



Regional Planning Committee Agenda

Date: Friday, September 25, 2026
Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Location: Electronic Zoom Meeting

Pages

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. AGENDA

2.1 Review of the Agenda

Late items, new items and re-ordering of the agenda

2.2 Approval of Agenda

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

4. DELEGATIONS

None.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION

6.1 Draft Minutes of Previous Meetings

For review and approval

6.1.1 Regional Planning Committee Draft Minutes of July 24, 2026 Regular Meeting

3 - 7

6.2 Resolutions Without Meeting

None.

6.3 Follow up Action List

8 - 11

For review

7. BUSINESS - WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

7.1	Fiscal Year 2027/28 Biologist Services Business Case - Request For Decision	12 - 22
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That the Regional Planning Committee forward the attached Biologist Services business case to the Financial Planning Committee for consideration in the Fiscal Year 2027/28 budget.

7.2	Summaries of RPC Highlights from Trust Council Annual Reports for the 2022-2026 Term - Briefing	23 - 29
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8. BUSINESS - NEW

9.	WORK PROGRAM	30 - 35
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For review and referral to Trust Council before each quarterly TC meeting

10. NEXT MEETING

The next Regional Planning Committee meeting is January 8, 2026 at 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

11. CLOSED MEETING

If desired:

That the meeting be closed to the public in accordance with the Community Charter, Part 4, Division 3, s.90, (quote the pertinent section here, for example, (1)(a) personal information about...) and that the recorder and staff [attend/not attend] the meeting.

12. RISE AND REPORT

If desired

13. ADJOURNMENT

*Approximate time is provided for the convenience of the public only and is subject to change without notice.



Regional Planning Committee Minutes of a Regular Meeting

Date: July 24, 2026
Location: Electronic Meeting

Members Present: Mairead Boland, Saturna Island Local Trustee, Chair
Sam Borthwick, Denman Island Local Trustee, Vice Chair
Tobi Elliott, Gabriola Island Local Trustee, Executive Committee Representative
David Graham, Denman Island Local Trustee
Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island Local Trustee (ex officio)

Member Regrets: Aaron Campbell, North Pender Island Local Trustee

Staff Present: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services
Mary Storzer, Regional Planning Manager
William Shulba, Senior Freshwater Specialist
Rob Kroeker, Planning Services Administrative Assistant / Recorder

Others Present: One member of the public was present.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Boland called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and acknowledged that participants of the meeting were attending all across the territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

2. AGENDA

2.1 Review of the Agenda

No new item was presented for consideration.

2.2 Approval of Agenda

By general consent the Regional Planning Committee approved the agenda as presented.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No member of the public wished to speak.

4. DELEGATIONS

4.1.1 Maxine Leichter – Friends of the Gulf Islands Society

The delegate spoke to concerns about protecting species at risk in the Trust Area. The Biologist's report shows that locations harbouring species at risk are known, and now need to be protected. A model Development Approval Information (DAI) bylaw would be helpful to ensure consistent and adequate professional reports. A request was made for staff to explain the difference between Regional Planning Committee and Trust Programs Committee ecosystem protection work. The Committee was urged to adopt all recommendations in the staff report.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION

6.1 Draft Minutes of Previous Meetings

For review and approval.

6.1.1 Regional Planning Committee Draft Minutes of May 1, 2026 Regular Meeting

By general consent the Regional Planning Committee approved the minutes as presented.

6.2 Resolutions Without Meeting

None.

6.3 Follow-up Action List

Received for information.

Trustee Elliott left the meeting at 10:23 a.m. and re-joined the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

7. BUSINESS – WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

7.1 Freshwater Atlas Updates and Timeline - Briefing

Senior Freshwater Specialist Shulba introduced the briefing. Committee discussion included:

- orientation to this work for new trustees after the October elections
- maintenance of data and contingency planning
- watercourse and wells data accuracy
- tutorial structure for the Freshwater Atlas demonstration
- resource sharing and the cost of mapping beyond Islands Trust jurisdictional areas

Trustee Elliott left the meeting at 10:41 a.m. and re-joined the meeting at 10:52 a.m.

7.2 Freshwater Footprint Gabriola Case Study into the Official Community Plan Review - Briefing

Senior Freshwater Specialist Shulba presented the briefing, speaking to project learning about Gabriola's water sustainability and freshwater hazard area map development. Committee discussion included:

- implications of 'hazard' used as a descriptive term
- alternative terms, such as groundwater risk area or freshwater conservation area
- rainwater harvesting systems mitigate freshwater hazard
- ground truthing practices including community monitoring and well-watching networks support data maintenance
- data procurement must include blueprints for replicating work, regardless of which water resource consultant performs work

The committee recessed for a break at 11:39 a.m. The meeting resumed at 11:50 a.m.

7.3 Monitoring Progress on Ecosystem Protection in Land Use Planning – Strategic Plan Initiative 3.2.4 Update – Request for Decision

Director Cermak introduced the Request for Decision, noting that the purpose is to forward the deliverables from the Environment and Climate Change Canada-funded biologist to Trust Council in support of Strategic Plan Initiative 3.2.4. Committee discussion included:

- seek a wide range of biological expertise if an independent firm is sought to review professional reports
- remove endorsement of the Land Information Screening Tool
- the tool organizes overlapping scientific and environmental data for presentation
- tools need to earn the trust of the public with transparency in development
- weighting of data layers should reflect community values and input
- it is key to explain to the community how decisions are reached
- the tool daylights part of the process by which staff make recommendations
- consider receiving rather than endorsing the items

The Committee recessed for lunch at 12:45 p.m. The meeting resumed at 1:16 p.m.

Trustee Elliott left the meeting at 1:14 p.m.

