



File No.: 6500-20 – Water
Sustainability

DATE OF MEETING: January 18, 2022
TO: Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee
FROM: Jason Youmans, Island Planner
Salt Spring Island Team
COPY: William Shulba, Senior Freshwater Specialist
SUBJECT: Project Update - Salt Spring Island Watersheds Stewardship and Protection Strategic Plan

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to update the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee on the status and next steps of Phase 1 of the Salt Spring Island Watersheds Stewardship and Protection Strategic Plan Project.

It supplements a verbal presentation that will be given to the SS LTC at its regular meeting of January 18, 2022.

BACKGROUND

On March 25, 2021, Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee endorsed a project charter to develop, under the guidance of a qualified consultant, a strategic plan to guide and prioritize watershed protection work on a 5-to-10 year basis (LTC Resolution #: SS-2021-98). The objective of this work is to better support Salt Spring Island Watershed Protection Alliance (SSIWPA) member agencies in advancing effective, equitable, and modernized land and water use planning.

In Fall 2021 staff undertook a competitive process to engage a firm to lead this work and Econics Services was the successful proponent. Econics is a Victoria-based firm whose mission is to help sustain water systems and the communities that depend on them. They were selected in part because of their experience with similar programs across Canada, previous program evaluation projects, and their work in 2021 facilitating development of Islands Trust's federation-wide Freshwater Sustainability Strategy (received by Trust Council on December 1, 2021).

Phase 1 of the Salt Spring Island the project involves producing a situation analysis and options identification report. This phase is also looking at SSIWPA's strengths and weaknesses, how it can be improved, or alternatives to it. The project flow diagram for Phase 1 can be found in Attachment 1.

The project formally kicked off on November 19, with Islands Trust's project team comprised of Jason Youmans and William Shulba. SSIWPA coordinator Shannon Cowan is providing logistical support to Econics as well as necessary background information and documentation.

Work completed to date includes the following:

- **Interviews** – 14 interviews were conducted involving 15 informants (one session included two people). Interviewees include staff, contractors, elected officials and volunteers from Islands Trust, the Capital

Regional District, water service providers, the Provincial Government, and community non-governmental organizations;

- **SSIWPA Workshop** – a virtual workshop was held on December 13, involving 17 attendees from the SSIWPA Steering Committee, its Technical Working Group, and support staff from government agencies. Econics also attended and presented to the November 25 SSIWPA quarterly meeting; and
- **Literature Review** – Econics reviewed several dozen documents that provide key context for the program review.

At the December 13 SSIWPA workshop, Econics presented preliminary findings, noting that these are broad, initial observations and do not necessarily reflect what will be found in the final report. These include the following:

1. SSIWPA has evolved considerably over its eight-year history;
2. No SSIWPA participant or stakeholder they spoke to is completely happy. In particular, people are frustrated that SSIWPA’s role seems to be limited to “coordination”, rather than leading science-related projects and programs;
3. Everybody appreciates the need for a “big tent” – a forum where all stakeholders and responsible agencies can gather to coordinate activities and exchange information. The role of a staffed coordinator is seen as necessary to make this possible; and
4. SSIWPA has been instrumental in a number of significant accomplishments since its inception.

Econics also provided several more specific observations about various facets of SSIWPA including, for example:

- There is ongoing tension about the role of volunteer/ community science;
- Coordination to date with First Nations or Indigenous organizations has been very limited; and
- There is ongoing debate about whether the focus should be on drinking water specifically or watershed protection more generally.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps are as follows:

- Econics is now preparing its draft Phase 1 report, which will be completed in early February;
- Draft results will be presented to SSIWPA Steering Committee at its 28 January meeting;
- Input from both SS LTC and SSIWPA meetings will be used to revise the Phase 1 report, which will be finalized by 28 February at the latest; and
- Subject to the report’s recommendations, Phase 2 of this project will include developing a Salt Spring Island Watershed Stewardship and Protection Strategic Plan.

All work will build on and support implementation of the federation-wide Islands Trust Freshwater Sustainability Strategy.

Submitted By:	Jason Youmans, Island Planner	January 6, 2022
Concurrence:	Stefan Cermak, Regional Planning Manager	January 10, 2022

ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1: Project Flow Diagram

ATTACHMENT 1: PROJECT FLOW DIAGRAM

