



Islands Trust

Regional Planning Committee Agenda

Date: Monday, September 8, 2025
Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 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. BUSINESS - WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

4.1 Revised Fiscal Year 2026/27 Business Cases - Request For Decision

2 - 23

1. That Regional Planning Committee proceed no further with a business case for eelgrass and kelp forest mapping due to federal mapping efforts and request staff to pursue data sharing agreements where feasible.

2. That Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Trust Programs Committee Resolution *TPC-2025-063* to add \$150,000 to the draft 2026/27 budget to support advancement of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan as shown in the Request for Decision to Trust Programs Committee received at their July 30, 2025 regular business meeting.

3. That Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Islands Trust Conservancy Board, Executive Committee, and Financial Planning Committee resolutions (*ITC-EC-2025-001, EC-2025-094, and FPC-2025-041*) prioritizing resources for a more robust geographic information system in order to advance Trust Council's Strategic Plan.

5. NEXT MEETING

The next Regional Planning Committee meeting is October 31, 2025 at 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

6. ADJOURNMENT

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



REQUEST FOR DECISION

To: Regional Planning Committee **For the Meeting of:** September 8, 2025
From: Planning Services **Date Prepared:** August 28, 2025
SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2026/27 Business Cases - Revised

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Regional Planning Committee proceed no further with a business case for eelgrass and kelp forest mapping due to federal mapping efforts and request staff to pursue data sharing agreements where feasible.
 2. That Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Trust Programs Committee Resolution TPC-2025-063 to add \$150,000 to the draft 2026/27 budget to support advancement of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan as shown in the Request for Decision to Trust Programs Committee received at their July 30, 2025 regular business meeting.
 3. That Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Islands Trust Conservancy Board, Executive Committee, and Financial Planning Committee resolutions (*ITC-EC-2025-001, EC-2025-094, and FPC-2025-041*) prioritizing resources for a more robust geographic information system in order to advance Trust Council's Strategic Plan.
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- 1 **PURPOSE:** For the Regional Planning Committee to consider fiscal year 2026/27 business case revisions it has requested.
- 2 **BACKGROUND:** On July 18, 2025 the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) reviewed three requested business cases:
 - a. Map eelgrass and kelp forests (phase 2).
 - b. Develop a growth management planning framework that includes data on growth trends and projections, geological and hydrological capacities, infrastructure, and development rates.
 - c. Conduct an independent review of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy (FWSS) by a qualified external party and that the scope include, but not be limited to:
 - i. Assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of the strategy to date,
 - ii. Identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement,
 - iii. Evaluating alignment with Trust Council strategic objectives and other key initiatives.

After consideration, RPC forwarded review of the FWSS to the Financial Planning Committee and requested staff to revise both the eelgrass mapping and growth management planning framework business cases. Specifically, the RPC passed the following [draft] resolutions:

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.

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.

Mapping Eelgrass and Kelp Forest Locations – Phase 2

Staff reached out to numerous relevant organizations including Parks Canada, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Seachange Marine Conservation, Dr. Martin from UBC Conservation Decisions Lab, staff from various provincial agencies and select First Nations reported to be mapping in the marine zone. Discussions revealed the following:

- Numerous local NGO's conducting mapping and restoration activities in the marine zone have been using Islands Trust eelgrass and kelp forest mapping as a baseline.
- There are at least two large eelgrass mapping projects being planned at the federal level. One mapping project is intended to quantify "blue carbon" while the other is developing an "Eelgrass Explorer system" designed to monitor healthy ecosystems for fisheries related decisions.
- Staff have not been able to get precise details on the timing, and resolution/scale of mapping but are satisfied that the information will be consistent and useable.
- Malahat First Nation, Snuneymuxw First Nation, and Tsawout First Nation report having done recent relevant but limited mapping. Staff are seeking further understanding of the scope, scale, and subject of mapping and are exploring data sharing agreements where desirable and agreed to.

Staff recommend proceeding no further with a business case for eelgrass and kelp forest mapping based on the new information (especially federal). Staff will continue to report back to RPC and Trust Council on further details as they become available in order to monitor progress of achieving Trust Council's Strategic Plan key initiative # 3.3.1. The eelgrass and kelp forest mapping business case reviewed by RPC at their July 18, 2025 regular business meeting is attached with the only amendment being a note recommending to proceed no further (Attachment 1).

Growth Management Planning Framework

RPC requested the submitted business case to develop a growth management planning framework to 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.

