

# Report

Date August 21, 2024

File: 0550-20

Subject Environmental Advisory Committee June 25, 2024 Meeting Minutes

---

## PURPOSE

To provide the Environmental Advisory Committee June 25, 2024 minutes for receipt, along with associated recommendations for Council's consideration.

## BACKGROUND

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) met on June 25, 2024, to provide comment on the Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment report and the Ecological Accounting Process as referred by Council. The draft meeting minutes are attached to this report.

Since the meeting, staff have been able to review the impact of recommendations on project scope, budget, and timeline. That analysis is presented in this report.

## DISCUSSION

### **Climate Vulnerability & Risk Assessment**

Staff and project consultant Urban Systems Ltd. presented the EAC with an update on the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Project. The EAC had previously reviewed earlier phases of this project, reviewing engagement findings in October 2023 and risk assessment findings in January 2024. The purpose of this referral was to consider recommendations for Council on the proposed draft Climate Adaptation Strategy. At this meeting, the EAC passed the following resolution:

*THAT the Environmental Advisory Committee provide the following feedback for Council's consideration:*

- 1. THAT the committee recommend to Council that the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Project include an explicit directive framework that articulates the urgency to act on climate, including timelines for implementation, and prioritization of actions, specific objectives, and an evaluation framework with budgetary impacts.*
- 2. THAT the committee recommend to Council that the plan includes a broader ecosystem framework to include wind impacts, and the role of Emergency Management outside an event.*

This resolution would require an additional project budget of approximately \$20K and an extended timeline (two months) to accommodate, and the timeline may have implications from the grant funder. \$20K is not budgeted for 2024; however, the funds would be paid for from the Climate Action and Energy Plan (CAEP) reserve if approved. Council direction is necessary on whether to undertake this work or to undertake this work in parallel with implementation.

The risk assessment findings completed in January 2024 already prioritized actions. This process created risk statements for municipal service areas that were then assessed for likelihood and consequence, with a qualitative risk rating awarded (special, low, medium, high, and very high). The very high and high priority ranked risk statements were prioritized in the strategy for action.

The strategy proposes that Directors bring forward work plan items through the planning cycle for each department. This plan/act cycle enables the strategy to maintain relevance and gain flexibility to accommodate new priorities or grant funding availability.

Considerations for budgetary impacts and evaluation framework were not included in the draft strategy, reflecting that the strategy is process-driven and quantitative and qualitative measures are included. In some cases, strategies are already budgeted by staff, as they speak to an item already underway (e.g. action 7.1: the development of a natural assets management plan is funded by a \$200K grant). Future actions are high and broad enough that they can be challenging to assign a cost to and susceptible to change over time (e.g. action 6.4 to monitor, preserve and restore saltwater/marsh areas to enhance coastal protection). Some actions also may not require any budget as they are collaborative efforts or support other jurisdictions (e.g. action 9.4 to participate in regional advisory groups on climate adaptation and airshed management). Measures can also be cost neutral or cost avoiding (e.g. if a natural asset can be used instead of grey infrastructure).

The resolution provided by the EAC recommends that additional work on budget, implementation timelines, and evaluation framework be performed to provide greater certainty and accountability for Council and staff to act. While this sets out expectations at the time of strategy adoption, this additional work may not result in improved strategy delivery as it removes the agility to adjust to new opportunities and information. Staff think this work would be more relevant and accurate if performed during the budget cycle being considered and not out of step with priorities at that time.

Alternative direction for staff can be considered that does not require additional project cost or timelines while meeting the intent of the EAC resolution:

1. *THAT the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Project articulate the urgency to act on climate, direct staff to bring forward prioritized and budgeted climate adaptation actions in the business planning process and prepare an annual evaluation report assessing implementation.*
2. *THAT the plan includes a broader ecosystem framework to include wind impacts, and the role of Emergency Management outside an event.*

### **Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process**

The Committee also discussed the Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process. Dave Preikshot, Senior Environmental Specialist, provided the Committee with a summary and presentation on the draft Ecological Accounting Process report for Richards Creek that was prepared by the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (Vancouver Island University).

