment 2 includes the detailed changed table, Attachment 3 includes meeting notes). Further comments gathered from the focus group conservation as well as relevant survey results are identified following Table 1.

Table 1: Resources Stewardship Focus Group Comments Related to Proposed OCP Changes.

Change	Focus Group Comments
Removed "density transfer" policies in resource section	Some questions raised about who these policies benefit
Removed "density bank" policies in resource section	Same as above
Removed prescriptive policies that should be in the Land Use Bylaw	No comment
Removed the "resource" section	No comment
Added policy to support maintaining agricultural land in large lots.	General support for Agricultural policies
Added policy to ensure adjacent agricultural land is considered in land use planning decisions.	General support for Agricultural policies
Added policy encouraging suitable information to be provided for applications within the ALR.	General support for Agricultural policies. Emphasis on use of data to ensure that development does not impact valuable agricultural land.
Added policy supporting LUB amendments that strengthen local food systems	Strong support for strengthening local food system.
Removed "density transfer" policies in forestry section	Some questions raised about who these policies benefit
Removed "density bank" policies in forestry section	Same as above
Inserted policy stating that mineral and aggregate resource processing should only be permitted if the product is for local use.	No comment
Included requirement for a security deposit for issued TUPs allowing aggregate and mineral processing.	No comment
Renamed "Forestry" title to "Forest Lands"	Consider referring to "woodland stewardship" as opposed to "forest management"
Insert policy to encourage protection of the natural environment and heritage features.	No comment
Insert policy encouraging use of forest lands for low impact recreational activities and education.	No comment

Additional Feedback:

Forestry:

OCP should emphasize a commitment to fire resilience

- Include fire resilience policies
- Develop a fire resilience DPA (wildfire DPA?)
- Education of fire resilience/ fire smart approaches
- Selective logging (e.g. in the 707) can help address fire resilience
- Identify the development of a fire resistance plan in OCP implementation plan (would need to co-ordinate with community groups and the RDN)

Support small-scale, ecosystem-based forestry practices as a viable rural land use

- Can assist with fire resilience (thinning is needed)
- Can create jobs

Limit clear cutting and open burning

- Consider a DPA for forestry
- Limiting open burning is a way to control volume of slash
- Need place on island were wood refuse can be chipped and reused (at least 5 acres)

Forestry management plan

- Encourage the development of a forestry management plan for Gabriola

Agriculture:

The group identified that in general the agriculture policies look good. There was a consensus that the islands need to grow more food. The focus group encouraged the use of data to identify how to place growth such that it does not negatively impact valuable agricultural land. It was discussed that the removal of the ability to subdivide will protect the ecological integrity existing and potential agricultural land.

The conversation digressed to include discussion related to the need for more services at the south end of the island and mixed zoning to facilitate the ability for a small store, blending into nature, at Degnen Bay or Silva Bay.

Related Survey Results:

Survey questions related to forestry and agriculture were limited to questions related to housing. About 43% support allowing density in agricultural areas equivalent to what is permitted by the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). About 24% respondents support addition units for workers in forestry zones, 30% if it is close to the village core. About 35% of survey respondents supported multiple small units with a combined floor are in forestry zones.

Freshwater Focus Group

The freshwater focus group took place on April 17th. There were six community members in attendance as well as the Islands Trust Senior Freshwater Specialist and the GW Solutions consultant working on the freshwater footprint. The draft policies presented to the focus group were on the use and protection of freshwater

resources (see Attachment 4). How the focus group comments related to the changes made to existing OCP policies and approach is identified in Table 2 (Attachment 5 includes the detailed changed table and Attachment 6 includes the meeting notes). Further comments gathered from the focus group conversation as well as relevant survey results are identified following Table 2.

Table 2: Focus Group Comments Related to Proposed OCP Changes for Freshwater

Change	**Focus Group Comments**
A clear goal is articulated.	General support for goal. Some discussion about the need for clear definitions and consistent reference (e.g. surface water vs. freshwater)
Objectives have been simplified and focused.	There was some discussion regarding organizing the objectives and policies differently (e.g. How we protect water, how we use water sustainably, how we restore water)
A new objective is added that recognizes the need to protect the watershed and ecosystem that supports ecological function.	This holistic approach previously taken is very supportive. The focus group discussed the importance of protecting of watersheds, habitats, forests and sensitive ecosystems. Coates Marsh, Cox Pond and Hoggan Lake were identified as particularly significant areas
A new objective specifically related to the use of freshwater vulnerability data has been added.	Much support for using available data including local knowledge.
A new objective and policies related to climate change have been added.	Support for including climate change considerations.
A number of policies focused on what is within the Islands Trust jurisdiction (research, requesting information for subdivisions and rezoning, use of land use planning tools) have been added.	General support.
Focussed but limited advocacy and collaboration policies have been identified. (in progress)	Support for focused advocacy policies particularly those related to collaboration between agencies and education.
Policy related to liquid waste management have been added.	Including policies related to liquid management was seen a critical. Concerns were expressed related to sewage capacity in areas of higher density.

Additional Feedback/Discussion

The OCP should acknowledge/address:

- Water is life
- The whole island can be considered a recharge area
- Land use impacts and saltwater intrusion potential
- Pollution form pharmaceuticals and septic systems impact water quality
- The need for DPAs to protect critical aquifers as well as forests and watershed ecosystems
- Stormwater runoff
- Targeted policies for different water sources
- Policies specific to groundwater
- Potential for back up community water supply

Data should consider:

- Pre-development water budgets in new developments
- Changes in water balance over time
- Site specific data
- Monitored quality and quantity of groundwater over time
- Climate change impacts

Policies should require:

- Freshwater recharge
- The use of cisterns to capture rainwater and store groundwater
- Reduction of impermeable surfaces
- Soil retention
- Cisterns for fire suppression on some properties

Water capture should be encouraged:

- Education is needed (some members of the focus group have only rainwater systems)
- Rainwater falls primarily for 5 months

<u>Related Survey Results</u>

This is just a snapshot of some of the OCP survey results that have come in related to water. There have been close to 300 survey respondents to-date.

- 60%+ indicate that their water comes from groundwater all the time with and additional 16.3 indicating that that's where they get it most of the time.
- 24% indicate that they sometimes get water delivered
- 36% indicated that they always get water from rainwater, 19% most of the time, 29% sometimes.
- 68% indicate that they do not run out of groundwater during the year.
- 14% identify that they don't use groundwater.
- August and September appear to be the driest months with 17 % running out of water in August and 13% running out of water in September.
- 80% support the requirements for new build to have rainwater catchment

Environment Focus Group

The environment focus group took place on April 24th 2025. There were twelve community members in attendance. The draft policies presented to the focus group focused on environmental protection and protection of biodiversity (see Attachment 7). How the focus group comments related to the changes made to existing OCP policies and approach is identified in Table 3 (Attachment 8 includes the detailed changed table and attachment 9 includes the meeting notes). Further comments gathered from the focus group conversation as well as relevant survey results are identified following Table 3.