This resolution was shared with Trust Area Services and subsequently the Trust Programs Committee (TPC) during their July 30, 2025 regular business meeting. In that Briefing (attached), it is noted that staff now intend to bring forward, later in the fall, one or more related business cases that address a multi-year, cross-department approach to growth

management/land protection planning and associated indicator development, monitoring and reporting. This will necessarily consider the mapping and information resources required to fully implement the draft Policy Statement (please read full TPC Briefing, prepared July 21, 2025, in Attachment 3). After discussion, TPC passed the following [draft] motion:

That Trust Programs Committee recommend that Financial Planning Committee add \$150,000 to the draft 2026/27 budget to support advancement of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, as of July 2025, key initiatives 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.1, 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, in cooperation with First Nations and in a manner that considers the Islands Trust Conservancy's plans for ecosystem mapping and analysis, through development of a business plan for a multi-year, joint Trust Programs Committee/Regional Planning Committee-led project to fund a:

1. *Consultant (selected via Request for Proposal) to:*
 - *conduct needs assessment and*
 - *develop strategy for:*
 - *data/mapping layer acquisition,*
 - *partnership development,*
 - *data analysis,*
 - *indicator development, monitoring and reporting.*
2. *Capacity funding to support involvement of First Nations' staff in development and implementation of the project.*
3. *Strategy development for long-term funding, investigation of the use of reserve funds, and potential grants. (TPC-2025-063)*

Of note in the TPC resolution is the recommendation for a joint TPC/RPC led project that advances RPC's original business case objective to draft a growth management planning framework (Trust Council Strategic Plan key initiative 2.1.2) with numerous other key initiatives that involve data acquisition and indicator development. Staff are currently assessing the amount of unspent salary savings (primarily from Trust Area Services) in order to hire a consultant to develop a business case that reflects TPC resolution (TAPC-2025-063) on time for December Trust Council. The RPC may consider a resolution supporting the TPC resolution or defer making a resolution till further information is reported back.

The growth management planning framework business case reviewed by RPC at their July 18, 2025 regular business meeting is attached with only an amendment to place a \$150,000 placeholder in support of TPC-2025-063 (Attachment 2).

GIS Resources

RPC may be interested to know that at the July 22, 2025 joint meeting between the Islands Trust Conservancy Board and the Executive Committee there was a robust discussion about the need for a strategic, long-term approach to updating and acquiring new ecosystem information, and for indicator monitoring that considered both financial planning and staffing resources. The Islands Trust Conservancy Board subsequently passed the following [draft] motion:

That the Islands Trust Conservancy Board indicate its strong support for robust geographic information systems, supported with long-term sustained funding and strategic direction by Islands Trust Council, to assist analysis of trends and development of indicators of ecosystem health, to support sound decision making

in planning, conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. (ITC-EC-2025-001)

And on July 23, 2025 Executive Committee subsequently passed the following motion:

That Executive Committee endorses resolution ITC-EC-2025-001 and recommends it be forwarded to Trust Council for consideration as part of the budget discussion. (EC-2025-094)

Most recently, on August 20, 2025, the Financial Planning Committee passed the following [draft] supporting motion:

That Financial Planning Committee recommend that Trust Council prioritizes support and maintenance for geographic information systems in the development of the 2026/27 budget, as per resolution ITC-EC-2025-001. (FPC-2025-041)

The Islands Trust Conservancy, Executive Committee, and Financial Planning Committee have all indicated support for considering prioritizing geographic information systems. This system is central to advancing Trust Council Strategic Plan and key initiatives being led by TPC and RPC. The RPC may consider a resolution prioritizing resources for a more robust geographic information system in order to advance Trust Council's Strategic Plan.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

ORGANIZATIONAL: Proceeding no further with the eelgrass and kelp forest mapping will allow staff to focus on pursuing data sharing agreements where feasible. RPC support for TPC resolutions to add \$150,000 to the draft 2026/27 budget to support advancement of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan as shown in the Request for Decision to Trust Programs Committee received at their July 30, 2025 regular business meeting will advance RPC's resolution to draft a business case for a multi-year strategy, and which assess how the biologist's work on ecosystem indicators, and build out maps and suitable land analysis tools be incorporated in a growth management planning framework.

FINANCIAL:

Staff currently recommend a placeholder of \$150,000 for next fiscal year as per TPC resolution *TPC-2025-063*. A refined estimate will come with development of a business case in time for consideration at the December 2025 Trust Council.

POLICY:

Policy 6.3.1 Budget Process
Policy 6.5.3 Procurement

IMPLEMENTATION/COMMUNICATIONS:

Business Cases will be advanced to the Financial Planning Committee.

FIRST NATIONS:

Updated eelgrass and kelp forest data will be made available with interested First Nations.

