

**District of Metchosin  
Environmental Advisory Select Committee**

**The GREEN and BLUE SPACES STRATEGY  
DECEMBER 2007**

**CONTENTS:**

**Introduction:** The historical context and the need for voluntary conservation of green and blue spaces in Metchosin as set out through the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy, the Regional Growth Strategy and the Official Community Plan for Metchosin is outlined.

**Purpose of the Strategy:** With community input, a plan for voluntary conservation of Green and Blue spaces in Metchosin is set out.

**Objectives of the Strategy:** Eight goals of the strategy are defined.

**Public Consultation:** The process of community involvement to date is summarized.

**Types of Green and Blue Spaces:**

1. Large undeveloped natural areas
2. Agricultural and managed forest lands
3. Viewpoints and landscapes
4. Connecting corridors
5. Marine areas
6. Valuable remnant ecosystems
7. Small lot stewardship areas

**Recommendations:**

1. Public Education
- 2. Acquisition and Protection**
- 3. Stewardship**
4. Municipal Government

**Further Tools for Conserving Green and Blue Space Values and Areas:**

1. Conservation covenants
2. Partners in conservation
3. Supporting agricultural and managed forest land
4. Develop voluntary best management practices guidelines
5. Municipal tax incentives for retention of natural areas for conservation purposes
6. "Naturescape" and other programs providing suggestions on restoration and/or maintenance of habitat

**Priority Actions:**

1. Request for moratorium on Disposition of BC Crown lands in Metchosin.
2. Grant BC crown lands to CRD Parks as Park land

**Updating the Strategy:**

The strategy as a living document

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**Appendix A:** Desired outcomes of the Green and Blue Spaces Strategy

**Appendix B:** Planning and regulatory documents which provide context for the strategy

## **Introduction:**

Before European contact, First Nations people maintained the landscape of sections of Metchosin by deliberately setting fires to clear the shrubs and trees and by their intensive cultivation of the camas bulb. This interaction with the forests and open areas produced fields and woodlands that greatly impressed early settlers with Metchosin's agricultural potential.

From the time of the first pioneer settlers, Metchosin has also been a refuge for the "city folk". 1200 acres around Matheson Lake was bought by the Gillespie family as their summer retreat and hunting lodge and Sir James Douglas purchased Section 2, 320 acres near Happy Valley and Metchosin Rd, also as a hunting lodge and retreat. He wrote of Metchosin in a report from 1842 "it is a very pretty place" and in a letter from 1873 "Metchosin looked at its best, the richly tinted foliage, the bright clear sky, the warm sunshine, the glassy smooth sea, and the grand mountains in the distance, formed a continuation of undescrivable beauty" (Footprints, 1983).

The Metchosin of today is not too much different. Sir James Douglas and others of those first farming pioneers, if they were to travel forward in time, would still recognize and love much of this landscape. It is to help maintain some of this impressive and cherished natural history that the Green and Blue Spaces Strategy Committee was formed.

What are these green and blue spaces? Green spaces are the forests, moss-covered rocky hilltops, wildflower meadows, wetlands, the agricultural fields and pastures that make Metchosin a green oasis in an increasingly developed landscape. Blue spaces are the lakes, ponds and streams that are the 'life blood' of our community, and the marine shorelines that link the land to the sea.

Many green and blue spaces contain native plants, animals and ecosystems with high ecological significance. These species and ecosystems are rapidly disappearing from southeast Vancouver Island as urban development increases.

There has been increasing recognition of the importance of green and blue space in the Capital Region. The CRD's Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy and the Regional Growth Strategy highlight the importance of conserving remnant natural and rural areas in the region.

Much of Metchosin is made up of a relatively natural landscape and agricultural land, largely as a result of the responsible management of past and present property owners. Green and blue space areas in our community contain some of the best remaining examples of the older coniferous forests, Garry oak woodlands and coastal meadows that have mostly disappeared from south east Vancouver Island and have been recognized as globally significant.

The natural and rural character of Metchosin defines the community. The protection of the natural environment and agricultural lands are key elements of Metchosin's Official Community Plan (OCP). However, Metchosin residents cannot take their green and blue spaces for granted. As other parts of the region develop, remaining rural and undeveloped lands become more attractive. Property and timber values increase, leading to additional pressures to develop and alter lands. Properties change hands and new owners want changes. There may be changes on federal and provincial crown lands that affect their green and blue space values.

Such changes, taken together over time, can erode the natural values of the community, as they have for most other CRD municipalities. Therefore, it is important to gain a 'big picture' view of the elements of the natural and rural character of Metchosin, to explore ways to increase awareness of these values, and to take action as a community to ensure that these values are sustained for future generations.