RPC 2026-010

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Regional Planning Committee forward this Request for Decision and its amended attachments to Islands Trust Council recommending that Islands Trust Council:

- Receive the *Species at Risk - State of the Islands* report;

- Endorse staff use of the *Species at Risk - State of the Islands* report, and the model natural environment Development Permit Area as operational technical inputs when advising Local Trust Committees and preparing bylaw updates;
- Endorse staff use of the Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports as a staff operational standard;
- Request staff to prepare an internal communications policy to improve how the methodology and rationale behind the Land Information Screening Tool are communicated in staff reports, presentations, and related projects;
- Request staff to expand and refine the Land Information Screening Tool content in the Housing Options Toolkit by adding a more technical summary of the tool's methodology, rationale, and intended use to complement the current plain-language version posted online as Tool 4 - Land Information Screening Tool.

CARRIED

Committee discussion continued:

- retaining biological services expertise versus going to tender for each need
- limit ongoing operational costs

RPC 2026-011

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Regional Planning Committee request staff to draft a business case with options for retaining ongoing biological services.

CARRIED

Trustee Elliott re-joined the meeting at 1:28 p.m.

8. BUSINESS – OTHER

8.1 Project Criteria and Prioritization - Briefing

Regional Planning Manager Storzer introduced the briefing. Committee discussion included:

- on-the-ground factors like housing availability should factor into Official Community Plan prioritization across regions
- strong criteria informing how resources are concentrated will aid project completion
- staff and trustee requests for work could be daylighted and contemplated in one list as a planning projects register
- rural Land Use Bylaws for associated islands are often dated and out of sync with Official Community Plans
- Strategic Plan work tends to draw staff capacity over bylaw updates
- growth pressures and remaining development potential
- minor projects criteria material is sought for Trust Council as well as for new trustee orientation

RPC 2026-012

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Regional Planning Committee request staff to forward the briefing on Regional Planning Team Major Project work, as well as the updated minor project work criteria to Trust Council.

CARRIED

Trustee Borthwick left the meeting at 2:27 p.m.

9. BUSINESS – NEW

None.

10. WORK PROGRAM

The work program was received for information.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next Regional Planning Committee regular meeting is September 25, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

12. CLOSED MEETING

The Committee did not close the meeting.

13. RISE AND REPORT

As the Committee did not close the meeting, there was no need for the Committee to discuss this option.

14. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent, the meeting was adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

Mairead Boland, Chair

Certified Correct:

Rob Kroeker, Planning Services Administrative Assistant

Minutes are not official until adopted at a subsequent meeting.

Follow Up Action Report

Regional Planning Committee

24-Aug-2022

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
21%	1 that Regional Planning Committee request staff to create a Freshwater Sustainability Strategy Frequently Asked Questions document. Update: FAQ for FW Footprint drafted; FAQ for FWSS targeted post 3rd person review	Morgana van Niekerk William Shulba	Target: 31-Dec-2026	In Progress

16-Feb-2024

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
45%	1 Staff to develop a Freshwater Sustainability Strategy implementation plan that defines the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Planning Committee, Trust Programs Committee, Trust Council and key staff, and that is operationalized through multi-year work plans, budget requests, and program-specific implementation plans. Update: not supported in Trust Council budget. Will require new business case drafted next fiscal. Target date amended.	Stefan Cermak William Shulba	Target: 29-Mar-2029	In Progress

07-Feb-2025

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
10%	1 RPC recommend that Trust Council request staff to revise policy 6.5.4 "Grants and Donations Administration" to develop clear guidance for staff and Trust bodies when applying for external grant funding opportunities by aligning approval limits with procurement policies and to establish clear approval and reporting processes.	David Marlor	Target: 31-Dec-2026	In Progress

Follow Up Action Report

Regional Planning Committee

18-Jul-2025

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
9%	1 Staff to report back to Regional Planning Committee on Trust Council policies, held by the Director of Planning Services, to address Trust Council's key initiative to review, and where appropriate, amend, combine or rescind policies, and to prioritize the crown referrals procedure.	David Marlor Stefan Cermak	Target: 31-Dec-2026	In Progress
76%	2 that Regional Planning Committee request staff amend the eelgrass mapping business case to include an option to partner with First Nations' marine divisions and other relevant organizations in the Trust Area toward completing the work. (COMPLETE) that Regional Planning Committee request that the business case for the Development of a Growth Management Planning Framework be revised as a multi-year strategy, and that staff assess how the biologist's work on ecosystem indicators, and build out maps and suitable land analysis tools be incorporated in that framework, before the next stages are envisioned. (TC did not support resources to do this work)	Clare Frater Stefan Cermak	Target: 31-Dec-2026	In Progress

Follow Up Action Report

Regional Planning Committee

08-Sep-2025

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
31%	1 that Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Trust Programs Committee resolution TPC-2025-063 and requests staff to develop a business case with appropriate budget for Phase 1 (initial development) of a multi year project related to ecosystem health and community resiliency indicators, scoping in relevant agencies, academics, First Nations partners, that will co-develop the project framework and methodology. (TPC taking lead) that Regional Planning Committee request staff to develop a strategy for long-term funding, investigation of the use of reserve funds, including funding partnerships and potential grants, as indicated in resolution TPC-2025-063.	Clare Frater Stefan Cermak		In Progress

01-May-2026

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
100%	1 that the Regional Planning Committee request the Land Information Screening Tool staff report be amended as a Request for Decision and forwarded to Trust Council for consideration, discussion, and next steps.	Stefan Cermak	Target: 30-Sep-2026	Completed
100%	2 that Regional Planning Committee request staff to strengthen the minor project criteria to include a clear, explicit Trust-wide resource allocation lens. This should consider: ·overall demand on planning resources, ·community scale and complexity, and ·alignment with federation-wide priorities.	Stefan Cermak	Target: 30-Sep-2026	Completed