Table 3: Focus Group Comments Related to Proposed OCP Changes for Environment

Change	Focus Group Comments
The policies related to ecosystem protection are currently in the section titled "Environment, Marine and Heritage Resources. This includes: Environmentally sensitive areas, marine resources and heritage and archeological resources. The proposed new policies are under the title "Biodiverse Ecosystems".	General support for this approach
The goal of "Preserving and protecting healthy and biodiverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems through the protection and restoration of protected areas, sensitive ecosystems, forest ecosystems, watersheds, marine and nearshore areas, and critical habitats for species at risk" has been added.	General support. No specific discussion on goal. However, there was interests in terms like "sensitive ecosystems" requiring clearer definition. Identified that "sensitive ecosystem" and "sensitive areas" are used interchangeably.
New emphasis on the use of Indigenous cultural knowledge, ecological and climate change data into land use planning.	Group recognized the integration of Indigenous knowledge as an important and climate change predictions critical to decision making that is forward thinking.
There is an increased emphasis on the protection of watershed, groundwater aquifers and all other ecosystem elements contributing to freshwater sustainability.	This was seen to be important. Discussion focussed on the need to use available data and to update data.
Shift from the existing OCP to recognize the importance of ecological integrity and integrate climate adaptation measures into land use policies.	Identified that climate action policies in OCP must be tied to concrete action and that restoration (not just preservation) be encouraged and supported.
Policies that read like regulations have been removed and will be addressed in the land use bylaw.	General support.
References to specific sources and legislation have been removed.	Not discussed
Specific Advocacy/Collaboration policies have been identified for different objectives	Advocacy related to education seen as important.

Additional Feedback/Discussion

Regarding Development Permit Areas (DPAs):

- Much support for expanding the use of DPAs
- Model DPAs provided by Islands Trust staff seen as a good place to start
- In addition to model DPA themes (aquifer protection, sensitive ecosystems…) consider DPAs for ecotones (areas of transition between ecosystems) and biodiversity corridors

Regarding Water Resources:

- Support for work being done to understand groundwater recharge, water footprint, saltwater intrusion
- Support for rainwater collection but some concern about cost

Data Should Consider:

- Local sources (e.g. GALTT, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Gabriola Commons)
- Establishment of baseline and continued baseline monitoring
- Invasive species tracking

Need for Collaboration and Education

- Need collaboration between environmental groups on the island Schools, library, real estate agents, signage good ways to share information
- Need public education about seasonal ecological sensitivity and land use (e.g. don't remove trees when birds are nesting)

<u>Survey Results</u>

Below is a snapshot of some of the OCP survey results that have come in related to environment and climate change. There have been close to 300 survey respondents to-date.

- Top three DPA preferences were for: Shoreline and marine, groundwater recharge, forested areas
- Some specific areas for protection identified included Honeysuckle Woods, Brickyard Beach, Descanso Bay/Valley, Indigenous Cultural Heritage (e.g. petroglyphs, marine areas)
- In terms of environmental impacts related to climate change many (76) respondents identified that trees, cedar in particular, are dying. Drought and reduction in rainfall, increasing temperatures and extreme weather were among the other major impacts identified by survey respondents.

RECOMMENDATION: *That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff prepare draft policy language related to resources stewardship, freshwater and the environment, as discussed at the May 22, 2025 LTC Special Meeting, for broader public review***.**

ALTERNATIVE:

1. The LTC could request additional engagement prior to preparing the next draft of policy language. If this is the case, the project will be delayed limiting summer engagement options.

Next Steps with Focus Group and Survey Feedback

The relevant feedback identified above, from the LTC and specific feedback received from focus group members related to specific wording will be integrated into the next draft of the policies. These updated policies will be presented to the LTC at their June 26th meeting to endorse as drafts to share with the community for further comment.

PART 2 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS - BACKGROUND

At the April 17, 2025 options for the next phase of community engagement, following focus group sessions, were presented. The following resolutions were passed:

It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee direct staff to proceed with "Option 1: Community Review Existing Draft Policies" as the next step in the community engagement process for the Official Community Plan (OCP) with the addition of a community meeting on Housing Options and Growth Management.

It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that the Gabriola Local Trust Committee request staff to develop options for a community meeting focused on Housing Options and Growth Management as part of summer engagement.

NEXT STEPS IN ENGAGEMENT: Community review of current draft policies:

- Review and update of draft policy language for community review
- Endorsement of draft policy language by LTC before community review
- Community review: groups wanting to provide feedback organizing themselves
- Community engagement activities/events: To be determined
- Communications will include: website, subscriber list, trustee articles in Sounder
- Community orientation to next stage of OCP meeting and community conversation on housing options and growth management (At their April meeting the LTC identified preference for the housing options and growth management conversation to be in-person).

ANALYSIS

LTC Decision Needed: The LTC needs to endorse and engagement plan for the community review of draft policy language. The following page contains a draft engagement plan that considers a community orientation meeting and a focussed conversation on growth management. As indicated in the engagement plan, staff are recommending that a community orientation meeting be held by zoom following the June 26th LTC meeting. This will enable a recorded copy to be accessible on line . Staff recommend the focussed meeting on housing options and growth management occur in September and be paired with sharing of what was heard through the summer engagement process.

Table 4 : OCP Engagement Plan Summer 2025

Activity	Purpose/Process	Date
OCP next step orientation meeting	Via zoom to enable a recorded presentation to be accessible on the website.	June/July
Engagement with SFN staff	IT staff will be working with SFN staff through each topic area related to the OCP.	June 26-September 2025
Share What We Heard Report	Share survey results and results from focus groups	
Share revised draft policies for community review online	Draft policies will be added on the website under each them. A direct link to a comment page will be provided.	
Share revised draft polices for community review at markets or community events (TBD)	The purpose of the market outreach will be to provide a summary of draft policies and encourage community members to provide feedback via the website or on a written form. The number of events will depend on staff availability.	
In person community meeting to review input June- Sept and focus on growth management questions	Staff are recommending the conversation on growth management happen after input on policy language has been received. This will provide the opportunity to share outcomes and assumptions based on summer engagement and how they will influenced the full draft of the OCP.	September 2025

RECOMMENDATION: *That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the OCP project summer 2025 engagement plan as presented in the staff report dated May 22, 2025.*

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The LTC could choose to alternative engagement activities. The LTC will need to provide clear direction to staff and staff will advise of feasibility.