4 RELEVANT POLICY(S):

Policy 6.3.1 Budget Process
Policy 6.5.3 Procurement

5 ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachment 1: Business Case: Phase 2 of Eelgrass and Kelp Forest Mapping

Attachment 2: Business Case: Development of a Growth Management Planning Framework

Attachment 3: TPC Indicator Business Case Briefing, prepared July 21, 2025

RESPONSE OPTIONS

Recommendation:

1. That Regional Planning Committee proceed no further with a business case for eelgrass and kelp forest mapping due to federal mapping efforts and request staff to pursue data sharing agreements where feasible.
2. That Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Trust Programs Committee Resolution TPC-2025-063 to add \$150,000 to the draft 2026/27 budget to support advancement of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan as shown in the Request for Decision to Trust Programs Committee received at their July 30, 2025 regular business meeting.
3. That Regional Planning Committee indicate support for Islands Trust Conservancy Board, Executive Committee, and Financial Planning Committee resolutions (*ITC-EC-2025-001, EC-2025-094, and FPC-2025-041*) prioritizing resources for a more robust geographic information system in order to advance Trust Council's Strategic Plan.

Alternatives:

RPC may ask for further information. This information would return to the next regular scheduled meeting of October 31, 2025.

1. That Regional Planning Committee request staff to provide information regarding:
 - [list specific information]

Prepared By: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services

- protection must be given to the natural processes, habitats and species of the Trust Area, including those of the old forests, Coastal Douglas-fir forests, Coastal Western Hemlock, Garry Oak/Arbutus forests, wetlands, open coastal grasslands, the vegetation of dry rocky areas, lakes, streams, estuaries, tidal flats, salt water marshes, drift sectors¹³, lagoons, and kelp and eel grass beds, and
- planning must account for the cumulative effects of existing and proposed development to avoid detrimental effects on watersheds, groundwater supplies and Trust Area species and habitats.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:

- In 2022, Islands Trust completed Phase 1 of eelgrass mapping using high-resolution aerial imagery collected between 2018–2021. While Phase 1 results were within expectations, 41% of the polygons (representing 682 hectares) require follow-up field verification to be used in land use planning and regulatory processes. Without this confirmation, the data cannot inform policy development, development permit areas, or setback regulations intended to protect sensitive marine ecosystems.
- Mapping eelgrass beds is essential to integrating environmental data into local decision making. Eelgrass is a key shoreline ecosystem that supports biodiversity, stabilizes sediment, and provides habitat for species including salmon and orca. Islands Trust mapping also supports partner organizations in education, restoration, and stewardship efforts.
- In 2012–2014, eelgrass was mapped across the Trust Area using towed underwater cameras in partnership with SeaChange Marine Conservation Society. In 2022, a two-phase business case was approved to update the data. Aerial imagery was used for Phase 1 to define shape, position, and density. Phase 2 was to verify data only in area where polygons were unreliable. The two-phase method is cost-effective, using field surveys only where imagery is inconclusive.
- On September 6, 2023, Regional Planning Committee reviewed a business case for Phase 2. Questions arose regarding cost-effective methods, agency partnerships, and grant funding. Staff were directed to explore external funding and develop a terms of reference. No viable funding sources were identified despite outreach. Staff maintained relationships with partners and monitored mapping initiatives by other agencies.
- Delaying Phase 2 beyond 2026 increases the risk of ecosystem changes that render Phase 1 data obsolete, undermining the cost-effectiveness of the phased approach.

PROJECTED RESULTS/DELIVERABLES:

Complete in-water surveys of 682 ha of low-confidence polygons using proven techniques (towed camera or side scan sonar). This will result in accurate, up-to-date maps that can be integrated into bylaw development, land use planning, and ecosystem protection strategies. The data will also be valuable to First Nations, stewardship groups, and partner agencies.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

Risk: Lack of consistent data across Local Trust Areas
Mitigation: ensure consultant has data acquisition expertise

Risk: Hazardous outdoor mapping
Mitigation: Procurement process requires qualified contractors, insurance, and indemnification

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Option 1: Do Nothing

- Benefits: No cost
- Risks: Phase 1 data remains incomplete and largely unusable; undermines Strategic Plan implementation
- Financial: None

- Resource: None
- Other Implications: Strategic Plan initiative 3.3.1 not achieved; mapping gaps hinder protection of eelgrass and marine ecosystems; missed opportunity to support First Nations and stewardship groups

Option 2: Proceed with Phase 2 Mapping (Recommended)

- Benefits: Data accuracy and completeness; enables regulatory tools and ecosystem protection
- Risks: Complexity of targeting only low-confidence areas may increase field time
- Financial: \$120,000
- Resource: Moderate staff time for procurement and contract management
- Other Implications: Advances First Nations collaboration and conservation objectives; builds continuity with Phase 1 data; fulfils Strategic Plan commitments

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS:

- Timely completion of mapping to maintain Phase 1 relevance
- Accurate, verified spatial data suitable for use in land use bylaws and ecosystem management
- Engagement with stewardship groups and First Nations to enhance use and dissemination of data

RECOMMENDED OPTION:

Option 2: Proceed with Phase 2 mapping using in-water survey methods. This initiative directly fulfils Strategic Plan action 3.3.1. Staff have explored alternative funding sources for two years without success. Further delays risk rendering previous work obsolete, increasing long-term costs and wasting previous resources.