Follow Up Action Report

Regional Planning Committee

24-Jul-2026

Progress	Activity	Responsibility	Dates	Status
100%	1 that the Regional Planning Committee forward this Request for Decision and its amended attachments to Islands Trust Council recommending that Islands Trust Council: ·Receive the Species at Risk - State of the Islands report, ·Endorse staff use of the Species at Risk - State of the Islands report, and the model natural environment Development Permit Area as operational technical inputs when advising Local Trust Committees and preparing bylaw updates, ·Endorse staff use of the Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports as a staff operational standard, ·Request staff to prepare an internal communications policy to improve how the methodology and rationale behind the Land Information Screening Tool are communicated in staff reports, presentations, and related projects, ·Request staff to expand and refine the Land Information Screening Tool content in the Housing Options Toolkit by adding a more technical summary of the tool's methodology, rationale, and intended use to complement the current plain-language version posted online as Tool 4 - Land Information Screening Tool.	Stefan Cermak	Target: 09-Sep-2026	Completed
100%	2 that the Regional Planning Committee request staff to draft a business case with options for retaining ongoing biological services.	Stefan Cermak	Target: 09-Sep-2026	Completed
100%	3 that the Regional Planning Committee request staff to forward the briefing on Regional Planning Team Major Project work, as well as the updated minor project work criteria, to Trust Council.	Stefan Cermak	Target: 09-Sep-2026	Completed

REQUEST FOR DECISION

To: Regional Planning Committee **For the Meeting of:** September 26, 2026
From: Planning Services **Date Prepared:** August 17, 2026
SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2027/28 Business Case

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Regional Planning Committee forward the attached Biologist Services business case to the Financial Planning Committee for consideration in the Fiscal Year 2027/28 budget.

1 PURPOSE: For the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) to consider the attached business case outlining options for retaining ongoing biological expertise within Planning Services, as directed by RPC at its July 24, 2026 meeting.

2 BACKGROUND:

At its July 24, 2026 meeting, RPC reviewed the deliverables produced by the temporary biologist funded through Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) from February 2025 to March 2026. These deliverables included:

- Species at Risk – State of the Islands report
- Model Natural Environment Development Permit Area
- Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports
- Updates to the Land Information Screening Tool (LIST)
- Updated OCP/DPA wording for Denman and Gabriola OCP amendment projects.

RPC subsequently passed the following resolution:

That the Regional Planning Committee request staff to draft a business case with options for retaining ongoing biological expertise.

The attached business case responds to that direction. It outlines several service models ranging from contracted “as-needed” biological review to part-time or full-time staffing. The recommended option is a 0.5 FTE permanent or an “as and when” biologist, balancing cost, continuity, and political feasibility.

The business case also reflects the operational context identified in the CAO’s *Operational Review* (November 2025), which concluded that Islands Trust faces “significant operational challenges” and “not sufficient capacity to do all the work that is currently expected and needed.” Retaining biological expertise directly supports Strategic Plan initiatives related to ecosystem health indicators, cumulative impacts, shoreline protection, and First Nations stewardship.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

ORGANIZATIONAL:

Retaining biological expertise will support planners in ecological review, improve consistency across the Trust Area, and strengthen evidence-based planning. It will also enhance coordination between Planning Services and Islands Trust Conservancy.

FINANCIAL:

The recommended option (0.5FTE biologist) is estimated at \$60,000 annually, depending on final FTE level with additional costs in the first year for ensuring proper equipment such as a laptop computer. Contractor-only models are significantly more expensive on a per-hour basis and provide limited continuity.

POLICY:

There are no policy implications associated with forwarding the Biologist Services business case to the Financial Planning Committee. The recommendation does not amend existing Islands Trust policies or bylaws and is consistent with the standard budget process under Policy 6.3.1.

IMPLEMENTATION/COMMUNICATIONS:

If forwarded to the Financial Planning Committee, the business case will be considered alongside other fiscal year 2027/28 budget requests.

FIRST NATIONS:

Retaining biological expertise strengthens the Trust's ability to integrate ecological data with First Nations stewardship priorities and supports collaborative work on culturally significant species and ecosystems.

4 RELEVANT POLICY(S):

Policy 6.3.1 Budget Process
Policy 6.5.3 Procurement

5 ATTACHMENT(S):

Business Case: Biologist Services

RESPONSE OPTIONS

Recommendation:

That the Regional Planning Committee forward the attached Biologist Services business case to the Financial Planning Committee for consideration in the Fiscal Year 2027/28 budget.

Alternatives:

Amend the business case

That the Regional Planning Committee amend the Biologist Services business case by: – [adding, deleting, rewording]... And forward the amended business case to the Financial Planning Committee.

Do not forward the business case

That the Regional Planning Committee not forward the Biologist Services business case to the Financial Planning Committee at this time.

Prepared By: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services



TO BE COMPLETED BY INITIATOR

Requested by:

Regional Planning Committee

Department:

Planning Services

Name of Request:

- **Biologist Services**

\$ Value of Request (indicate by fiscal year and total if project is multi-year):

\$61,800 (2027/28)

Budget Source (select all that apply):

- ☐ **Specific Project Funding** (select all that apply)
- ☐ Third Party Contractors
 - ☐ Staff Travel Expense
 - ☐ Staff Overtime Expense
 - ☐ New Staff Member – Temporary for project
 - ☐ Computer Hardware/Software

☐ **Furniture (Finance) & Tech. Equipment (IS)**

X Computer Hardware/Software/Supplies

☐ **New Staff Resources** (see Staff Costing Tool)

X Permanent Part Time

☐ **Temporary**

Temp Duration: _____

☐ **Other Funding Sources (i.e. grants) – please describe:** _____

Date of Submission to Finance:

Funding Required for (date range):

\$60,000 / year: April 1, 2027 - onwards

\$1,800 – one time expenses

TIE TO ISLANDS TRUST GUIDING DOCUMENTS:

- **Islands Trust Act, Section 3:** The object of the Trust is “to preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of residents... and of the Province generally.”
- **Trust Council Strategic Plan 2025–28:**
 - 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3 – Climate resilience and cumulative impacts.
 - 3.2.1–3.2.4 – Identify and monitor ecosystem health indicators.
 - 3.3.1 – Shoreline protection.
 - 4.1.1, 4.1.2 – First Nations engagement in stewardship.
- **Policy Statement:** Directives on ecosystem protection, cumulative impacts, and reconciliation.
- **Islands Trust Conservancy science priorities:** Ecosystem mapping, conservation analysis.
- **Local Trust Committee Work Programs:** Require ecological expertise to inform land use bylaws, OCP updates, and policy development.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:

The Islands Trust hired a temporary biologist from February 2025 to March 2026 through an Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) grant. The temporary role delivered a suite of high-value products that directly support Trust Council’s Strategic Plan and the legislated preserve-and-protect mandate.

Deliverables included (but were not limited to):

- Species at Risk – State of the Islands report
- A model natural environment Development Permit Area
- Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports

The Biologist also:

- Supported planners with ecological review outside their expertise
- Ensured consistent, science-based advice across the Trust Area
- Provided professional biologist input into key initiatives including the Land Information Screening Tool (Tool 4 within the Housing Options Toolkit) and researching indicators and related data for Trust Council’s Strategic Plan
- Strengthened relationships and collaboration with NGOs, community groups, partner governments and between the Islands Trust Conservancy and Planning Services.

At its July 24, 2026 meeting, the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) reviewed these deliverables and requested staff to forward them to Trust Council and to prepare a business case outlining options for retaining ongoing biological expertise. The Committee’s request reflects both the demonstrated value of ecological expertise and the operational reality identified in the CAO’s *Operational Review*—specifically, that Islands Trust faces “significant operational challenges” and “not sufficient capacity to do all the work that is currently expected and needed.”

The opportunity is to retain biological expertise in a way that is financially realistic, politically viable, and operationally effective. The challenge is that Trust Council has mixed views: some trustees strongly support integrating biological expertise into planning services, while others are reluctant to support any initiative that increases taxes or does not align with preferred outcomes such as a specific GIS platform or institutional partnership.

This business case presents options that balance cost, capacity, and political feasibility.

PROJECTED RESULTS / DELIVERABLES:

Retaining biologist services—whether through staff or contracted support—will:

- Advance Trust Council Strategic Plan priorities (2.1.1–2.1.3, 3.2.1–3.2.4, 3.3.1, 4.1.1–4.1.2).
- Improve ecological review of planning applications, bylaws, and projects.
- Strengthen alignment with First Nations and intergovernmental partners.
- Increase planner efficiency and reduce delays for applicants.
- Provide more equitable, predictable review of environmental reports.
- Enhance public trust in the Trust’s ability to deliver on its legislated mandate.

These outcomes mirror those achieved by the temporary biologist and respond to the capacity issues identified in the CAO’s *Operational Review*.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Option 1: Create a “Professional Biologist Service” business line item (Retainer Model)

Benefits — Flexible; allows hiring specialized biologists (e.g., marine, SAR specialists) as needed; aligns with the Trust Council Chair’s preference for “as-needed” expertise.

Risks — High cost. Private firm rates are 2–3× internal salary equivalents. For example:

- Intermediate Biologist: \$120–\$135/hour
- Senior Biologist: \$135–\$175/hour (and up)

Financial implications — A \$20,000–\$30,000 annual allocation buys only ~60–150 hours of work per year. This is insufficient for ongoing ecological review, relationship-building, or strategic plan implementation.

Resource requirements — Ongoing contract management; repeated onboarding; limited continuity.

Other implications — Does not build institutional knowledge; inconsistent availability; may satisfy trustees opposed to staffing increases but provides minimal operational value.

Option 2: Hire a Full-Time Permanent Biologist (1.0 FTE)

Benefits — Highest value; consistent, science-based expertise; strong institutional knowledge; efficient support for planners; direct implementation of Strategic Plan priorities.

Risks — Highest cost; politically challenging given tax sensitivity.

Financial implications — \$115,288 salary/benefits + \$5,075 training/travel

Resource requirements — Standard PSA hiring process.

Other implications — Strong recruitment pool; aligns with CAO’s Operational Review recommendation to add capacity in areas with acute pressures.

Option 3: Hire a Permanent Part-Time Biologist (0.5 FTE)

Benefits — Lower cost; maintains continuity; avoids repeated onboarding; provides predictable availability.

Risks — Uncertain candidate interest; may not meet full demand.

Financial implications — \$60,000

Resource requirements — Similar hiring effort to permanent role.

Other implications — Politically more feasible; provides meaningful capacity without full cost. Hiring an “As and When” Biologist for the same number of hours incurs higher costs (+\$3,000/year) due to higher leave compensation paid out vs. opportunity for leave.

Option 4: Replace a Planner (or other staff) with a Full-Time Biologist

Benefits — Budget-neutral.

Risks — Reduces planning capacity; contradicts CAO’s Operational Review (“there is not sufficient capacity to do all the work that is currently expected and needed”).

Financial implications — No net increase.

Resource requirements — Reassignment of position.

Other implications — Operationally risky; may be politically attractive but undermines core planning functions.

Option 5: Do Nothing

Benefits — No new budget allocation.

Risks — Planners continue ecological review outside their expertise; slower processes; increased risk of weak or challenged decisions; diminished credibility.

Financial implications — \$0 direct cost; significant indirect costs borne by applicants and staff capacity.

Other implications — Does not address Strategic Plan commitments.

RECOMMENDED OPTION RATIONALE:**Option 3: Hire a Permanent Part Time or “As-and-When” Biologist (0.5 FTE)**

This option balances cost, continuity, and political feasibility. It provides meaningful ecological capacity, supports Strategic Plan implementation, and avoids the high cost and low continuity of contractor-only models. It also responds to the CAO’s Operational Review, which identifies capacity as the core organizational issue.