NEXT STEPS

If the staff recommendation is supported staff will:

- Develop a communications plan
- Schedule a zoom orientation on the next phase of the OCP engagement. All focus group participants will be invited and encouraged to invite others.
- Schedule a community meeting on housing options and growth management.
- Update draft bylaws for LTC review at their June 26th regular business LTC meeting.

Submitted By:	Narissa Chadwick, RPP, MCIP, Island Planner	May 7, 2025
Concurrence:	Renee Jamurat, RPP MCIP, Regional Planning Manager	May 7, 2025

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resource Stewardship Policies
2. Resource Stewardship Change Table
3. Resource Stewardship Meeting Notes
4. Freshwater Policies
5. Freshwater Change Table
6. Freshwater Meeting Notes
7. Environment Policies
8. Environment Change Table
9. Environment Meeting Notes

Attachment 1: RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP - Draft Objectives and Policies

Goal: Manage land and water resources responsibly to ensure their sustainability for future generations. Ensure food security, and integrate economic, social, ethical, and cultural considerations into resource management.

Agriculture

1. **To preserve agricultural land, promote local food security, and support farmers in producing and marketing products to the local community.**

    - Retain farmland within the ALR.

    - Approval of the subdivision of land in the ALR, where such subdivision would reduce the long-term viability of the parcel for farm use, is not supported.

    - All lands in the ALR shall be designated Agriculture in this Plan.

    - Agricultural land should be retained in large land holdings within the Agricultural Land Reserve to support the viability of agriculture and avoid the fragmentation of farmland.

    - The keeping of livestock and large-scale horticulture operations shall be permitted with the exception that the large-scale commercial growing of mushrooms.

    - The raising of furbearing animals shall be discouraged in circumstances where there is a potential for conflict with existing non-farm uses on an adjoining parcel.

    - When making land use planning decisions for property adjacent to the Agricultural Land Reserve, the needs and activities of farming operations should be considered to ensure compatibility.

    - Proposals to permit low impact recreational uses or ecological reserves may be considered on land in the agriculture designation.

    - The removal of soil from or the deposition of soil on agricultural land shall be strongly discouraged where it would reduce the agricultural viability of the farm parcel.

    - The Plan supports the use of land located in the ALR with farm status, for small-scale, low-impact uses (eg. Agri-tourism) related to farming, subject to the approval of the

Agricultural Land Commission. The zoning bylaw shall provide regulations for agri-tourism operations.

- On Lot 1, Section 19, Gabriola, Nanaimo District, Plan 27281 (The Gabriola Commons) community agriculture and institutional uses are supported, and zoning that specifies agriculture and institutional uses as principal permitted uses is supported by this Plan. The institutional uses permitted will include non-profit and not for profit enterprises that provide services of benefit to the residents of Gabriola. Educational uses also fall under the definition of "institutional" and it is intended that the Commons will be a place for learning about agriculture, food production, and sustainability practices.

- This plan supports the amalgamation of lots in the Agriculture designation.

- The use of lands, buildings or structures in any zone being used for the manufacturing or research of genetically engineered seeds, plants or animals shall not be permitted in the planning area.
- Agrology and other professional reports may be required to support applications for inclusion or exclusion from the Agricultural Land Reserve, subdivision, and non-adhering Residential Use. Reports should consider the land's current and future farming potential, describe the link between the proposed application and the current use of the land, and describe any non-soil-based farming activities and environmental best practices.

- Amendments to the land use bylaw to reduce or remove barriers to uses that would strengthen the local food system, such as small-scale food processing, warehousing, distribution, and other activities are supported when consistent with the policies in this plan.

<u>Forested Land</u>

2. **To preserve large contiguous areas of forested land and encourage the use of forested land for recreation, wildlife habitat and maintaining biological diversity.**

- The subdivision of land, in the Forestry zone, shall not be supported, except for purposes of creating an ecological reserve.

- Appropriate small scale forest related activities such as bird watching, wildlife viewing, education, and passive recreation shall be encouraged.

- Natural systems, biological sustainability, ecological services, and natural aesthetics of forest lands should be protected through a DPA.

- Riparian areas, marine shoreline areas, sensitive ecosystems, endangered habitat, soils, watersheds, biodiversity, old or large individual trees, and old growth stands should be protected through a DPA.

Minerals and Aggregate Resources

3. **To minimize the use of land for processing materials from mining, aggregate and other resource extraction by not permitting it as a land use except by Temporary Use Permit or through site specific rezoning applications.**

    - Processing of mineral and aggregate resources is an industrial use and may only be permitted through a site-specific zoning or a Temporary Use Permit.

    - Mineral and aggregate resource processing should only be permitted if the product will be for local use.

    - Any application to permit a mineral and aggregate resource processing use should be required to demonstrate how the natural environment will be restored following conclusion of the use. A security deposit should be provided to ensure follow through of conditions when a TUP is issued for this use.

Attachment 2: Where Resource Stewardship Section Differs From Existing OCP

The proposed changes to Official Community Plan (OCP) policy related to resource lands are described in the table below. Specific topics that fit within resource are related to the agriculture and forestry lands. A summary of what the current OCP contains and some of the related issues can be found in the Density Transfer Discussion Guide and Resource Snapshot document in Attachments 4 & 5.

Change	Rationale
Removed "density transfer" policies in resource section	These policies are replaced by less prescriptive housing policies in the housing section (See Attachment 3 for Draft Housing Objectives and Policies).
Removed "density bank" policies in resource section	These policies are replaced by less prescriptive housing policies in the housing section (See Attachment 3 for Draft Housing Objectives and Policies).
Removed prescriptive policies that should be in the Land Use Bylaw	Resource, agriculture, forestry
Removed the "resource" section	Very few relevant policies remain in this section after density bank and density transfer policies were replaced.
Added policy to support maintaining agricultural land in large lots.	Included policy to avoid fragmentation of farmland.
Added policy to ensure adjacent agricultural land is considered in land use planning decisions.	To avoid the impacts of adjacent land uses being detrimental to farming operations.
Added policy encouraging suitable information to be provided for applications within the ALR.	To enable officials to have relevant and reliable information to support decisions.
Added policy supporting LUB amendments that strengthen local food systems	To support activities which enable local food security. This supports a goal of the current OCP.
Removed "density transfer" policies in forestry section	These policies are replaced by less prescriptive housing policies in the housing section (See Attachment 3 for Draft Housing Objectives and Policies).
Removed "density bank" policies in forestry section	These policies are replaced by less prescriptive housing policies in the housing section (See Attachment 3 for Draft Housing Objectives and Policies).
Inserted policy stating that mineral and aggregate resource processing should only be permitted if the product is for local use.	To encourage this land use to only occur at a small scale and provide benefit to the community.
Included requirement for a security deposit for issued TUPs allowing aggregate and mineral processing.	This would guarantee TUP permit conditions be followed when temporary use permits expire.