The Committee passed the following resolution:

1. *THAT the committee support the valuation of streams and substantial riparian areas, as a natural resource for the purpose of operational and maintenance budgets.; and*
2. *Consider natural systems in the overall asset management policy.*

The resolution is consistent with Council's Strategic Plan (2019-2022) priority to integrate natural assets into the overall asset management system. The 2024 Business Plan advances work to develop an inventory of natural assets, followed by developing a natural asset management plan.

## OPTIONS

### 1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council:

- (1) Receive the minutes of the June 25, 2024 Environmental Advisory Committee meeting;
- (2) Endorse the recommended edits to the draft Climate Adaptation Strategy as outlined in the Climate Change Specialist's August 21, 2024 report:
  - a) *THAT the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Project articulate the urgency to act on climate, direct staff to bring forward prioritized and budgeted climate adaptation actions in the business planning process and prepare an annual evaluation report assessing implementation.*
  - b) *THAT the plan includes a broader ecosystem framework to include wind impacts, and the role of Emergency Management outside an event.*
- (3) Endorse the Environmental Advisory Committee's resolution on the Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process:
  - a) *THAT the committee support the valuation of streams and substantial riparian areas, as a natural resource for the purpose of operational and maintenance budgets.; and*
  - b) *Consider natural systems in the overall asset management policy.*

- Staff will amend the Climate and Risk Vulnerability Assessment Project with the recommended changes outlined in this report. These changes can be accommodated in the existing project budget and timelines.

### 2. THAT Council receive the minutes of the June 25, 2024 Environmental Advisory Committee meeting.

- Endorsing the EAC's resolution will result in additional budget and timelines for project completion.

## IMPLICATIONS

Implications	Concerns or Impacts to North Cowichan
Social	• No significant impacts or concerns
Environmental	• No significant impacts or concerns
Financial	• There are no significant impacts or concerns if Council accepts the Recommended Option.

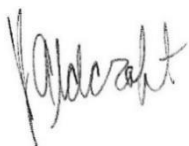
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should Council accept the Committee's resolution, developing timelines, budgets, and simplified prioritization criteria would require additional project budget and timeline. Additional budget would need to be allocated from the operating budget and would not be reimbursed by the project's grant from the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund. Project completion delays may have implications from the grant funder.</li> </ul>
Policy/Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant impacts or concerns</li> </ul>
Strategic Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee resolutions align with Council's Strategic Plan (2019-2022) to develop a climate risk and vulnerability assessment and work on natural assets.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant impacts or concerns</li> </ul>
Staffing Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extending the project timeline will require existing staff resources to remain assigned to project development.</li> </ul>

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council

- (1) Receive the minutes of the June 25, 2024 Environmental Advisory Committee meeting;
- (2) Endorse the recommended edits to the draft Climate Adaptation Strategy as outlined in the Climate Change Specialist's 21 August 2024 report:
  - a) *THAT the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Project articulate the urgency to act on climate, direct staff to bring forward prioritized and budgeted climate adaptation actions in the business planning process and prepare an annual evaluation report assessing implementation.*
  - b) *THAT the plan includes a broader ecosystem framework to include wind impacts, and the role of Emergency Management outside an event.*
- (3) Endorse the Environmental Advisory Committee's resolution on the Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process:
  - a) *THAT the committee support the valuation of streams and substantial riparian areas, as a natural resource for the purpose of operational and maintenance budgets; and*
  - b) *Consider natural systems in the overall asset management policy.*

Report prepared by:




---

Jennifer Aldcroft  
Climate Change Specialist

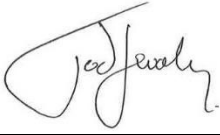
Report reviewed by:




---

David Conway  
Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services

**Approved to be forwarded to Council:**



---

Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

- (1) EAC June 25, 2024, Draft Minutes