If Trust Council cannot support a full FTE, a 0.5 FTE provides a viable middle ground that maintains institutional knowledge and supports planners while staying within a politically tolerable cost range.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

- Financial risk — Contractor-only models risk cost overruns; permanent staff require stable funding.
- Operational risk — Without professional ecological expertise, planners face increased workload and higher risk of errors.
- Reputational risk — Weak ecological review undermines public trust and First Nations relationships.
- Strategic risk — Inability to deliver on Strategic Plan priorities.
- Mitigation — Adopt a hybrid model (Option 3) that provides core capacity and allows targeted contracting for specialized needs.

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

Quantitative

- Permanent biologist (1.0 FTE): ~\$120,000/year.
- “As-and-When” or Part time biologist (0.5 FTE): ~\$62,000/year.
- Contractor rates: \$120–\$175/hour (2–3× internal cost).
- Planner efficiency gains.
- Risk avoidance: \$25,000–\$50,000+ per avoided challenge.

Qualitative

- Advances preserve-and-protect mandate.
- Strengthens relationships with First Nations, ENGOs, and ITC.
- Improves public confidence.
- Provides consistent, equitable ecological review.
- Builds institutional knowledge.

PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE:

- If hiring staff: PSA competition (internal or external).
- If contracting: Procurement process will be dependent on approved scope and amount; requires ongoing contract management and creation of administrative coordination processes

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

- Budget approval: March 2027.
- Hiring/contract initiation: April–July 2027.
- Integration with Planning Services and Islands Trust Conservancy: July–September 2027.
- Annual review of service level and demand.

STAFF RESOURCING:

- Director, Planning Services: 30–40 hours (competition, onboarding).
- Employee Services Coordinator: 10–15 hours.
- Interview panel: 1.5 hours/interviewee.
- Cross-department orientation: 1 week.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION:

- Internal communication upon approval.
- Coordination with Islands Trust Conservancy and First Nations.
- Clear messaging to trustees on cost-efficiency and Strategic Plan alignment.
- Annual reporting to RPC and Trust Council on ecological service usage.

Requested by Regional Planning Committee

Prepared by Stefan Cermak, Director Planning Services / August 17, 2026

Approving Director's signature

Date Director Approved



Islands Trust

JOB PROFILE

Position # 00142613

Title:	Biologist (Part-time)	Classification:	Biologist 24
Ministry:	Islands Trust; Ministry of Municipal Affairs	Work Unit:	Planning Services
Supervisor Title:	Director, Planning Services	Supervisor Position #:	00036528

PROGRAM

Located in Coast Salish territory, the Islands Trust is a special purpose government responsible for protecting the unique amenities and environment of more than 450 islands and surrounding waters in the southern Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound. Created by the Province via the Islands Trust Act, Islands Trust plans and regulates local land use, coordinates with other level of government and First Nations on key issues impacting the area, and protects land through the Islands Trust Conservancy.

JOB OVERVIEW

The purpose of this position is to enhance integration of biological information into land use decisions in the Islands Trust Area with an emphasis on ensuring that biological information and species at risk are more adequately considered and protected during decision-making, including with regards to development applications and bylaw development/amendment.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

- Recommend land use and environmental policy for the preservation of ecosystems and mitigation of human impact for long range and special planning projects such as Official Community Plans, zoning bylaws, regional plans, and Island Trust Policy Statement implementation and amendment.
- Review and evaluate development applications, environmental assessments and other referrals in accordance with bylaws, policies and regulations and provide recommendations for ongoing monitoring for compliance with environmental and ecosystem protection.
- Develop report content for reports on development applications and specific assignments.
- Advise staff and public of matters relating to land use and environmental conservation and integrity.
- Assist Director of Planning Services or designate with environmental advice, mapping and technical information where required relating to ecosystems/species at risk.
- Coordinate and manage projects updating strategic biological information (e.g. eelgrass mapping, forest contiguity mapping, species at risk surveys).
- Support refinement/updating of computer models that inform the integration of values into major land use decisions.
- Develop interpretation criteria (e.g.: checklists, information sheets, etc.) for development permit areas and exemptions.
- Develop procedures to ensure staff are recommending actions identified within species at risk recovery plans.
- Develop and implement a training program for staff in interpreting ecosystem mapping layers.
- Develop long range education program for planners to increase knowledge, awareness and skills related to planning and managing for ecological values including biological, technical and regulatory advice.

- Assist the Director of Planning Services or designate with relevant grant administration, reporting, and writing.
- Develops and promotes working relationships with internal and external partners, including First Nations/Indigenous Knowledge Holders, and government agencies to achieve program or project objectives regarding species at risk, ecosystem protection, and informed land use planning.

JOB REQUIREMENTS

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE:

- Degree in biological sciences or equivalent
- Registration in good standing with the BC College of Applied Biologists
- Minimum of 3 years of increasingly responsible professional environmental management experience
- Minimum of 1 year experience in conducting environmental monitoring and assessments

Provisos:

- Valid B.C. driver's licence, or ability to obtain a valid B.C. driver's license within 3 months of hire
- Successful completion a criminal records check.

Preference may be given to candidates with the following:

- Professional research and reporting of species at risk in the Islands Trust Area
- Experience enhancing integration of biological information into land use decisions
- One or more years' experience working for/with local governments to ensure that species at risk are more adequately considered and protected during decision-making
- One or more years' experience in project management
- One or more years' experience working with First Nation governments and/or Indigenous Peoples
- One or more years' experience in providing training
- Experience with public engagement, and/or communications
- Registered, or eligible, as a Registered Professional Planner (RPP/CIPP)

BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES:

Planning, Organizing and Coordinating involves proactively planning, establishing priorities and allocating resources. It is expressed by developing and implementing increasingly complex plans. It also involves monitoring and adjusting work to accomplish goals and deliver to the organization's mandate.