Change	Rationale
Renamed “Forestry” title to “Forest Lands”	To recognize that the policies are not all related to forestry, but rather forested land.
Insert policy to encourage protection of the natural environment and heritage features.	To recognize the ecological function and heritage value of these lands.
Insert policy encouraging use of forest lands for low impact recreational activities and education.	To recognize the natural beauty these lands provide.

Attachment 3

Resource Stewardship on Gabriola Discussion Notes

Date: April 3rd 2025

Discussion Summary Themes

OCP Needs to Mention Forestry Activities

-A lot of the land on Gabriola is better suited to wood than agriculture.

"We're blessed with forests, but I don't see anything about taking care of the woodland. If it's done properly and respectfully, it can be a beautiful thing."

"People either cut everything down, or they do nothing—there's no intermediate."

"You've got a lot more social license to do things with agriculture, than forestry. But because it's not mentioned in the OCP, people on private land can do anything. But we could mandate max cut sizes or only closed canopy."

-See Merv Wilkinson's eco forestry—fully functioning, ecologically beautiful forest that was actively logged for 80 years.

-Put a pathway along the Tunnel where people could walk along the road. Currently, it's really dangerous to walk there.

Describe Low-Impact Approach to Managing Local Resources

-We could be utilizing these local resources in low-impact ways—creating jobs for local people and providing lumber and firewood. No heavy machinery required.

> *"You can't buy a piece of Douglas Fir at the local hardware store."*
>
> "It's important to keep in mind that the resources that we do have here can be utilized here before they're taken anywhere else. We have an opportunity to be a more sustainable community."
>
> "We can tell ourselves that we're being sustainable by not extracting our resources, while importing resources from elsewhere."

Not viewing "protect" just as 'do nothing'

-Use 'woodland stewardship' instead of 'forest management'.

-Part of protection is stewardship, whether it's managing fuel, managing deer, etc.

-Protecting doesn't necessarily mean a hands-off approach.

Re: Forested Land Policy

2. To preserve large contiguous areas of forested land and encourage the use of forested land for recreation, wildlife habitat and maintaining biological diversity.

-Small scale forestry activities should expand to some resource-based uses (not just human recreation). Allow for small-scale forestry activities that enhance ecological integrity and fire resiliency.

Frame Forestry Activities as Wildfire Resiliency

-If you look at 707, so many areas that are so dense = wildfire fuel. This is going to cause problems. We could have thinning operations.

"We're burning one community a year."

-RDN has a responsibility to manage certain parts. They are going to need to "treat" certain areas and people aren't going to like that.

The problem with "don't touch anything" is that our forests are already so altered. Leave it alone doesn't make sense. **The issues with fuel build up are big for safety.**

-Education is needed to help people see the benefits. Have the incentive to do something with the woodland, rather than raking it all down or doing nothing.

-Also a big problem with cutting in all down where there's a big problem 30 years later (10,000 stems per hectare). Move towards selective logging that employs local people.

Management Plan for the 707 involved brining in heavy machinery and people were against it. Could have a lower impact approach, using more people, small machinery.

What can Islands Trust do to limit what people do on their own properties (i.e. Not clearing from lot corner to lot corner)?

Could be a Wildfire Development Permit.

Commit in the OCP to having a fire resilient community. And talk about how you become a fire resilient community:

-building standards and codes for houses

-standards for forests. What do they look like closer to the residences vs. what do they look like further from the residences?

-this type of forest still looks natural, it's not manicured.

-People need to understand that it's beneficial to them to do some management on their properties. They need to have incentive. That their property is going to be improved by it. Rather than being forced into a situation by rules from outside forces. Provide a good alternative to what they're currently doing.

-The Open Smoke Control Burning regulation is going to help prevent clearcutting.

-Old growth tends to be more fire-resilient. You can also introduce some old growth characteristics—some of those ecological features can come back.

-Don't believe there's ever been a Forest Management Plan for Gabriola

-There are Interface Fire/Management Plans done by RDN. They use aerial shots and identify priority areas, as well as site-specific areas. Community Fire Resiliency Plan was done a couple of years ago. RDN is moving forward with this but they're largely focused on RDN lands. That's all they can treat. They have no authority over private lands. How to approach management of Crown lands?

"People see the proposed plans and there's an outcry and then we don't do anything. Not managing anything is problematic in an ecosystem that has already been so disturbed."

"When you walk in the woods, there's a lot of dead standing wood. That takes a lot of time to self-thin."

-Any woodland management has to be cyclic. There is some brush when you remove from the forest and you slash it down and, within 5 years, that becomes part of the soil.

-Add building a fire resilient community as a value in the OCP.

-Also capture it in the OCP Implementation Plan because it will take a community group to champion this because both the Islands Trust and RDN are limited. If it's listed in the Implementation Plan, there could be an opportunity for staff to support applications for funding, etc.

-Advocacy Policy needed about how to deal with fuel load on this island. **Open smoke burning control regulation means we can no longer burn slash on island**. So, things like stumps pile up. RDN's plan for when they remove is to ship it all off-island.

-We need a piece of land where we can grind up and chip stumps and it goes back into the land, feeds the soil. Needs to be a champion for this.

-Is there a place on the island that would work for this?

-It would need to be 5 acres. Need to get zoning, then get permitting (it turns into waste management). It's connected to RDN waste management plan to reduce their waste disposal. They consider burning as disposal." We need to weigh it and understand how much waste is being managed. It's basically a transfer site with a big compost pit.

-Make it available to people to use it. E.g., We just burned alder and using it to grow chanterelles.

-Ideally, we recycle it back into the island. It's part of a circular ecosystem.

"We as society need to quit using the atmosphere as a garbage can." Don't burn it or ship it off island, we need to slash it up and let it go back to the land."

-You want to remove ladder fuels, but not everything. Okay to have some branches on the ground that go back into the forest.

Strong Support for Agricultural Policies

-The agricultural component is really great. We need to grow food on this island.

What is the overall view of the agricultural land on the island?

There are places with beautiful agricultural land where nothing more is happening. The possibility for more is huge.

-Especially with the current political climate, anticipate a stronger demand for local food.

-If people have to own the land in order to farm it, that's a major barrier.

-Suitable Land Analysis—taking data on water recharge and sensitive ecosystems all together to have a sense of which areas make sense to allow development.