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

Quantitative:

- Cost. \$120,000 based on 2012–14 contract costs adjusted for inflation and recent discussions

Qualitative:

- Strategic Plan initiative completed
- Enables bylaw amendments and improved regulatory tools
- Supports marine ecosystem health and resilience
- Provides critical data for First Nations and stewardship partners

PURCHASING PROCEDURE:

Request for Proposal (RFP) and Service Contract as per procurement policy.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

- April 1, 2026 – post RFP
- May 1, 2026 – initiate contract
- October 2026 – RPC review draft materials
- December 2026 – update Trust Council
- February 2027 – RPC review final report
- March 2027 – Trust Council receives final deliverables

STAFF RESOURCING:

- RFP preparation and review – 40 hours (Director, Planner, Finance, Biologist, GIS)
- Contract Development – 12 hours (Director, Planner, Finance, Biologist)
- Contract Support – 20 hours (Planner, GIS)

- Contract Management – 20 hours (Planner, Director)
- Reporting – 12 hours (Planner, Director)

**These hours have not been evaluated whether or not they are manageable or feasible

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION:

Staff will engage stewardship groups and invite First Nations input during project planning. Final results will be shared broadly and made accessible through existing platforms such as MapIT.

Requested by: Regional Planning Committee

Prepared by: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services / July 11, 2025



Completion of this form initiates a request to the management team, FPC, and ultimately Trust Council for allocation funding in the next fiscal year budget. The form is to be completed and submitted at the start of the decision making process. The business case forms part of the Annual Budget Process (refer to Islands Trust Council Budget Process Policy 6.3.i).

TO BE COMPLETED BY INITIATOR

<p>Requested by: Regional Planning Committee</p>	<p>Budget Source:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific Project Funding (select all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Third Party Contractors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff Travel Expense <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff Overtime Expense <input type="checkbox"/> New Staff Member – Temporary for project <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Hardware/Software <p><input type="checkbox"/> Furniture & Equipment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Computer Hardware/Software/Supplies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Staff Resources (see Staff Costing Tool)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Temp Duration: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other – please describe: _____</p>
<p>Department: Planning Services</p>	
<p>Name of Request: Development of a Growth Management Planning Framework</p>	
<p>\$ Value of Request: 2026/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$211,000 <p>Update: Sept. 10, 2025: \$150,000 placeholder in support of TPC-2025-063</p>	
<p>Date of Submission to Finance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	<p>Funding Required for (date range): April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027</p>

TIE TO ISLANDS TRUST GUIDING DOCUMENTS:

[Islands Trust Strategic Plan 2025–2028](#)

- Focus Area: Growth Management & Community Resiliency
- Goal: Defined capacity constraints and indicators inform decision-making
- Strategic Direction: Support proactive land use planning and establish limits to growth using evidence-based data
- Key Initiative: 2.1.2 – Develop a growth management planning framework that includes data on growth trends and projections, geological and hydrological capacities, infrastructure, and development rates.

[Policy Statement Alignment:](#) Consistent with the Trust’s preserve and protect mandate under the Islands Trust Act.

- Guiding Principle: Trust Council believes that to achieve the Islands Trust object, the rate and scale of growth and development in the Trust Area must be carefully managed and may require limitation.

- Directive Policy 3.2.2 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address the protection of unfragmented forest ecosystems within their local planning areas from potentially adverse impacts of growth, development and land-use.
- Commitments of Trust Council 5.2.1 Trust Council holds that growth and development in the Trust Area should be compatible with preservation and protection of the environment, natural amenities, resources and community character.
- Directive Policy 5.2.4 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address any potential growth rate and strategies for growth management that ensure that land use is compatible with preservation and protection of the environment, natural amenities, resources and community character.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:

The Islands Trust Area faces increasing development pressures and climate-related risks that demand proactive, data-informed planning. Currently, growth management tools vary between Local Trust Areas, limiting consistency and effectiveness. This initiative addresses the need to develop a coordinated framework that integrates land use, infrastructure capacity, hydrological and geological constraints, and development trends.

By identifying growth limitations and environmentally suitable areas, this framework will enable informed decision-making by Trustees, align with strategic planning goals, and improve collaboration across the Trust Area. It will also help meet provincial housing objectives while maintaining ecological integrity.