Teamwork and Co-operation is the ability to work co-operatively within diverse teams, work groups and across the organization to achieve group and organizational goals. It includes the desire and ability to understand and respond effectively to other people from diverse backgrounds with diverse views.

Engaging External Partners identifies and involves external stakeholders in order to foster long term partnerships.

Expertise includes the motivation to expand and use technical knowledge or to distribute work-related information to others.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCY:

Sustained Learning and Development means continually increasing your ability to build and maintain respectful and effective relationships with Aboriginal people. Central to this competency is appreciating that there are many other cultural understandings of knowledge and ways of working that have legitimacy and deserve respect – and therefore require our continual learning and development, including direct exposure to cultural and community ways. It includes an eagerness to continually reflect upon and assess your own level of cultural agility and competence, self-

awareness, and expertise. It means being willing to learn in new and different ways and appreciating how diverse ways of thinking and acting can ensure the success of the BC Public Service in supporting Aboriginal self-determination.



BRIEFING

To: Regional Planning Committee **For the Meeting of:** September 25, 2026

From: Stefan Cermak
Director, Planning Services **Date Prepared:** September 18, 2026

SUBJECT: Summaries of RPC Highlights from Trust Council Annual Reports for the 2022-2026 Term

PURPOSE: To provide the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) with a summary of work completed during the 2022–2026 term. This summary is intended to stimulate discussion regarding RPC accomplishments, lessons learned, and key messages to share with the incoming Regional Planning Committee.

BACKGROUND: The Chair of the Regional Planning Committee has requested background information to help guide discussions on key messages for the incoming RPC. To assist the Chair, staff have compiled the RPC-approved annual highlights from the Islands Trust Annual Reports for the 2022–2026 term. Because the final annual report for the current year is still in development, staff have included the most recent report submitted to Trust Council summarizing this year's completed work.

ATTACHMENT(S):

- Summaries of RPC Highlights from Trust Council Annual Reports for the 2022-2026 Term

FOLLOW-UP:

Staff will continue to work with the RPC Chair as requested.

Prepared By: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services

Summaries of RPC Highlights from Trust Council Annual Reports for the 2022-2026 Term

Role

The Regional Planning Committee (RPC) provides policy and planning advice to Trust Council by identifying and reporting on emerging issues related to the committee's areas of responsibility: development management, community planning, and sustainable community. The committee also develops guidelines, policies, and models for use by staff and local trust committees.

Members serving during the 2022–26 term are:

- › Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island (Chair: 2022-2025)
- › Sam Borthwick, Denman Island (Vice-Chair)
- › Alex Allen, Hornby Island
- › Mairead Boland, Saturna Island (Chair: 2025 - 2026)
- › Aaron Campbell, North Pender Island
- › David Graham, Denman Island
- › Mikaila Lironi, Lasqueti Island
- › Tobi Elliott, Gabriola Island (Executive Committee Representative)
- › Peter Luckham, Thetis Island, Islands Trust Chair (Ex Officio Member)

Ex-officio member of RPC changed:

- *Peter Luckham resigned as Islands Trust Council Chair in March, 2025.*
- *Laura Patrick was elected as Islands Trust Council Chair in March, 2025.*

Resigned from RPC in 2025/26:

- Alex Allen, Hornby Island
- Mikaila Lironi, Lasqueti Island

HIGHLIGHTS

2022–23 Highlights

In the 2022–23 fiscal year, the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) completed the following Strategic Plan items and presented them to Trust Council:

- Completed Groundwater Mapping Assessment for Galiano, Mayne, North Pender, Saturna, and South Pender Islands
- Received a Shorezone Polygon Mapping Summary Report “Eelgrass in the Gulf Islands Trust Area”
- Applied Healthy Watersheds Initiative Funding toward a video: “Indigenous Perspectives on Water”
- Completed Heritage Conservation Overlay Mapping Phase 1. Phase 1 concluded with a report illustrating the importance of the work, approach, and data required to develop a planned project approach toward managing heritage. It defined the study area, cultural heritage, legislation, and a data dictionary. Phase 1 also drafted a project and engagement plan for phase 2
- Trust Council adopted RPC sponsored policy amendments and an adoption to increase efficiency and effectiveness of Planning Services including:
 - Best Management Practices for Delivery of Local Planning Services (Policy 5.9.1). Amended June, 2022
 - Delegation of Land Use Permits (Policy 4.1.15). Adopted June, 2022
 - Priority Setting/Review Guidelines (Policy 6.2.1). Amended Sept, 2022
 - Following the election, Regional Planning Committee also funded a Housing Forum for staff, and provided orientation to the RPC to trustees

2023/24 Highlights

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the Regional Planning Committee completed the following Strategic Plan items and presented them to Islands Trust Council:

- Received a Housing Needs Reports Gaps Analysis
- Received (on behalf of the Islands Trust) a grant to update all local trust committee Housing Needs Reports
- Completed a comprehensive Housing Options Toolkit that provides local trustees, planning staff and community groups with resources for implementation of housing-related projects
- Trust Council adopted a Housing Strategic Action Plan
- The Regional Planning Committee and Trust Programs Committee created a Montreal Pledge COP15 Biodiversity Framework working group
- Staff implemented Regional Planning Committee-sponsored policy amendments to increase efficiency and effectiveness of Planning Services including creation and use of a new Regional Planning Team and new Current Planning Team as per:
 - Best Management Practices for Delivery of Local Planning Services to Local Trust Committees (Policy 5.9.1)
 - Delegation of Land Use Permits (Policy 4.1.15)

- Priority Setting/Review Guidelines (Policy 6.2.1)

2024/25 Highlights

In the 2024/25 fiscal year, the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) completed the following Strategic Plan items:

Housing Strategy Action Plan

- Contracted Housing Needs Reports for each of the 13 local trust areas
- Created a steering and technical committee in collaboration with other jurisdictions and experts to explore Tiny Homes on Wheels barriers and solutions
- Received a Tiny Homes on Wheels Enablement Project report
- Advanced draft deliverables within the Housing Strategic Action Plan including a Suitable Land Analysis for Gabriola, Denman, and Mayne Island Local Trust Committee major projects

Freshwater Sustainability Strategy

- Advanced the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy through various local trust committee (LTC) major projects amending respective Official Community Plans and Land Use Bylaws including:
- Development of a Freshwater Footprint methodology (Gabriola Island LTC)
- Development of watershed resiliency mapping (within Suitable Land Analysis for the Gabriola, Denman, and Mayne Island LTCs)
- Submitted a grant application for up to \$400,000, over two years, from the Watershed Security Fund, to implement key initiatives under the Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy, including staffing, consulting, and technical resources to undertake the following projects and initiatives:
 - Islands Trust Area Freshwater Footprint
 - Islands Trust Area Watershed Resiliency Mapping
 - Freshwater Sustainability Regulatory and Policy Audit
 - Freshwater Helpdesk
 - Islands Trust Freshwater Atlas
 - Freshwater Sustainability Technical Advisory Committee
 - Watershed governance

Bylaw Enforcement

- Reviewed revisions to Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement policies and procedures including:
 - Trust Council Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1
 - Best Practices Manual

Other

- Reviewed Annex 1 of the Islands Trust Governance Review (2022)
- Reviewed a Community Engagement Framework template

2025/26 Highlights

In the 2025/26 fiscal year, the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) completed the activities related to the following Islands Trust Strategic Plan items:

Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy Review

- Extensively reviewed and endorsed revisions to Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement policies and procedures including:
 - Islands Trust Council Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1
 - Islands Trust Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement Best Practices Manual
 - Implementation plan

Housing Strategy Action Plan

- Revised the Housing Options Toolkit
- Revised the Housing Strategic Action Plan
- Completed an Engagement Framework template
- Completed creation of a housing-related definition for model Land Use Bylaws
- Received the Tiny Homes on Wheels Enablement Project final report and AVICC presentation materials
- Received the Islands Trust Housing Needs Reports

Protection of Ecosystem Health in All Land Use Planning Decisions

- Received two presentations from a Registered Biologist funded through an Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) grant to support species-at-risk recovery by strengthening the integration of biological information into Islands Trust decision-making and projects

Freshwater Sustainability Strategy

- Advanced the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy (FWSS) through various local trust committee (LTC) major projects amending respective Official Community Plans and Land Use Bylaws including:
 - Development of a Freshwater Footprint methodology for the Gabriola Island LTC

- Development of watershed resiliency mapping for the Gabriola; Denman; and Mayne Island LTCs
- Received a demonstration of an online Freshwater Atlas

During this period, the Committee also reviewed Minor Project Criteria in order to advise Islands Trust Council on the provision and allocation of resources to deliver planning services.

2026/27 (Q1 summary)

Directors Reports to Trust Council summarizing RPC work advancing Trust Council's top priorities:

September 2026

1. Regional Planning Committee

Work completed on the following Trust Council approved top priorities:

~ Freshwater Sustainability Strategy:

- RPC received updates on the *Freshwater Footprint* Gabriola case study which is complete and its products have been delivered into the Gabriola Island Official Community Plan (OCP) review, and was received at the Local Trust Committee regular meeting of July 16, 2026. The update summarised the milestone, its significance for the *Freshwater Sustainability Strategy*, and its transferability to other islands, and provided links to the public record including a frequently asked questions document.
- RPC received updates on the *Freshwater Atlas* summarizing the methodology by which it has been assembled and its metadata harmonised with the corporate standard, themes within, and the staged timeline to public rollout beginning in September 2026.
- Staff continue to respond to numerous enquiries from Thetis Island Local Trust Area regarding relevant available layers of information.
- Staff will shortly be posting competitions or issuing award for services to review the Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy, draft a Freshwater Footprint Technical Assessment for Salt Spring Island and to conduct a Salt Spring Island Detailed Watershed Resiliency Assessment.

~ Monitor Progress of Protection of Ecosystem Health in All Land Use Planning Decisions:

- RPC received, and forwarded to Trust Council, a coherent set of tools to strengthen ecosystem-informed planning completed by the Environment and Climate Change Canada–funded Biologist (Feb 2025–Mar 2026).
- Amongst the numerous tools, the Biologist added her expertise to the Land Information Screening Tool (LIST). RPC discussed this tool and requested options and recommendations to improve communications on the methodology and rationale used to create models in the LIST and that these can accompany any public release of maps or models that support LTC projects.
- RPC received a report providing the requested options. RPC did not recommend that Trust Council endorse staff use of the use tool; instead RPC requested staff prepare an internal communications policy to improve how the methodology and rationale behind the Land Information Screening Tool are communicated in staff reports, presentations, and related projects.
- RPC also requested staff to expand and refine the Land Information Screening Tool content in the Housing Options Toolkit by adding a more technical summary of the tool's methodology, rationale, and intended use to complement the current plain-language version posted online as Tool 4 - Land Information Screening Tool. Staff had included the technical summary, plain language version, and additional powerpoint presentation in the report to Trust Council but the Executive Committee requested it removed from the report.

Work completed on the following:

~ **Major and Minor Project Work Overview and Updates:**

- RPC received an overview of the major project work of the Regional Planning Team, including scope, criteria for prioritization, and roles and responsibilities. RPC forwarded the overview, along with similar updates to minor project work, to Trust Council.