-We have to bare in mind the carrying capacity of these islands. How much water? How much can the ferry handle? The ferry is the dictator.

> -changes to housing don't necessarily change the number of ppl living on the island, they change how people live.

One of the changes proposed is to remove the density transfer and density bank policies currently in the forestry and resource sections. What do we think?

> "I'm not sure if this is a community-oriented idea, or if it only benefits rich landowners."

This is why we proposed some other ways of doing it, like flex zoning and other tools

Re: reducing the ability to subdivide, that will protect some ecological integrity. And the move to increase density closer to the village.

Ecologically, it makes sense for people to be more concentrated, and close to services and close to transit.

We need services at the south end of the island. You can't get a cup of coffee at the south end.

Are there particular areas you think we should explore to change zoning or mixed zoning?

-Degnen Bay and Silva Bay. Something really low-key that blends in with nature. Where you could buy eggs, milk, a coffee.

-Now's the time to speak with the trustees, if you have a site-specific idea or the idea for land use that meets a community need.

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ATTACHMENT 4: Water Resources Draft Policies

GOAL: Protect Gabriola Island's freshwater resources and ensure that neither the density, nor the intensity of land uses is increased where the quality and quantity of the supply of freshwater is likely to be inadequate or increase the vulnerability of freshwater supply.

Freshwater availability is a limiting factor Gabriola Island. The majority of Gabriola residents rely on groundwater. In the Islands Trust Area, all groundwater originates from rainfall and is stored in underground freshwater reserves known as aquifers. The amount of freshwater available in the aquifers is variable across islands due to geology, topography, coastline, ecosystem, and other natural factors. This variation may lead to vulnerable supply, especially in dryer seasons and years of drought. Conservation and protection of groundwater resources is essential for freshwater sustainability into the future.

Objectives:

1. Protect critical aquifer recharge areas, watersheds, aquifers, wetlands, and freshwater ecosystems to support freshwater sustainability of Gabriola's groundwater resource.

2. Consider available freshwater vulnerability data in all land use planning decisions.

3. Limit development and other alterations of the land base that increase the vulnerability of groundwater regions and negatively impact the supply of groundwater.

4. Ensure that the quality of groundwater is preserved and protected.

5. Consider climate change vulnerabilities on freshwater resources.

Policies:

1. **Protect critical aquifer recharge areas, watersheds, aquifers, wetlands, and freshwater ecosystems to support the sustainability of Gabriola's groundwater resource.**

   - Protect watershed ecosystems, lakes, wetlands, creeks, and recharge areas from negative impacts of development.
   - Evaluate potential impacts to critical groundwater recharge areas when considering increases in density and intensity of land use.
   - Siting regulations should support appropriate buffer areas to protect wetlands and watercourses.
   - Density, lot size, setbacks, and site coverage should consider and support function critical to the health of watershed ecosystems.

- Development proposals are encouraged to include approaches that enhance or provide protection to watershed ecosystems and freshwater resources (e.g. clustering of development, density averaging, covenant protection, parkland dedication).

- Increase in density and intensity of land use should not negatively impact Indigenous interests.

2. **Consider available freshwater vulnerability data in all land use planning decisions.**

- Use existing groundwater recharge mapping from the Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy to inform "Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas" that may be designated as a development permit areas and/or be used for adjudicating land-use applications. .

- Critical aquifer recharge areas should be addressed in all applications related to increases in density and intensity of land use.

Advocacy/Collaboration:

- Work with the Regional District of Nanaimo, the Province, First Nations and others to integrate additional data as it emerges

3. **Limit development and other alterations of the land base that increase the vulnerability of groundwater regions and negatively impact the supply of groundwater.**

<u>Commercial, Industrial, Recreational Use of Water:</u>

- Groundwater shall not be transported off the island and sold.

- The sale of groundwater and collected rainwater maybe permitted by rezoning

- Industrial or recreational uses which are consumptive of large quantities of groundwater shall be discouraged.

- Groundwater fed swimming pools shall not be permitted.

- Uses that consume large amounts of groundwater should not be permitted as Home Occupations.

Residential Water Use

- Secondary suites and other accessory dwelling units shall only be permitted in areas where there is an adequate supply of potable water and not in areas of high freshwater vulnerability.

Lot Coverage:

- Lot coverage regulations should limit impervious surfaces to promote groundwater recharge.

- Prohibit new large impervious surfaces in critical aquifer recharge areas, requiring permeable materials and low-impact development (LID) techniques to maintain natural infiltration.

Rezoning:

- When considering rezoning applications that are not related to farming, the local trust committee should ensure that the proposed new use will not reduce the quantity of water for farming.

- Rezoning applications involving an increase in density or intensity of land use should be required to provide an assessment of the availability of sustainable, long-term groundwater.

- A Freshwater Management Plan should be provided where a rezoning will result in significant increase in water use.

Community Water Systems:

- Community water systems for significant new development should be encouraged.

- In considering the approval of a community water system, consideration shall be given to the results of a water management review, prepared by a licensed Professional Engineer and/or Professional Geoscientist under stamp and seal which examines impact on other water users, groundwater recharge, and freshwater capacity.

Subdivision and Potable Water Supply:

- An adequate supply of potable water, as specified in regulation, must be proven for each new lot created by subdivision.

- It should be demonstrated that withdrawal of groundwater for new lots created through subdivision will not adversely affect the supply to existing and potential water users.

First Nations Interests

- Identify water allocation for the Snuneymuxw First Nations and other First Nations wanting to return to Gabriola and help establish water reserves under the Water Sustainability Act.

- Consider water allocations supporting First Nations interests in the review of subdivision and rezoning applications.

Advocacy/Collaboration:

- Water conservation measures are encouraged (e.g. low water use fixtures, and retention of rainwater and runoff in cisterns and ponds).

4. Ensure that the quality of groundwater is preserved and protected.

- Any additional density or intensity of use that would negatively affect the quality of groundwater should not be permitted.

- Land use decisions shall consider the capability for sewage disposal without danger of contaminating groundwater, surface water and the marine environment.

- In areas where individual septic systems are adversely affecting the environment or the quality of water, subdivision regulations may require a sewer system in new development.

- Identify areas at elevated risk of saltwater intrusion and restrict development in these areas. Refer to saltwater intrusion mapping.

- In areas where it is anticipated that septic disposal systems may not function properly, development shall be prohibited unless the Ministry of Health approves an alternate effluent disposal system.

Advocacy/Collaboration:

- The application of pesticides and herbicides on the land by any agency or individual shall be discouraged with the exception of normal farm practices in the ALR.