There are some large sections of land in Metchosin that are in the public domain, as municipal and regional trails and parks, as provincial crown lands and as federal Department of National Defence and penitentiary properties, as well as the leased Pearson College. All of these properties have retained much of the natural environment and provide links to other relatively intact areas. One of the main aims of the green and blue space strategy is to work with federal and provincial governments to maintain these important green and blue spaces in perpetuity.

Much of Metchosin land is in private hands. An important goal of this strategy is to increase public awareness of Metchosin's green and blue spaces among its residents, and to assist interested landowners in voluntarily taking action to maintain and enhance green and blue spaces on their properties.

This document presents a strategy for voluntarily conserving green and blue spaces in Metchosin through using the context set out in the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy, the Regional Growth Strategy and the Official Community Plan for Metchosin.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**

To set out a comprehensive plan, developed with input from community landowners and residents, for voluntary ways to conserve the green and blue spaces of Metchosin

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY**

1. Raise awareness and appreciation of the many values and benefits associated with green and blue spaces in Metchosin
2. Gain broad public support for the conservation of green and blue space areas to maintain key features of the natural environment, agricultural and managed forest lands, recreation opportunities, and the scenic rural character of the community
3. Provide an opportunity for landowners and residents to provide input into the identification of important green and blue spaces areas and the development of the strategy
4. Define criteria and develop a framework for evaluating and ranking the significance of green and blue spaces in Metchosin that incorporates ecological, cultural, heritage, rural, recreational and aesthetic values

5. Identify and map important green and blue spaces in Metchosin, their linkages to other green and blue space areas, and describe why these areas and links are important
6. Encourage all levels of government (national, provincial, regional, municipal, First Nations) and local landowners and residents to voluntarily conserve green and blue space areas and values on their lands
7. Identify opportunities for partnerships to help conserve green and blue space areas in the community
8. Provide recommendations for the voluntary conservation and stewardship of green and blue space areas and values in Metchosin

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

An important component of the Green and Blue Spaces Strategy was public consultation which took several forms:

- Information displays at community events (e.g., Metchosin Day)
- Special events (evening talks and morning walks on appropriate subjects)
- Presentation of the framework for the strategy to the West Metchosin Ratepayer's Association and the Association for the Protection of Rural Metchosin
- A public workshop and questionnaire to solicit input into the goal and objectives of the strategy, the proposed green and blue space categories, the benefits of green and blue space, to identify important green and blue space areas in Metchosin, and to obtain ideas for voluntary tools for the conservation of green and blue spaces.

## **TYPES OF GREEN AND BLUE SPACES**

The categories of green and blue space in this strategy expand upon, but are intended to be consistent with, the categories set out in the CRD's Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy.

**1. Large undeveloped natural areas** These large areas of native vegetation have few, if any, roads and appear to be in a relatively natural state. Most of these areas were included in the Unprotected Green Space Policy Areas identified in the Regional Growth Strategy, and some are identified in Metchosin's OCP. These large undeveloped areas are mostly forested but may contain rocky outcrops, meadows, stream corridors, wetlands, and ponds. These large undeveloped natural areas fall into 4 groups:

**a. Existing parks and protected areas.** This category includes regional parks (CRD Parks e.g., Witty's Lagoon), municipal parks (e.g., Buckbrush Swamp), and lands with some form

of protection, such as a conservation covenant (e.g., van der Meer Nature Conservancy, Camas Hill).

**b.** Federal crown land. Federal lands such as those at Rocky Point, Mary Hill and Albert Head, and institutional lands such as Pearson College and William Head Institute.

**c.** Provincial crown land. There are parcels of unallocated provincial Crown land in Metchosin. Some of these are important recreational properties in our community (e.g., Section 25, also known as '100 Acre Wood').

**d.** Private land. Some of Metchosin's existing large undeveloped natural areas are large land holdings on private land.

## **2. Agricultural and managed forest lands.**

Considerable portions of Metchosin are 'working landscapes' devoted to agriculture or forestry. We consider these part of Metchosin's Green and Blue Spaces.

**a.** The agricultural lands are based on the extensive area within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in Metchosin and existing field and pastures outside the ALR used or potentially usable for food production.

**b.** The managed forest lands are those areas of private land within the Private Managed Forest Lands (formerly known as Forest Land Reserve) that will be periodically harvested and replanted.

## **3. Viewpoints and landscapes.**

Viewpoints and landscapes are two categories of Green and Blue Spaces valued for their aesthetic significance.