PROJECTED RESULTS/DELIVERABLES:

- A completed Growth Management Planning Framework
- Comprehensive dataset on population, housing, development rates, infrastructure, and natural capacities
- Policy tools to support OCP updates and land use decisions
- Identification of growth capacity indicators for monitoring and planning
- Public engagement summary and integration plan

RISK ASSESSMENT:

Risk: Lack of consistent data across Local Trust Areas

Mitigation: Partner with provincial data sources and utilities; ensure consultant has data acquisition expertise

Risk: Resistance to growth framing

Mitigation: Emphasize evidence-based planning and protection priorities in messaging

Risk: Unclear terminology (e.g., geological capacity)

Mitigation: Define collaboratively with experts and Trust Council direction

Risk: Limited staff capacity

Mitigation: Supplement with contractor support and phased work plan

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Option 1: Undertake the Framework as proposed

- Benefits: Proactive, consistent, data-driven growth planning; preserves ecological values; informed policy
- Risks: Requires upfront cost, moderate complexity
- Financial Implications: \$211,000

Cost Component	Description	Estimated Cost
Contractor	Lead consultant/firm to conduct research, analysis, draft framework, facilitate engagement, and prepare deliverables (approx. 80–100 days @ \$1,200–\$1,500/day).	\$150,000
Data Acquisition	Purchase of specialized datasets (geological, hydrological, infrastructure, demographics), GIS mapping services, and any required field studies	\$20,000
Engagement and Communications	Costs for public meetings, venue rentals, materials, surveys, facilitation, and honoraria for First Nations engagement (*First Nations capacity funding has not been included)	\$26,000
Contingency	To accommodate unforeseen costs, data gaps, or additional consultation needs.	\$15,000
Total Estimated Cost		\$211,000

- Resource Requirements: Contractor, Trust staff coordination
- Other Implications: High potential for long-term savings and improved planning outcomes

Option 2: Limit scope to growth projections only

- Benefits: Lower cost, faster execution
- Risks: Incomplete framework, continued planning gaps
- Financial Implications: \$80,000–\$100,000
- Resource Requirements: Consultant, limited staff support
- Other Implications: May not address key strategic objectives

Option 3: Status quo – No new framework

- Benefits: No immediate cost
- Risks: Fragmented decision-making; reactive land use responses
- Financial Implications: None immediately; potential long-term costs
- Resource Requirements: Existing staff only
- Other Implications: Missed strategic opportunities, growing development pressure

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS:

- Clarity on key concepts (e.g., geological and hydrological capacity)
- Access to reliable, localized data
- Engagement with First Nations and local communities
- Contractor with experience in integrated growth and infrastructure planning

Failure to address these may limit utility or buy-in of the framework.

RECOMMENDED OPTION:

Option 1: Proceed with full development of the Growth Management Planning Framework. It best meets Islands Trust’s strategic goals, addresses future needs, and creates a strong foundation for consistent and sustainable decision-making across Trust Areas.

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

Costs:

- Total project estimate: \$211,000
- Breakdown: Contractor services, data acquisition, engagement
- Staff time: 320 hours (project management, GIS, communications support)

Benefits (Quantitative):

- Potential savings from reduced planning delays and legal risks
- Improved efficiency in OCP and bylaw updates

Benefits (Qualitative):

- Stronger community trust through evidence-based policy
- Better resilience to climate and infrastructure stress
- Strategic alignment with housing and environmental mandates

PURCHASING PROCEDURE:

A competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process will be conducted to engage a qualified planning or consulting firm with expertise in regional growth analysis and environmental capacity modelling.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

- Q1: 2026–27: Finalize scope, issue RFP
- Q2–Q3: Data gathering, partner engagement, framework drafting
- Q4: Final deliverables, internal review, presentation to Trust Council

Timeline: 12 months total

STAFF RESOURCING:

- Project Manager (Policy Staff): ~160 hours (*Director, Planner, Finance, GIS*)
- GIS/Data Analyst: ~100 hours (*Planner, GIS, Director*)
- Communications & Engagement Support: ~60 hours (*Planner, Communications Specialist, Director*)

**These hours have not been evaluated whether or not they are manageable or feasible

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION:

- Communications strategy will be developed with Islands Trust communications staff
- Early and ongoing engagement with LTCs, First Nations, Bowen Island Municipality, and other partners
- Collaboration with external agencies (MoTI, BC Ferries, VIHA, Regional Districts, Improvement Districts, etc.) for infrastructure data
- Concerns around mandate alignment (growth vs. protection) will be addressed through focused messaging and inclusive consultation

Requested by: Regional Planning Committee

Prepared by: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services



BRIEFING

To: Trust Programs Committee **For the Meeting of:** July 30, 2025
From: Trust Area Services **Date Prepared:** July 21, 2025
SUBJECT: Indicator business cases - update

PURPOSE: To advise Trust Programs Committee (TPC) that staff have not yet prepared business cases for funding in 2026/27 to update the State of the Islands report or development of ecosystem health and integrity indicators; to provide an update on Regional Planning Committee decisions regarding related business cases; and to advise of planned next steps.