5. Consider and address climate change impacts on freshwater supply and quality.

- Establish climate-resilient water conservation areas based on projected drought severity and aquifer recharge potential.

- Require all new subdivisions and rezoning applications to demonstrate a climate-informed water management plan, including long-term aquifer sustainability under changing climate conditions.

- Prohibit zoning changes that would increase water demand in areas identified as vulnerable freshwater shortages.

- Require that all new residential, commercial, and institutional developments incorporate cisterns for rainwater storage, sized to support water needs during prolonged drought conditions.

- Restrict development on steep slopes and unstable terrain where climate-driven extreme rainfall events could lead to erosion and sedimentation of freshwater sources.

- Integrate climate change projections for freshwater availability when accessing proposals related to increases in density and intensity of land use

Attachment 5: Freshwater Resource Change Table

The LTC has highlighted freshwater sustainability as a key focus for the OCP review. There have been substantial changes proposed in the draft bylaw based on feedback received through past community engagement as well as a review of other bylaws in the Islands Trust Area related to water supply. The proposed changes to Official Community Plan (OCP) policy related to freshwater resources on Gabriola Island are identified in the chart below.

Change	Rationale
A clear goal is articulated.	Clear goals help to focus objectives and actions.
Objectives have been simplified and focused.	Focus on ecosystem health, data, quality and quantity addresses all previous and proposed policy objectives.
A new objective is added that recognizes the need to protect the watershed and ecosystem that supports ecological function.	Focus on ecosystem health is a more holistic then the approach previously taken. Some of the policies under this objective may overlap and/or be complimented by goals related to the protection of biodiversity section of the OCP.
A new objective specifically related to the use of freshwater vulnerability data has been added.	Recent groundwater recharge data is now available and water balance data is being developed. The LTC will need to decide whether related maps should be included as a schedule in the OCP.
A new objective and policies related to climate change have been added.	Climate change is happening, increasing the vulnerability of groundwater resources as drought periods increase. Climate change can also have impacts on water quality as it relates to sea level rise, stormwater run off and other climate change impacts.
A number of policies focused on what is within the Islands Trust jurisdiction (research, requesting information for subdivisions and rezoning, use of land use planning tools) have been added.	It is important for the OCP to focus on what the LTC can effectively do. Given the unique jurisdictional existence of the Islands Trust there is a tendency to include a large amount of policies that are advocacy in nature. Some of the draft policies have been influenced by language in other LTC OCPs.
Focussed but limited advocacy and collaboration policies have been identified. (in progress)	Advocacy and collaboration with other jurisdictions, organizations and the Gabriola community is an important part of supporting freshwater sustainability. These policies should be limited to those that can be effectively implemented. One or two key policies per section is encouraged. References to other processes or strategies that are happening at the community level are encouraged.
Policy related to liquid waste management have been added.	This was previously in its own section but addresses water quality. Additional liquid waste management policies will be moved to other sections in the OCP.

Water Focus Group Discussion Notes

Date: April 17th 2025

Water Presentation: OCP Project Summary

BACKGROUND
Visioning & Policy Development Process

- Islands Trust staff began with a visioning process for the OCP, identifying key goals.
- Emphasis on focusing on actionable policies.
- Outreach efforts included surveys, correspondence, and community engagement.
- Currently in theme-focused phase of engagement

Best Practices & Policy Framework

- Draft policies reflect an integrated approach using regional best practices.
- OCP is a legal guiding document for the community.
- Advocacy policies can be added but are not legally binding.

Timeline

- Draft OCP expected for community review by Fall 2026.
- There will be opportunities for community engagement on draft polities through the summer

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DISCUSSION - Groundwater Management & Challenges

Ecological Importance

- Water is life
- Groundwater is crucial for housing, agriculture, and ecosystems.
- Forests are vital for groundwater resupply and recharge.
- Need to be conscious of pollution from sources like pharmaceuticals and septic systems impacts on water quality.
- Protection of recharge watersheds and restoration of forests is essential.

Scientific and Technical Perspectives

- Some scientists consider the whole island as a recharge area.
- Critical aquifer areas are site-specific, with risks including land use impacts and saltwater intrusion.
- On Galiano, recharge potential is mapped via 25x25 m grid cells, influencing Development Permit (DP) area policy.

Ground Conditions & Storage

- Soil type and land cover affect the ability to store recharged water.

- Without storage, even effective recharge plans may fail.
- Topography, soil retention, and vegetation matter significantly.

Water Balance & Engineering Solutions

Pre- and Post-Development Water Budgets

- Maintain or mimic pre-development water budgets in new developments.
- Recalculate water balance after surface changes (e.g., pavement) and add mitigation measures.

Water Capture & Engineering Methods

- Encourage rooftop collection.
- Explore soak away pits (risk of clogging over time).
- Increase permeable pavement and grass-lined ditches.

Calculating and Maximizing Recharge

- Recharge = Rainwater – Evapotranspiration.
- Use site-specific data for better results.
- Encourage storage: Cisterns, permeable features, and soil retention.

Freshwater Sustainability & Adaptation Strategies

Current Challenges

- Many homes lack groundwater access.
- Drought seasons are growing longer due to climate change.

Rainwater Harvesting

- Rainwater falls primarily over 5 months – storage must cover that time.
- Evidence shows rainwater harvesting doesn't significantly reduce recharge.
- Consider requiring cisterns in OCP for new builds.

Development & Density

- Rainwater harvesting should supplement wells, not replace.
- Avoid basing increased development solely on rainwater availability.

Fire Suppression and Infrastructure

- Water for fire suppression often privately sourced.
- Conveyance (e.g., water towers) is cost-prohibitive.
- Consider requiring cisterns for fire suppression on some properties

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Policy Development & Improvement Suggestions

Policy Clarity

- Need clear definitions: groundwater vs. surface water vs. freshwater.
- Targeted policies needed for different water sources.
- Policies must reflect groundwater-specific needs, not just freshwater generally.

Considering grouping policies into focus areas:

- How do we protect water?
- How do we use sustainably?
- How do we restore it?

Practical Implementation

- Easier to regulate new builds.
- Education is key for existing structures.
- Use rainwater and cisterns as part of a broader water strategy.

Freshwater Footprint Project

Holistic Sustainability Framework

- Moving beyond water balance to include:
    - Contaminants & pollution.
    - Aquifer stress and water use.
    - Water **quality and quantity**.

Metrics & Monitoring

- Consider ecological, water, and carbon footprints.
- Monitor human behavior and development impacts.
- Use **dashboards** to track water data across the island.

