



Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee Minutes of a Special Meeting

Date: Friday, October 22, 2021

Location: Electronic Meeting
200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria

Members Present: Peter Luckham, Chair
Laura Patrick, Local Trustee
Peter Grove, Local Trustee

Staff Present: Stefan Cermak, Regional Planning Manager (RPM)
Jason Youmans, Island Planner
William Shulba, Senior Freshwater Specialist
Kathryn Martell, Ecosystem Protection Specialist, Islands Trust Conservancy
Rob Pingle, Planning Team Assistant
Sarah Shugar, Recorder

Coastal Douglas-Fir (CDF) Science Working Group Members Present: Riley Finn
Susan Hannon
Sally John
Tara Martin
Briony Penn
Mitchel Sherrin
Ruth Waldick

Others Present: 1 member of the public

These minutes follow the order of the agenda although the sequence may have varied.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Luckham called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to an electronic meeting of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee. Chair Luckham introduced himself, the Trustees and staff and acknowledged that the Local Trust Committee is meeting within Coast Salish Territory. The Coastal Douglas-Fir (CDF) Science Working Group Members were introduced.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

By general consent the agenda was approved.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

3.1 Local Trust Committee Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chair Luckham reported this meeting is an opportunity for the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee to meet with the CDF Science Working Group.

3.2 Presentation of conservation decision support tool for Coastal Douglas-Fir and Associated Ecosystems

Planner Youmans presented an overview of the LTC Coastal Douglas-Fir and Associated Ecosystems project.

T. Martin presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled: "Prioritizing Coastal Douglas-Fir Bioclimatic Zone Protection and Management" by Dr. Tara Martin and Riley Finn. T. Martin presented a land-use decision support mapping tool developed by Dr. Martin, Mr. Finn and the University of British Columbia (UBC) Martin Conservation Decisions Lab.

In discussion the following comments and questions were noted:

- The Trustees expressed appreciation for the presentation and the work of the UBC Conservation Decisions Lab.
- There was a question regarding whether there are any old growth trees on Salt Spring Island. T. Martin reported most of the forests on Salt Spring Island have been logged. Today there are approximately 313 trees over 70 metres, 650 trees over 60 metres, and 8,000 trees over 50 metres. There is a combination of big, old giant trees, and mature second growth forests that are now showing characteristics of mature forests. The majority of forests are second growth, many are third growth and there is a need for protection across all of the different stages.
- There was a question regarding the maximum effect for the minimum cost and what is meant by "minimum cost." T. Martin reported costs are considered in many different ways including the economic costs. In this analysis sites were selected based on the highest quality, the oldest stage and the greatest groundwater recharge areas.
- There was a question regarding what map shows the areas that need to be protected. T. Martin reported she has only shown a portion of map of the Musgrave area and the entire map could be made available to the LTC. The dark green shaded areas are the highest priority.
- There was a question regarding next steps. T. Martin suggested reconvening the CDF Science Working Group to identify tools and incentives that could be used to best manage and protect the high value areas.
- There was a question regarding how to keep the mapping and data sets up to date going forward. T. Martin advised the UBC Conservation Decisions Lab could be engaged on an ongoing basis to update the mapping and data sets.
- There was a comment that old growth trees can be smaller due to growing conditions and whether those trees are captured in the mapping. T. Martin reported the Coastal Douglas-fir bioclimatic zone includes Garry Oak ecosystems. The mapping identifies high value ecosystems although the big tree data does not capture the old growth trees

that are less than 50 metres. The forest contiguity, sensitive ecosystems, terrestrial ecosystem, and water recharge mapping layers likely capture the Garry Oak ecosystems.

- There was a comment that lot-scale fire protection strategies are often based on reducing the understory, clearing trees and creating firebreaks to protect structures. It is important to consider how healthy forests provide fire protection on a macro scale.
- There was a comment that Fire Smart programs are based on BC Interior conditions and are not specific to coastal forest ecology. A healthy forest understory in a Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem will slow down fire and the biggest threat to forest understory is deer hyper-abundance.
- There was a comment that wildfire is more common in slash cut areas and tends to extinguish in healthy, mature forest. Salal understory is fire resistant.
- There was a comment that the map layers can be used to ask questions and explore possibilities such as how the corridors of broom and gorse affect fire risk to structures.
- There was a comment that the map layers can be updated as new data becomes available such as Salt Spring Island fire hazard data.
- There was a comment that the mapping tool can help answer the question of which forests are going to retain their health over time under extreme heat and drought conditions.
- There was a comment that the mapping tool can be used to examine different management scenarios and can inform priority areas.
- There was a comment that one of the benefits of this flexible mapping tool is to consider areas watershed by watershed. There was a suggestion for the LTC to consider the role of engaging the public at the watershed level.
- There was a comment that groundwater recharge occurs everywhere on Salt Spring Island and areas with greater recharge are at higher elevation. The mechanism for precipitation to get into the soil and bedrock below is not limited to a discreet area. The dark green areas are generally on steep slopes and water runs downhill. Concern was expressed that a map such as this could lead to more fragmentation of forests on SSI and contiguous forest protection would be more effective to protect groundwater recharge. There was a suggestion for a more robust discussion regarding what this map would resolve as a planning tool.
- There was a comment that this is a tool that is one of many that is available. This mapping tool could provide information regarding whether a parcel of land has high/medium or low ecological value when being considered for conservancy, covenant or parkland dedication.
- There was a comment that all forests have ecological value and the shades of green show relative importance.
- The biosphere approach would identify core values and apply concentric circles to identify and apply protection of those core values.

3.3 General discussion about possible approaches to Coastal Douglas-fir zone and associated ecosystem protection on Salt Spring Island

In discussion the following comments and questions were noted:

- There is concern in the community regarding wildfire risk and tree cutting and brush cutting are happening as part of fire prevention.

- There is an opportunity to build on fire resiliency data and to identify tools that would inform decisions going forward.
- It is important to consider that healthy forests are fire resistant and there is a need to consider how tools will enable people to protect their structures. It may be important to maintain the ability to clear brush and trees around structures. It was noted heat domes and extreme winds increase the risk of trees falling on structures. It is a complex relationship between fire protection and ecology.
- Support was expressed for a multi-disciplinary approach including fire specialist, botanist, forest ecology specialist, etc.
- There has been unprecedented development on the Gulf Islands and there is up to a 10- year lag time on groundwater recharge data.
- There was a suggestion to have a dynamic forest management approach with a goal of a desired future forest rather than a prescriptive forest management approach.
- There was a suggestion for a fire expert workshop to discuss treatments, actions and education. Planner Youmans reported a fire expert workshop is included in the LTC 2022 project budget.
- There was a suggestion to engage First Nations treaty groups. There are stewardship plans that could assist in terrestrial stewardship plans. Forests were tended, stewarded gardens and controlled fire was part of forest management.
- There was a comment that landowner contact programs are effective and need to be funded.
- Support was expressed to focus on stewardship and education and voluntary compliance.

4. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Peter Luckham, Chair

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Sarah Shugar, Recorder