BACKGROUND:

Trust Council’s 2025-2028 Strategic Plan includes a focus on:

- acquiring and updating mapping layers,
- development of ecosystem health and other indicators,
- trend monitoring and reporting, and sharing of data and
- sharing of this information with partners and the public.

These activities are crucial to informed decision-making and to understand effective implementation of the preserve and protect mandate. Relevant key initiatives from the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan are below.

FOCUS AREA	GOALS & DESIRED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	KEY INITIATIVES				LEAD
			Top priority for current council term	Priority for current council term	To be initiated 2026-2027	Initiation timeline TBD	
Growth Management & Community Resiliency	Defined capacity constraints and indicators inform decision making	2.1 Support proactive land use planning and establish limits to growth using evidence-based data	2.1.1 Work with other agencies to facilitate data gathering / share in the development of environmental indicators				TPC
			2.1.2 Develop a growth management planning framework that includes data on growth trends and projections, geological and hydrological capacities, infrastructure, and development rates				RPC
			2.1.3 Update and implement Freshwater Sustainability Strategy (2022-2032)				RPC
Ecosystem Health & Integrity	Diverse community members/groups are invested in revitalizing ecosystems and expanding protected areas	3.2 Improve understanding and monitoring of ecosystem health	3.2.1 Identify indicators of ecosystem health and integrity				TPC
			3.2.2 Update the State of the Islands Report				TPC
			3.2.3 Develop a shared inter-agency ecosystem health indicator toolkit for citizen groups, conservancies, and other agencies				TPC
			3.2.4 Monitor progress of protection of ecosystem health in all land use planning decisions				RPC/LTCs
	Marine and foreshore ecosystems are healthy	3.3 Strengthen marine and foreshore protection practices	3.3.1 Map eelgrass and kelp forests				RPC
Climate Change	Land use decisions are informed by data and ongoing monitoring to manage and adapt to climate risks	4.1 Identify the Trust's mandate and role related to climate change	4.1.1 Develop a climate action strategy, set baseline data and targets				TPC
			4.1.2 Partner with agencies and others to share climate data				TPC

In June 2025, Trust Council confirmed that key initiatives in blue required business cases for the upcoming 2026/27 budget development cycle, to which TPC was assigned updating the State of the Islands report and development of ecosystem health and integrity indicators, as well as partnering with other agencies to share climate data (no anticipated cost). Staff work on business cases has not begun for two key reasons: lack of staff time due to the Policy Statement Amendment process, and the need for a collaborative, multi-department review of available internal and external data and mapping layers, scan of best practices in comparable organizations, and assessment of desired needs in the context of a possible new Policy Statement, review of the [Freshwater Sustainability Strategy](#), and upcoming work to develop a new Islands Trust Conservancy [Regional Conservation Plan](#) (extended to December 2029) and [Securement Strategy](#).

[At its meeting on July 18, 2025](#), Regional Planning Committee (RPC) received draft business cases for eelgrass and kelp forest mapping (\$120,000) (Phase 2-polygon verification), and development of a growth management planning framework. In the covering request for decision briefing, staff noted with regard to the growth management planning framework (estimated cost of \$211,000) that: “*The initiative will require a detailed review with other data gathering and metric initiatives such as the State of the Islands Report to ensure complimentary work and not duplicating efforts. The initiative is moderately complex and requires an intensive amount of resources. Staff do not recommend proceeding with this initiative at this time.*” The projected results were to have been:

- A completed Growth Management Planning Framework
- Comprehensive dataset on population, housing, development rates, infrastructure, and natural capacities
- Policy tools to support OCP updates and land use decisions
- Identification of growth capacity indicators for monitoring and planning
- Public engagement summary and integration plan

RPC passed the following [draft] motion:

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.

Staff now intend to bring forward, later in the fall, one or more related business cases that address a multi-year, cross-department approach to growth management/land protection planning and associated indicator development, monitoring and reporting. This will necessarily consider the mapping and information resources required to fully implement the draft Policy Statement.

