

District of Saanich

Community Context

The District of Saanich is located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, one of the 13 municipalities in the Capital Regional District. With a population of 113,000, it is one of the eight BC communities with populations over 100,000. The municipality recently completed a Climate Change Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and in 2011 completed the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. <http://www.saanich.ca/living/climate/ccap.html>

Potential Climate Change Impacts

The District began its climate change adaptation planning from a broad perspective, with an interest in identifying future climate change impacts, as specific impacts had not been previously identified in the community. The review included an assessment of 10 sectors in the community, which identified potential impacts and the actions to address them.

Assessment of Climate Change in Saanich

Background

The District of Saanich originally received Gas Tax funding for three plans: a Climate Action Plan (greenhouse gas reduction plan), a Climate Change Adaptation Plan and an Environmental Management System. In addition to Gas Tax funding allocated to adaptation planning, the District secured an additional \$25,000 from Natural Resources Canada's Regional Adaptation Collaborative (RAC). The District used these funds to retain Stantec – Sheltair to initiate and lead the adaptation planning process.

With secured funding, Mark Boysen, Sustainability Coordinator, who coordinates the District's adaptation work, created a director level committee to serve as an adaptation working group. Mr. Boysen chaired the committee, which included Saanich's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Directors, department managers, and the Police & Fire services.

Identifying Future Climate Change Scenarios

Stantec – Sheltair worked with Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC) to analyze regional climate change scenarios. Saanich's average annual temperature is projected to warm 1.7°C and local annual average precipitation is projected to increase 5% by the 2050's. Local summers will be drier, winters will be wetter and both seasons will be warmer.

Assessing Climate Change

Working with the PCIC climate scenarios, the consultants identified ten sectors susceptible to climate change impacts including: ecosystems and urban forests; infrastructure; transportation and mobility; buildings; agriculture and food security; energy supply; economic development; health; land-use; and emergency response. The consultants completed a preliminary vulnerability and risk assessment, modified from the protocol outlined in the *Preparing for Climate Change A Guidebook for Local, Regional and State Governments*¹. District sectors sensitive to climate change and with a low adaptive capacity were considered to be the most vulnerable. Climate change impacts, such as increased storm events, with a high probability of occurring and significant consequences were ranked as the highest risk areas.

Stantec-Sheltair and Mr. Boysen summarized and simplified the climate scenarios, impacts, and vulnerability and risk assessment results into a climate change adaptation discussion paper. The District requested feedback on the discussion paper from its newly formed adaptation working group and from a provincial advisory committee with members Jenny Fraser of the Climate Action Secretariat, Cathy LeBlanc of the Ministry of Community and Rural Development, and Sarah Webb of the Capital Regional District. Through a series of mini workshops the District collected feedback on the paper from seven community advisory committees, which regularly provide comment on District initiatives, to Council. During the consultations, the consultants and Mr. Boysen asked stakeholders to identify climate change vulnerabilities, risks and adaptation solutions that were missing from the adaptation discussion paper.

Two workshops were held in June 2010 to solicit additional feedback from local government leaders and community stakeholders. At the first workshop, CAO's and Directors from Saanich and each municipality in the Capital Region participated in discussion groups to identify impacts and identify current and potential adaptive capacity to address the impacts. A second workshop was held the next day with key community stakeholders who will be directly affected by the projected climate change impacts. The goal of the workshops was to "ground-truth" the information initially gathered in the discussion paper.

Feedback from staff, committees and the workshops has been summarized and additional vulnerabilities, risks and potential actions were integrated into the Discussion Paper.

Adaptation Planning

After the public provided feedback on the initial discussion paper, a draft Adaptation Plan was prepared for further public and staff review. The Adaptation Plan was designed to be a much more accessible and public friendly document. Then, in 2011, the Plan was sent to Council for approval.

The Sustainability Coordinator was responsible for leading the implementation of the plan, along with the implementation of the greenhouse gas reduction plan (Climate Action Plan).

With federal funding support through Natural Resources Canada's Regional Adaptation Collaborative Program



Natural Resources
Canada

Ressources naturelles
Canada

Canada

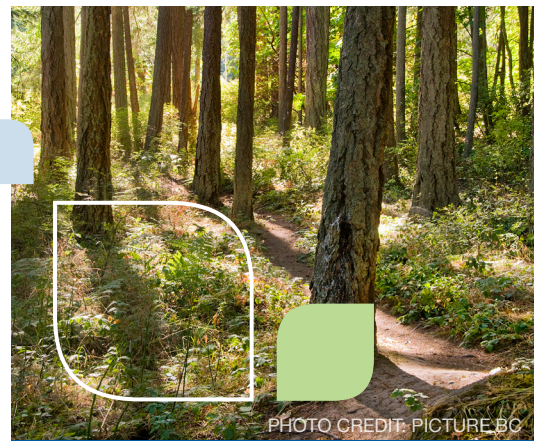


PHOTO CREDIT: PICTURE BC

Lessons Learned

Saanich completed development of the Plan in 2011 and offers the following suggestions to local governments that are beginning work in climate change adaptation:

- **Recruit experts** – Having access to experts on an advisory committee helped District staff launch the climate change adaptation planning process and ensured the project linked to regional and provincial adaptation processes.
- **Staff are key leaders** – Saanich's CAO and Sustainability Coordinator helped mobilize District staff during the adaptation planning process. Having several staff lead the process can build support across departments for the plan.
- **Communicate effectively** – This is a new and vast discussion topic to communicate with different groups. Use accessible language when explaining climate change scenarios, such as "winters will likely become warmer and wetter," particularly at the early stages of the project. The adaptation concept can mean different things to different people. Take the time needed to ensure participants understand the challenge.

Budget and Timeline Followed

Total Project Budget: The District received Gas Tax funding to complete a climate change adaptation plan, which is budgeted to cost \$35,000; the District received an additional \$25,000 from Natural Resources Canada's Regional Adaptation Collaborative (RAC). The District designated 25% of the Sustainability Coordinator's time to manage the adaptation planning process.

Funding Sources: Gas Tax Funding, Natural Resources Canada and District of Saanich

Timeline: The climate change adaptation action planning began in 2009, was completed by the end of 2010 and approved by Council in 2011.

Sources

¹ University of Washington; King County, Washington; ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, 2007. *Preparing for Climate Change: A Guidebook for Local, Regional, and State Governments*. <http://www.icleiusa.org/action-center/planning/climate-adaptation-planning-resources>