**a.** Hill top viewpoints Many trails in the upland portions of Metchosin lead to viewpoints that provide beautiful views, such as those designated in the OCP.

**b.** Scenic landscapes These are the hills, valleys and other green and blue space features visible from key points in the community, such as at the Municipal grounds. These vistas are an important part of the natural and rural character of Metchosin.

## **4. Connecting corridors.**

**a.** Green space corridors These are natural areas that provide connections between existing parks and protected areas, and large undeveloped areas of green space. Green space corridors allow the movement of animals and spread of plants and often contain recreational trails of value to the community. Examples include CRD's Galloping Goose Regional Trail and many local Metchosin trails.

**b.** Blue space corridors These are areas of intact native vegetation along streams and around wetlands and watercourses. They protect the aquatic environment and provide pathways for the spread of plants and the movement of animals. Examples include

protected riparian vegetation alongside Bilston Creek, Cole Creek, Martin Brook, Gooch Creek, Veitch Creek.

#### **5. Marine areas.**

**a. Nearshore marine areas** These areas occur along the coastlines of Metchosin. They are productive nursery areas and habitat for marine life, and include eelgrass beds, kelp beds, and subtidal rocky areas.

**b. Marine shorelines** These are areas of natural shoreline on land. They are an important part of the scenic character of the community, contain recreational trails or beach access points, and provide a buffer between buildings and natural dynamic processes such as shoreline erosion. Examples include: rocky marine shorelines and beaches (especially between Albert Head and Church Island), tidal lagoons, estuaries and offshore islands.

**6. Valuable remnant ecosystems** These are small relatively isolated areas of native ecosystems, such as Garry oak wildflower meadows, wetlands, rocky outcrops or old-growth forest that have high natural heritage values and provide habitat for old-growth dependent plants and animals. Most of these areas are identified in the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory and are highlighted in the regional green and blue spaces strategy. (Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory maps are available on the Capital Regional District's Natural Areas Atlas [www.crd.bc.ca/maps/natural/index.htm](http://www.crd.bc.ca/maps/natural/index.htm)).

**7. Small lot stewardship areas** Most of the residential properties in Metchosin, even lots less than 2 ha, contain green space. These lawns, pastures, fields and trees taken together, constitute a major portion of the green space in the community.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### Public Education

- The Talk and Walk series are an example of a public education program to raise awareness and support for native ecosystems and species and the conservation of green and blue spaces in Metchosin.
- Provide additional information on green and blue spaces on the District of Metchosin website with links to sites with information on specific topics
- Initiate a series of articles, information sheets, workshops and other initiatives on green and blue space topics (eg) ways that private land stewardship can contribute to the conservation of green and blue space areas and values in Metchosin, use of native plants in gardens.
- Initiate a series of articles and/or information sheets on how to support local agricultural producers and processors.
- Inform land owners about the options of placing a conservation covenant on their land or entering into some type of voluntary stewardship agreement.

- Develop a list of 'guest speakers' who could make presentations to local clubs, seniors' groups, schools, etc. on green and blue space topic.
- Explore additional opportunities for raising awareness and support for the conservation of green and blue spaces in the community.
- Green & Blue Spaces articles in the Muse under that heading.

#### Acquisition and Protection

- Establish parks and trails and access to viewpoints and landscapes during the subdivision or rezoning process or in negotiations with other levels of government.
- Develop a fund for acquisition of priority green and blue spaces as they become available.
- Encourage CRD Parks to consider establishing new protected areas in our community.
- Encourage the Department of National Defence and Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, through the management of their lands in Metchosin, to maintain their green and blue space values, especially in light of their municipal, regional, provincial, federal and global importance (as refuge of rare species and ecosystems).
- Notify the appropriate provincial government agencies of the importance of all crown lands in Metchosin for green and blue space preservation and the interest of the District in the protection of these lands in perpetuity, be it under municipal, regional, provincial, federal or non-governmental authority.
- Support landowners who wish to place voluntary conservation covenants on their property.

#### Stewardship

- Carry out local environmental restoration projects and invite members of the community to participate (eg) Fireproof Metchosin Day-roadside broom and gorse removal.
- Continue the community project "Mapping Special Places in Metchosin"
- Develop a stewardship certification program for private landowners and developers.
- Consult local land trusts and conservation groups to discuss ideas and opportunities for the voluntary stewardship of green and blue spaces and values in Metchosin

- Bring together local farmers to discuss their role and needs in the conservation of green and blue space areas and values and how best to integrate and sustain natural and agricultural values on rural lands.
- Develop a not-for-profit foundation to facilitate the conservation of green and blue spaces in Metchosin.
- Work towards having Scotch broom declared a 'noxious weed' due to its adverse effects on sensitive and endangered species in sunny exposures.