The draft Policy Statement includes draft guiding principle 2.17 “*To be informed by a broad range of sources in its decision-making processes, including Indigenous Knowledge, institutional knowledge, local community knowledge, and science.*” There are a number of draft directive policies in the draft new Policy Statement directing local trust committees and island municipalities to identify features that are to be protected (see Attachment 1). Successful and effective implementation of the Policy Statement will depend on whether sufficient, quality information is available, and whether it can be communicated to decision-makers and the public in an easy-to-understand manner that provides both point-in-time information and trend information. There will also need to be finalized, documented methodologies for analysis of the mapping layers listed in order to implement the following policies that require local trust committees and island municipalities to:

- Identify suitable locations that could support increased density for the development of safe, secure, diverse, and attainable housing.
- Identify network of protected areas of sufficient size and distribution to preserve the environmental integrity of ecosystems in their planning area.
- Identify watersheds where the quality or quantity of the supply of freshwater is likely to be inadequate or unsustainable.

Staff are investigating the best approach to identifying the required information to inform next steps. These could include:

- Inventory of existing mapping, aerial imagery and other imagery (e.g., LiDAR) , and other data layers, along with analysis of their age and timeframes for updating to ensure the information is current and relevant to future analyses
- Review of data required for implementation of the Policy Statement, and prioritization of acquisition/analysis
- Review of data required to measure the effectiveness of the Conservancy’s 2017-2029 Regional Conservation Plan, and to develop a new 10-year plan for 2030 - 2040
- Review of existing reports, methodologies, and comparable projects that could inform development and implementation of ecosystem health indicators (e.g. [2017 analysis of ecosystem disturbance in the Islands Trust Area](#), carbon storage reports)
- Consultation with First Nations about species of cultural significance and any additional knowledge they can provide or would like Islands Trust to consider
- Assessing what ecosystem health indicators are already being monitored by other agencies working in the Islands Trust Area or Salish Sea (e.g [Puget Sound Vital Signs indicators, MetroVancouver](#) –see page 43)
- Evaluation of whether the previously-selected State of the Island indicators should be re-measured/evaluated and if new ones should be added.
 - In 2016, staff assessed a wide range of ideas for potential indicators for the State of the Islands report and ultimately narrowed them down to just those that were

achievable by a co-op student, using only existing data sets from Islands Trust mapping layers, BC Assessment data, Census data, BC Ferries traffic statistics, and existing reports.

- Review best practices in indicator communications (e.g. dashboards, infographics)

A mix of approaches is probably needed that includes in-house work, a request for proposal(s) for consultant support, and academic partnerships. (Staff are meeting with Tara Martin of the University of British Columbia's Conservation Lab on July 28 and will bring updates about a potential partnership to the Trust Programs Committee July 30 meeting.)

Trust Programs Committee may be interested to know that at the July 22, 2025 joint meeting between the Islands Trust Conservancy Board and the Executive Committee there was a robust discussion about the need for a strategic, long-term approach to updating and acquiring new ecosystem information, and for indicator monitoring that considered both financial planning and staffing resources.

The Islands Trust Conservancy Board subsequently passed the following [draft] motion:

That the Islands Trust Conservancy Board indicate its strong support for robust geographic information systems, supported with long-term sustained funding and strategic direction by Islands Trust Council, to assist analysis of trends and development of indicators of ecosystem health, to support sound decision making in planning, conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. (ITC-EC-2025-001)

and on July 23, 2025 Executive Committee subsequently passed the following [draft] motion:

That Executive Committee endorses resolution ITC-EC-2025-001 and recommends it be forwarded to Trust Council for consideration as part of the budget discussion.

ATTACHMENT(S):

- 1) Mapping layers required for full implementation of the draft Policy Statement
- 2) Example indicators
- 3) Example of a map as communication tool re ecosystem protection (2018)

FOLLOW-UP: Staff will work through the summer/fall of 2025 to develop a multi-year, integrated plan, for next steps for advancing Strategic Plan key initiatives 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.2.1, 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.1, 4.4.1 and 4.1.2. in cooperation with First Nations and in a manner that considers the Islands Trust Conservancy's plans for ecosystem mapping and analysis.

Staff recommend that TPC recommend that Financial Planning Committee add \$150,000 to the draft budget as placeholder funding for the development of a multi-year, joint TPC/IPC-led project for 2026/27 to be put towards:

1. Consultant (selected via Request for Proposal) to :
 - conduct needs assessment and
 - develop strategy for:
 - data/mapping layer acquisition,
 - data analysis, and
 - indicator development, monitoring and reporting.

2. Capacity funding to support involvement of First Nations' staff in development and implementation of the project.

Staff also recommend that TPC recommend that Financial Planning Committee support enhanced funding in 2026/27 for purchase of select mapping layers/data that is identified during development of the multi-year plan, as time-sensitive - for analysis and use in indicator development reporting in subsequent years and for use in implementation of new Policy Statement (with prior Trust Council approval).