Upcoming 3 workshops:

- May 1st webinar Community Monitoring and Mapping webinar
- May 22nd (date TBC) defining the freshwater footprint. Bringing a Gabriola lens to the data that we have – showcasing other methods – water balance, nutrient balance, contaminants. What are the most important things to incorporate into water protection?
- June 5th – public meeting to present to the LTC

Attachment 7 – Environmental Policies

4. Preservation and Protection Ecosystem Biodiversity:

GOAL: Preserving and protecting healthy and biodiverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems through the protection and restoration of protected areas, sensitive ecosystems, forest ecosystems, watersheds, marine and nearshore areas, and critical habitats for species at risk.

Healthy and biodiverse ecosystems on Gabriola Island provide essential resources, inspire artistic and spiritual practices, and support ecological balance and sustainability. Adhering to the Islands Trust's mandate to preserve and protect the region's unique amenities and environment against the potential negative impacts of a growing population necessitates conscious and focussed protection of sensitive ecosystems, forest habitats, watersheds, marine and nearshore areas, and critical habitats for species at risk.

Gabriola Island's Unique Ecosystems:

- **Sensitive Ecosystems:** Gabriola Island is home to several sensitive ecosystems, including coastal Douglas-fir forests, Garry oak meadows, and wetlands. These areas provide habitat for numerous species and are vital for maintaining biodiversity.
- **Marine and Nearshore Areas:** The island's coastline and nearshore environments support rich marine life, including kelp forests, eelgrass beds, and important spawning grounds for herring and other fish species.
- **Watersheds:** The island's watersheds are crucial for freshwater supply and support a variety of aquatic and riparian habitats.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that land use planning and ecosystem protection decisions are guided by comprehensive ecological and climate change data as well as Indigenous cultural knowledge.

2. Protect watersheds, aquifers, wetlands, and freshwater ecosystems to support the sustainability of Gabriola's groundwater resource

3. Identify, protect, and connect sensitive terrestrial ecosystems and habitats for species at risk.

4. Protect marine ecosystems and shoreline ecosystems from degradation and incompatible development.

5. Adapt land use policies and regulations to increase climate change mitigation through ecosystem based solutions and address ecosystem threats such as wildfire and other climate change related and other threats to the integrity of the ecosystem.

Commented [NC1]: This objective is also in water section. It will not exist in two places in the OCP. How the ecosystem biodiversity section interweaves with the water policies is yet to be determined.

1. **Ensure that land use planning and ecosystem protection decisions are guided by comprehensive ecological and climate change data as well as Indigenous cultural knowledge**

   - Use available data ecosystem data to inform land-use plans, regulatory processes, and priorities for ecosystem protection including consideration of biodiversity corridors to support species migration in response to a changing climate.
   - Require all development proposals involving zoning changes, subdivisions, or plan amendments to undergo an assessment of environmental impact before approval.
   - Incorporate climate predictions and other available data to guide decisions on land disturbance and density increases.
   - Incorporate Indigenous cultural knowledge where possible, to complement other sources of data related to land use decision making.

   Advocacy/Collaboration:

   - Partner with other government levels, First Nations, NGOs and property owners to inventory, map, and conserve sensitive ecosystems, ensuring consistent protection approaches for shared watersheds.

2. **Protect critical aquifer recharge areas, watersheds, aquifers, wetlands, and freshwater ecosystems to support the sustainability of Gabriola's groundwater resource.**

   - Protect watershed ecosystems, lakes, wetlands, creeks, and recharge areas from negative impacts of development.
   - Evaluate potential impacts to critical groundwater recharge areas when considering increases in density and intensity of land use.
   - Siting regulations should support appropriate buffer areas to protect wetlands and watercourses.
   - Density, lot size, setbacks, and site coverage should consider and support function critical to the health of watershed ecosystems.
   - Development proposals are encouraged to include approaches that enhance or provide protection to watershed ecosystems and freshwater resources (e.g. clustering of development, density averaging, covenant protection, parkland dedication).
   - Increase in density and intensity of land use should not negatively impact Indigenous interests.

Commented [NC2]: Same policies existing in water section at the moment

3. **Identify, protect, and connect sensitive terrestrial ecosystems and habitats for species at risk.**

   - Integrate the goals and objectives of the Islands Trust Conservancy Regional Conservation Plan in land-use decisions.
   - Amend permitted uses in zones near sensitive ecosystems to avoid adverse impacts on their ecological functions.
   - Modify regulations for the siting, size, and dimensions of uses and buildings adjacent to sensitive ecosystems to protect these areas.
   - Encourage protection of sensitive habitats, such as riparian areas, via conservation covenants and development permit area regulations.
   - Review and update setbacks from the high water mark to prevent erosion, hazardous conditions and threats to ecosystem integrity.
   - Require environmental covenants for rezoning in sensitive areas.
   - Increase protected area networks, when possible, to safeguard sensitive ecosystems and habitats for at-risk species.
   - When possible, require the retention of natural tree cover along shorelines, allowing minimal selective cutting.
   - Use setback and screening provisions in zoning to provide buffer areas around the nests of protected birds.
   - Promote protective, vegetated buffers around natural features and sensitive areas, with zoning provisions for natural, native landscape buffers.

   Advocacy/Collaboration:

   - Work with conservation organizations in securing important habitats through acquisition, covenants, or stewardship agreements.
   - Encourage voluntary covenants or easements to protect natural features

4. **Protect marine ecosystems and shoreline ecosystems from degradation and incompatible use and development.**

   - No building may be permitted beyond the high watermark of the sea.
   - Limit new marina developments to areas where they will limit negative impact marine ecosystems, or sensitive nearshore environments.

- Use development permit areas and covenants to protect marine ecosystems, particularly in areas identified as high priority for biodiversity conservation
- Only permit shoreline modifications, such shoreline armouring, when necessary to protect existing structures, there is minimal impact on natural shoreline processes, and when other alternatives such as soft or nature based (e.g. green shores) approaches, or a managed retreat, are impractical.
- Use zonings and development permit provisions to protect marine and foreshore areas that are of ecological significance.

Advocacy/Collaboration

- Encourage senior government to designate Gabriola Pass and other sensitive marine environments as a marine protected area.

5. **Adapt land use policies and regulations to increase climate change mitigation and resilience to climate change, wildfire, and other ecological hazards.**

- Encourage carbon sequestration through preservation of forests and native vegetation.
- Establish setbacks in zoning regulations for significant marine and foreshore areas that incorporate climate resilience considerations such as sea level rise and storm surge projections.
- Include wildfire protection measures in development permit guidelines and setbacks.
- Prioritize the use of native species and fire smart landscaping where planting may be required as a condition of development permit area.
- Protect and restore carbon-sequestering ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, and riparian areas through zoning and develop permit area and require conservation covenants as a condition of subdivision and rezoning.
- Encourage forest management strategies that promote ecological resilience while reducing fire fuel loads.

