

How much will this new service cost?

- As a first step, the proposed Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship Service will convert the existing invasive species program into a regional service and formalize local government requisition for the part-time invasive species coordinator at the current budget (approximately \$100,000). This new regional service would be cost-shared based on population (50%) and converted assessment (50%).
- While the new service is initially built on the current support for invasive species management, a regional approach to biodiversity and protection of natural assets requires coordination across multiple levels of government, First Nations, environmental organizations, landowners, and residents of the region and needs to be supported by research and inventories, collaborative partnerships and the implementation of an environmental stewardship strategy and public outreach program. Additional staff capacity and operational funds will be considered in future budget cycles to achieve a regional approach to biodiversity and protection of ecological assets.

Why is a new service needed?

- The Board identified the preservation of regional biodiversity and protection of natural assets as a strategic priority and directed staff to explore options for a regional approach to the issue. Staff determined that a new regional service would best achieve the strategic direction of the Board.

What will a Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship Service do?

- Prompt more environmentally conscious actions, such as ecosystem restoration and protection, watershed protection, planting of trees and native species and removal of invasive species to enhance and protect biodiversity and ecological assets in the region.
- Preserve regional biodiversity and protection of natural assets
- Increase efficiency of service through partnerships with provincial agencies, local and regional governments, environmental stewardship groups and residents

- Restore, protect and enhance healthy ecosystems by building on the existing invasive species program
- Support biodiversity activities that promote healthy ecosystems
- Deliver education, outreach, and other promotional activities to support biodiversity

What programs are proposed to operate under the service?

- Staff propose converting the existing invasive species program into a new Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship Service that integrates biodiversity, protection and stewardship of ecological assets and invasive species management. Additional resources will be required to build the service out.
- A regional approach to biodiversity and protection of ecological assets requires coordination across governments, First Nations, environmental organizations, landowners and residents of the region.
- Currently CRD staff collaborate and coordinate with many of these partners through existing CRD- facilitated, multi-stakeholder initiatives around watershed and harbour stewardship, invasive plants and Canada geese. These initiatives will continue and will consider biodiversity and ecological asset protection in their work in support of the new service.
- As the new service develops, additional staff capacity and operational funds will be requested in future budget cycles to achieve a regional approach to biodiversity and protection of ecological assets.

Who has been engaged in the development of the service concept?

- All eligible electors have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process through the AAP. Informal discussions with local government and some First Nations staff have occurred over the past two years. Staff have received general support for a regional approach to biodiversity and ecological assets.
- The proposed service area applies to all municipalities and electoral areas of the Capital Regional District, including Central Saanich, Colwood, Esquimalt, Highlands, Langford, Metchosin, North Saanich, Oak Bay, Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, Victoria, View Royal, and the Electoral Areas of Juan de Fuca, Salt Spring Island, and Southern Gulf Islands. Participating area consent will be obtained by conducting a region wide alternative approval process.

How does this benefit my community?

- Protecting and enhancing regional biodiversity and ecological assets will help build climate resiliency, improve watershed and harbour health, support food security, and enhance the livability, sustainability and resilience of the region and electoral areas through environmental stewardship.
- Coordinating, communicating and establishing collaborative partnerships with municipalities, First Nations, large landowners, other government agencies and stewardship groups to protect, restore and enhance key biodiverse habitats and ecological assets and to minimize and manage the impacts of stressors and problem species.

What is an Alternative Approval Process?

- An Alternative Approval Process (AAP) is a form of approval that allows electors to indicate whether they are against a local government proposal moving forward. Electors do this by submitting a completed elector response form to the CRD. If 10% of eligible voters complete and submit the form, the AAP has not obtained elector approval.

Why does the CRD need elector approval?

- As per the Local Government Act, the CRD must receive the electors' approval before it can adopt a bylaw to establish a new service.

What is the expected approval timeline? When would AAP start? When would the service be established?

- The anticipated timing for the Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship Service AAP is as follows:
 - December 2023 - 1st, 2nd, 3rd reading of Bylaw No. 4575 Regional Coordination of Biodiversity and Environmental Stewardship by the CRD Board,
 - February 2024 – Bylaw received approval by Inspector of Municipalities
 - November 21, 2024 - AAP response period begins
 - January 15, 2025- AAP response period ends at 4:30 pm
 - Feb 2025 – AAP results delivered and final adoption of bylaw (if applicable)

Where can I find more information on the AAP?

- For more information on the Alternative Approval Process (AAP), who can participate, where to find an elector response form, and how forms may be submitted, please visit crd.bc.ca/biodiversity-aap