Prepared By: Clare Frater, Director, Trust Area Services

Reviewed By/Date: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services
David Marlor, Director, Legislative and Information Services

Attachment 1

Mapping layers required for full implementation of the draft Policy Statement

- **Ecosystem features**
 - sensitive ecosystems classified as the following ecosystem types: cliff; freshwater; herbaceous; old and mature forest; riparian; wetland; and woodland.
 - forest ecosystems.
 - coastal oak and prairie ecosystems
 - critical habitat for species at risk
 - natural heritage sites
 - clam beds
 - coastal wetlands
 - kelp forests
 - forage fish spawning areas
 - estuaries
 - mud flats
 - tidal salt marshes
- **Freshwater**
 - watershed ecosystems,
 - freshwater sources,
 - groundwater recharge areas.
- **Hazards**
 - areas at elevated risk of natural and climate change-related hazards including, but not limited to
 - flooding, sea-level rise,
 - erosion,
 - slope instability
 - wildfire
 - areas at elevated risk of saltwater intrusion
- **Heritage sites**
 - community heritage sites.
 - Indigenous cultural heritage sites including, but not limited to,
 - village sites
 - burial sites
 - camp sites
 - middens
 - cairns
 - petroglyphs
 - culturally modified trees
 - fish traps
 - clam gardens
 - pictographs
 - known (registered), unregistered, or newly discovered archaeological sites (through engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies).

- **Transportation networks**
 - appropriately-situated, safe, comfortable, and equitable transportation networks
 - rural roadways, including scenic and/or heritage roads

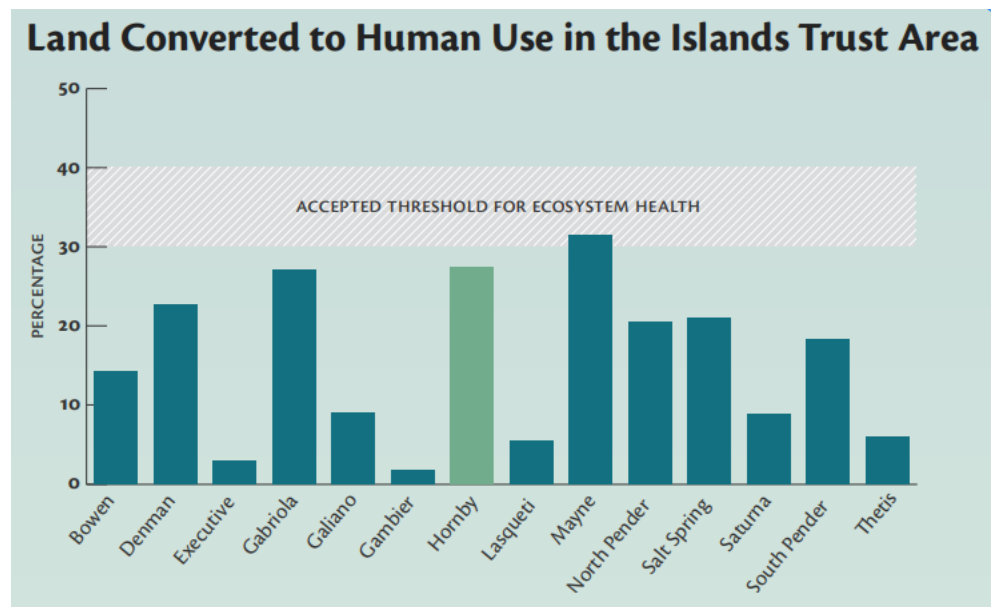
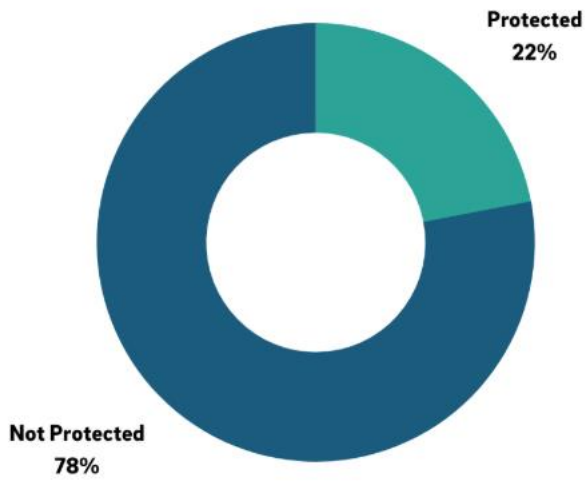
- **Harvesting areas**
 - Indigenous harvesting areas on land and marine foreshores including, but not limited to, fish weirs, clam gardens, camas meadows, and other areas used for Indigenous hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering of plants and medicines (through engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies).

- **Islets and small islands**

- **Agricultural lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve**

Attachment 2: Previously used ecosystem indicators:

% of Areas with High Biodiversity Protected in the Trust Area



Attachment 3: Example of a map as communication tool re ecosystem protection (2018)