Attachment 8: Environment Change Table

The proposed changes to Official Community Plan (OCP) policy related to biodiverse ecosystems are organized differently than those in the existing OCP. As well, they take on a more comprehensive and adaptive approach to biodiversity protection recognizing the importance of understanding climate impacts and adaptation to climate change. A summary of what the current OCP contains related to environmental protection can be found in the environmental protection discussion guide (Attachment 4).

Change	Rationale
The policies related to ecosystem protection are currently in the section titled "Environment, Marine and Heritage Resources. This includes: Environmentally sensitive areas, marine resources and heritage and archeological resources.	The proposed new policies are under the title "Biodiverse Ecosystems". The preservation and protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems was a key goal emerging from the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process with biodiversity as an important focus. Marine policies related to commercial and recreational use will be moved to the "Resource Stewardship" section of the draft OCP. Cultural Heritage will be a separate section.
The goal of "Preserving and protecting healthy and biodiverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems through the protection and restoration of protected areas, sensitive ecosystems, forest ecosystems, watersheds, marine and nearshore areas, and critical habitats for species at risk" has been added	The current OCP does not have a clear goal articulated. Instead, it references work that was done in 1975 and 1995 that identified areas of ecological significance that should be protected and preserved. The current objectives focus on the protection of specific environmentally sensitive areas. The draft objectives are more holistic by focussing on ecosystem protection.
New emphasis on the use of Indigenous cultural knowledge, ecological and climate change data into land use planning.	Interest in the integration of Indigenous knowledge as an important reconciliation step into land use planning has been recognized by the LTC and the community. Climate change predictions are critical to decision making that is forward thinking.
There is an increased emphasis on the protection of watershed, groundwater aquifers and all other ecosystem elements contributing to freshwater sustainability.	The Islands Trust has undertaken a number of studies over the past few years related to freshwater sustainability. Freshwater sustainability has been a priority for this OCP review process.
Shift from the existing OCP to recognize the importance of ecological integrity and integrate climate adaptation measures into land use policies.	Climate change is a reality. Impacts are being felt by Islanders. So far, with the draft OCP policies climate change has been integrated into each section. Climate change policies may be moved to a separated section.
Policies that read like regulations have been removed and will be addressed in the land use bylaw.	The purpose of the OCP is to identify policies that will support particular uses. The land use bylaw is where the details of the use can be defined. This approach allows for the permission for specific uses to be more easily changed over time.

Change	Rationale
References to specific sources and legislation have been removed.	Newer resources and legislation adopt to changes over time. Given this, references to specific sources become outdated
Specific Advocacy/Collaboration policies have been identified for different objectives	Advocacy/collaboration policies can be useful in focussing actions that are outside the LTC's jurisdiction. Advocacy/collaboration policies should be clear and focussed. These will be added to the OCP implementation plan.

Environment Focus Group Discussion Notes

Date: April 24th 2025

BACKGROUND

Introduction & Process Overview

- Goal is to keep the Official Community Plan (OCP) process transparent but flexible.
- OCP began with a visioning process to define key goals within Islands Trust jurisdiction.
- Timeline: now through September to review and update policies.

Jurisdiction & Limitations

- Islands Trust is a special-purpose government and does not provide services or infrastructure like many other municipalities do.
- OCP policies must remain within scope; advocacy policies are not enforceable.
- Last OCP from the 1990s so we need to consider the longevity of the document so that it sustains us for more than 10 years into the future.

DISCUSSION – ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

Development Permit Areas (DPAs)

- DPAs proposed to protect different designations such as sensitive ecosystems, aquifers, steep slopes, raptor habitats. What about other animal species?
- Model DPAs are available to use as a starting point
- Support for DPA designations (e.g., ecotones, biodiversity corridors).
- Enforcement and compliance of DPAs is a concern – how to ensure intent is followed?
- DPAs don't prohibit buildings but guide where/how it's done.
- Education seen as a parallel tool to regulation (e.g., seasonal tree cutting, nesting periods).

Water Resources

- Rainwater collection not to be mandated universally – housing cost and science concerns.
- Ongoing studies: groundwater recharge, freshwater demand, and saltwater intrusion.
- Tools: Suitable Land Analysis, contour mapping, aquifer layers.
- Reverse osmosis and desalination have ecological impacts. Trust Council has a policy that there would not have reverse osmosis on the island.

Data & Science

- Need for up-to-date, accessible data (e.g., species at risk, mapping steep slopes).
- Provincial data used (e.g., 2011 ecosystem data, new lidar survey?).
- Data challenges: limited Islands Trust capacity, reliance on provincial and local organizations (eg. GALTT, Gabriola Commons, Pacific Salmon Foundation).
- Citizen science opportunities (e.g., iNaturalist, Forage Fish Surveys).
- Challenge to build in baseline data monitoring – how do we keep the data up-to-date?
- Don't mix up technology and science

Draft Policies - Terminology

- DPAs address protecting critical aquifers – term should be more specific – an aquifer is a large area. Maybe critical water recharge area?
- The term watershed is used inappropriately – it should be termed as waterways
- Ambiguity in terms like "unique ecosystems," "sensitive areas" – need clearer definitions.
- Protecting corridors for wildlife migration – not relevant for the scale of Gabriola.
- Terms "sensitive ecosystem" and "sensitive areas" are used interchangeably. These terms should be defined.

Ecology & Biodiversity

- Ecotones (where two habitats meet) should be considered for DPA protection.
- Invasive species tracking, forest decline (e.g., big leaf maple) need more attention.
- Habitat protection could extend beyond "species at risk" to general ecosystem health.

Education & Outreach

- Education suggested as a key strategy (schools, libraries, signage).
- Real estate agents can be early information points for newcomers.
- Public education about seasonal ecological sensitivity and land use is needed.
- Off-leash dog culture discussed in relation to environmental disruption.

Policy Integration & Climate Action

- Desire for integrated planning across housing, water, and environment sectors.
- Climate language in OCP must be tied to concrete action.
- Consider restoration (not just preservation) and incentive tools (e.g., tax credits) for landowners preserving their lands in a natural state (outside of NAPTEP- too restrictive)

- Consideration of density management is crucial – affects all environmental areas.

Indigenous Engagement

- Kensington Lands (Indigenous held) pose uncertainty regarding density increase – we can't make assumptions that these lands will follow our rules as they will have self-governance.
- OCP references Indigenous knowledge; suggestion to deepen this with clearer incorporation of priorities.
- A capacity agreement for $10,000 is in place to support SFN engagement.