Active Projects Report

Regional Planning Committee

1. *Implement the Housing Strategic Action Plan (Strategic Plan Key Initiative 2.3.2)*

Activity:

Trust Council:

-Requested staff to prepare an internal communications policy to improve how the methodology and rationale behind the Land Information Screening Tool are communicated in staff reports, presentations, and related projects

- Requested staff to expand and refine the Land Information Screening Tool content in the Housing Options Toolkit by adding a more technical summary of the tool's methodology, rationale, and intended use to complement the current plain-language version posted online as Tool 4 - Land Information Screening Tool.

Responsible

Stefan Cermak

Dates

Rec'd: 01-May-2026

Target: 31-Mar-2027

2. *Update and Implement Freshwater Sustainability Strategy (2022-2032) (Strategic Plan Initiative 2.1.3)*

Activity:

- a. Independent review and update
- b. Draft an Implementation Plan
- c. Freshwater Atlas Update

Responsible

Stefan Cermak

William Shulba

Dates

Rec'd: 12-Feb-2020

Target: 31-Mar-2027

Active Projects Report

Regional Planning Committee

3. *Monitor progress of protection of ecosystem health in all land use planning decisions (Strategic Plan Initiative 3.2.4)*

Responsible

Dates

Activity:

Staff Biologist recommendations of how to integrate biological information into planning forwarded to Trust Council (Sept. 2026).

Trust Council:

- Received the Draft Species at Risk - State of the Islands report,
- Endorse staff use of the Species at Risk - State of the Islands report, as an operational technical input when advising Local Trust Committees and preparing bylaw updates.
- Amended the model natural environment Development Permit Area by amending the designation to clarify the DPA would not apply to the entire Trust Area, but would instead be available for individual LTCs to consider for adoption.
- Requested staff to bring the draft model natural environment Development Permit Area back to Trust Council for consideration, once amended.
- Endorse staff use of the Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports as a staff operational standard
- Request staff to prepare an internal communications policy to improve how the methodology and rationale behind the Land Information Screening Tool are communicated in staff reports, presentations, and related projects
- Request staff to expand and refine the Land Information Screening Tool content in the Housing Options Toolkit by adding a more technical summary of the tool's methodology, rationale, and intended use to complement the current plain-language version posted

Patricia Woodruff
Stefan Cermak

Rec'd: 31-Mar-2025
Target: 11-Sep-2026



Print Date: September 18, 2026

Follow Up Action List

Active Projects Report

Regional Planning Committee

online as Tool 4 - Land Information Screening Tool.

Future Projects Report

Regional Planning Committee

1. Review all Trust Council policies, and where appropriate, amend, combine, or rescind (all committees) (Strategic Plan Initiative 1.2.5)

Responsible

Date Received

Review and report to RPC.

Stefan Cermak

31-Mar-2025

All Trust Council policies held by the Director of Planning Services:

- Policy 4.1.4; 4.1.9; 4.1.13; 4.1.14; 4.1.15 (General LTC policies)
- Policy 4.2.2 (APC Operating Policy)*
- Policy 5.3.1; 5.3.2; 5.3.3; 5.3.5 (Community Planning)
- Policy 5.4.1; 5.4.2; 5.4.3; 5.4.4 (Land Use Regulation)
- Policy 5.5.1 (Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement)
- Policy 5.6.1 (Application Processing)
- Policy 5.7.1 (Policy Statement Checklist)
- Policy 5.9.1; 5.9.2 (Best Management Practices and Outer Islands)
- Policy 6.1.1 (First Nations Engagement Principles)

* Being lead by Director of Legislative and Information Services while reporting to Governance Committee

2. Improve processes for prioritizing funding for ongoing OCP reviews (Strategic Plan Initiative 2.2.1)

Responsible

Date Received

RPC continue to refine prioritization matrix.

Stefan Cermak

31-Mar-2025

Matrix reviewed numerous times. Minor project prioritization criteria reviewed by RPC Jan. & May 2026.

RPT developing process for consideration of 2027/28 major project business cases.

First Nations Capacity Funding policies and honorariums being considered via Finance and Trust Council

Future Projects Report

Regional Planning Committee

3. *Map Eelgrass and kelp forests (Strategic Plan Initiative 3.3.1)*

Responsible

Date Received

Partner with First Nations' marine divisions and other relevant organizations in the Trust Area toward completing the work.

Stefan Cermak

03-Feb-2020

Maintain contact and retrieve data from with consultants (Hatfield) funded by the Canada Space Agency Hatfield to lead the design and development of the Eelgrass Explorer (E2) system for mapping eelgrass in the intertidal areas across the entire British Columbia coast. Expected 10m resolution data available target date: May 2027.
Exploring Information sharing with UBCs Martin Conservation Decisions Lab - data includes possible eelgrass and kelp mapping.

4. *Update OCPs and LUBs to incorporate new Policy Statement policies (Strategic Plan Initiative 2.2.2)*

Responsible

Date Received

Stefan Cermak

31-Mar-2025

5. *Develop a growth management planning framework that includes data on growth trends and projections, geological and hydrological capacities, infrastructure, and development rates (Strategic Plan Initiative*

Responsible

Date Received

Future Projects Report

Regional Planning Committee

·Draft a business case, for phase 1 (initial development), of a multi-year project. Co develop with partners. Develop with a funding strategy (grants, reserve funds, partnerships, etc).

Stefan Cermak

31-Mar-2025

·Developed a business case with TAS and TPC: *Trust Area Resilience Assessment Initiative*.

·March 2026: Trust council does not support Business Case as per approved Operational Review (September 2025).

6. *Update OCPs and LUBs to foster climate change resilience (considering topics such as Coastal Douglas-fir protection, foreshore and nearshore environments, and groundwater) (Strategic Plan Initiative 4.2.3)*

Responsible

Date Received

Strategic Plan assigned key initiative to: LTCs

Stefan Cermak

31-Mar-2025

Exploring Information sharing with UBCs Martin Conservation Decisions Lab

Exploring grant funding for onland flood mapping