#### Municipal Government

- Refer to the maps that are generated through the “Mapping Special Places in Metchosin” project, Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory, Metchosin Ecological Inventory and the Green and Blue Spaces Strategy for use in consideration of land use decisions.
- In general, oppose applications to withdraw land in our community from the ALR or Private Managed Forest Lands.
- Where legally authorised, acquire parks and trails (including viewpoints) during the subdivision or rezoning process.
- Develop voluntary guidelines ('best management practices') for conserving green and blue space values during the development of large properties for residential and commercial uses.
- Encourage partnerships to help develop incentives for the conservation of green and blue space values on public and private lands (eg) preferential tax status similar to ALR
- Recognise forest lands as having high value for absorbing carbon dioxide emissions and as a positive tool to counter climate change.
- Incorporate the elements of the green and blue spaces strategy into the next update of Metchosin's Official Community Plan
- Update the maps in the OCP.
- While Metchosin has no formal management responsibility for nearshore marine areas, we should continue to acquire and maintain inventories of these areas, and have municipal input into provincial and federal government decisions regarding their management.
- Recognise the importance of, and encourage the protection and restoration of, Metchosin's natural shoreline.
- Use the municipal website to inform residents of Green and Blue Space initiatives, stewardship options, etc



## **Further Tools for Conserving Green and Blue Space Values and Areas**

There are a number of voluntary tools for conserving green and blue space areas and values in Metchosin:

1. Conservation covenants. If residents wish to ensure that the special features of their property are protected forever, they may choose to establish a conservation covenant on their property. This covenant protects these special features in perpetuity, regardless of who owns the land in the future, without restricting the right to sell the land. There are several conservation covenants already established in our community e.g., the Camosun College van der Meer property, Camas Hill.
2. Partners in conservation. Some conservation groups have a program to protect and enhance important natural areas and habitat on privately owned land by providing recognition, incentive and assistance to landowners who agree to conserve these areas. The agreement is totally voluntary and does not restrict use of the land as long as the identified areas are maintained. Landowners are provided with a sign at the entrance to their property or a label to place on their farm produce containers, e.g., The Land Conservancy (TLC) "Conservation Partners Program"
3. Supporting agricultural and managed forest land. Farm lands and managed forest lands are important components of Metchosin's green and blue spaces. Agricultural land and farmers are currently supported in a number of ways: for example there are reductions in property tax if agricultural sales reach a certain value and Metchosin allows the Farmer's Market to use the municipal grounds for commerce, at no cost. There is a need to explore additional ways to encourage and support residents engaged in agriculture and sustainable forestry, where appropriate and permitted, in Metchosin. Encourage ecoforestry and organic farming practices.
4. Develop voluntary best management practices (BMP's) guidelines for land developers that reduce the proliferation of invasive species and diminish negative impacts on the natural environment.
5. Local governments in BC currently do not have the power to grant municipal tax incentives for retention of natural areas for conservation purposes. The Islands Trust does have the power to do this, and offers tax incentives for landowners who place conservation covenants over their property. If the Municipal Act is changed to allow this power, Metchosin should consider including it in the options for encouraging voluntary stewardship of green and blue spaces on private lands. Metchosin could join with other municipalities in lobbying the provincial government to permit this conservation tool.
6. "Naturescape" and other programs provide suggestions aimed at landowners on how to restore and/or maintain habitat. These include directions for building and placing bird and bat houses, and nature friendly ponds, gardening with native plants, attracting butterflies and pollinators, etc. Disseminate this information through the municipal website, workshops, brochures, etc.

## **Priority Actions**

1. Contact the provincial government to request a moratorium on the development or disposition of BC Crown lands in Metchosin.
2. Request that the province grant BC crown lands to CRD Parks (or other appropriate authority) as park land.
3. Develop a brochure highlighting the values of green and blue spaces in Metchosin and options for voluntary conservation of these areas and associated values

### **Updating the Strategy**

The green and blue spaces strategy is a 'living' document that will be updated as new information becomes available or new actions and priorities are identified. It is recommended that the document be updated as required and formally reviewed every five years to ensure it remains relevant.

## **Appendix A**

### **Desired Outcomes of the Green and Blue Spaces Strategy**

Broad community awareness of the many benefits and values associated with green and blue spaces in Metchosin and support for their conservation.

Public and private landowners voluntarily conserving the green and blue space values on their lands.

A community that retains and enhances:

- clean air and water
- productive and functioning agricultural and managed forest lands
- green and blue features that are important elements of the scenic natural and rural character of the community
- healthy, viable, functioning terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystems
- large undeveloped areas containing a diversity of native ecosystems and species
- important areas of habitat for wildlife and threatened and endangered species
- green and blue space buffers around, and connections between, parks and undeveloped natural areas
- the natural and rural character of important viewsapes

- access to recreational trails, shorelines, and upland viewpoints

## Appendix B

### Planning and Regulatory Documents that Provide Context for the Green and Blue Spaces Strategy

This appendix lists the planning and regulatory documents that provide the context for the Metchosin Green and Blue Spaces Strategy and sets out the key elements of each document in relation to the conservation of green and blue spaces in the community.

A number of existing planning and regulatory documents provide direction and context for the protecting and maintaining green and blue spaces in Metchosin:

- *Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy*

This document:

- provides a definition for regional green and blue spaces
- identifies green space areas, stream corridors and marine shorelines of regional significance in the Capital Region
- suggests strategies for conserving and restoring these areas
- specifically identifies ways that municipalities, the federal and provincial government, institutions and private landowners can contribute to the conservation and restoration of green and blue spaces

- *Regional Growth Strategy*

The *Regional Growth Strategy* sets out a framework for growth and development in the Capital Region. The Strategy specifies the location of an urban containment boundary with the objective of protecting the integrity of rural communities and designates agricultural and forest lands within the provincial land reserves as *Renewable Resource Lands* requiring long-term protection.

The *Regional Growth Strategy* identifies large undeveloped areas outside of parks as *Unprotected Green Space Policy areas* (these are based on the *Core Green Space Areas* in the *Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy*). It proposes that the Capital Regional District and member municipalities work together to protect as much of these lands as possible from development. The *Regional Growth Strategy* also identifies marine areas along the shoreline as *Blue Space Core Policy Areas*, and proposes that all level of government work together to protect the integrity of these

areas. All of nearshore waters along Metchosin's marine shoreline are within *Blue Space Core Policy Areas*.

- *Official Community Plan*

The Metchosin *Official Community Plan* (OCP) sets out the objectives and policies for environmental protection and management, parks, agricultural and forestry lands, institutional lands, transportation and residential and commercial development (including amenity provisions for development. The objectives and policies in the OCP are intended to shape the character and form of development in the municipality, while protecting the natural environment, heritage areas and sites, and agricultural and forestry lands. These objectives and policies will play a key role in the conservation of green and blue spaces in Metchosin.

- *Regional Context Statement*

The Regional Context Statement (RCS) demonstrates how the OCP is consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) or identifies strategies to make it consistent with the RGS or explains elements of the OCP which are not applicable to the RGS. The RCS contains policies and objectives which aim to protect landscape character, ecological heritage and biodiversity throughout the District, including the "Green and Blue Space" lands identified by the RGS.

- *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed to provide direction for the management of Metchosin Parks and Trails, which are key elements of the green and blue space in the community. This Master Plan needs to be updated.

- *Land Use Bylaw*

The Land Use Bylaw sets out the requirements for different land use zones in Metchosin. The bylaw regulates the types of land uses permitted, the siting of buildings, and conditions for subdivision. Each of these factors can affect the retention of green space or blue space values on a property.

- *Tree Management Bylaw*

Regulates the cutting of trees, particularly significant trees (landmarks, or trees with heritage or wildlife value) and trees within 15 m of a watercourse and along shoreline slopes. The Tree Management Bylaw has been amended to provide protection to the following tree species: Cascara, Pacific Yew, Garry Oak, Western Flowering Dogwood, Arbutus and Manzanita

- *Rainwater Protection and Management Bylaw*

This bylaw seeks to minimize alterations to the hydrology of a property when it is developed. Specifically it seeks to retain the proper functioning condition of wetlands, streams and streamside vegetation, and maintain natural water quality and flows during and after the development of a property.

- *Soil Deposit and Removal Bylaw*

Regulates the deposit and removal of soil on properties in the municipality. Soil deposit and removal can affect green and blue space values on a property.

Additional documents to be considered in the conservation of green and blue space in Metchosin:

- Provincial legislation relating to the Agricultural Land Reserve
- Provincial legislation relating to the Private Managed Forest Lands (formerly known as Forest Land Reserve)
- Provincial regulations/guidelines relating to riparian areas
- Department of National Defence (DND) plans and reports relating to the management of the environmental values on DND lands