



STAFF REPORT

Date: July 15, 2013

File No.: TH 6500 – 20

To: Thetis Island Local Trust Committee
For meeting of July 24, 2013

From: Aleksandra Brzozowski
Island Planner

Re: Shoreline Protection Concepts and Options

INTRODUCTION:

At its June 5, 2013 business meeting, the Local Trust Committee (LTC) passed the following resolution:

TH-018-2013: It was MOVED and SECONDED to direct staff to bring back a report which outlines the core concepts and Islands Trust values of shoreline stewardship and options on further educational approaches for the Greenshores approach.

This report provides a summary of Islands Trust values influencing shoreline protection policies, as well as common shoreline protection concepts communicated in other jurisdictions and organizations. It also outlines the decisions required for continuing work on the Greenshores program.

The aim is that the information provided in this staff report will inform decisions regarding LTC messaging at the August 8 “Stewarding Our Shores” event, as well as next steps for shoreline protection on Thetis Island.

BACKGROUND:

During the 2008-2011 Official Community Plan (OCP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Review for Thetis Island, the LTC decided to proceed no further with a draft development permit area for marine shorelands. This project was set aside, to be reviewed after more time dedicated to public consultation.

As well, Trust Council’s current Strategic Plan identifies the following current priorities relevant to shoreline protection:

- To advance the stewardship of coastal areas and marine shore lands
- Provide stewardship information about waterfront lands to community members
- Develop and implement new land use planning tools for shoreline and marine protection

Recently, the public on Thetis Island has indicated that they are more in favour of a non-regulatory approach to shoreline protection, specifically further in-depth education about shoreline stewardship.

ISLANDS TRUST VALUES REGARDING SHORELINES:

The LTC has requested a summary of the values held by the Islands Trust regarding shoreline protection, to serve as a starting point for dialogue with the Thetis community during the August 8 Stewarding Our Shores event.

In a summary list form, policies from the Thetis Island Local Trust Area – and the Islands Trust Area more generally – highly value the following:

- Quality marine habitats
- Preservation of marine biodiversity
- Marine water quality
- Maintaining natural coastal and intertidal processes
- Quality riparian areas
- Foreshore features
- Allowing for the natural processes of salt marshes, kelp, eelgrass beds, and coastal grasslands

These values are drawn from policies existing in the Islands Trust Policy Statement and the Thetis Official Community Plan, as summarized below.

Islands Trust Policy Statement

Local trust committees are clearly directed to protect the shorelines in the Trust Area, including protection of sensitive marine habitats, intertidal habitats, riparian habitats, water quality, and natural coastal processes.

In its section on Ecosystem Preservation and Protection, the Islands Trust Policy Statement makes the following commitment regarding ecosystems, including coastal ecosystems:

Commitments of Trust Council

Trust Council holds that:

- proactive land use planning is essential for the protection of Trust Area ecosystems
- protection must be given to the natural processes, habitats and species of the Trust Area, including those of the old forests, Coastal Douglas-fir forests, Coastal Western Hemlock, Garry Oak/Arbutus forests, wetlands, open coastal grasslands, the vegetation of dry rocky areas, lakes, streams, estuaries, tidal flats, salt water marshes, drift sectors, lagoons, and kelp and eel grass beds.

In the Policy Statement, there is also a directive policy that:

Local trust committees shall in their Official Community Plans and regulatory bylaws, address:

- the protection of sensitive coastal areas;
- the planning for and regulation of development in coastal regions to protect natural coastal processes;
- opportunities for the sharing of facilities such as docks, wharves, floats, jetties, boat houses, board walks and causeways; and
- the compatibility of the location, size and nature of marinas with the ecosystems and character of their local planning area.

Thetis Island Official Community Plan

One of the main objectives of the Thetis Island Official Community Plan (OCP) is to protect marine life and foreshore habitat. In its Natural Resources section, the Thetis Island OCP outlines policies to maintain the integrity of foreshore features, shoreline features, and intertidal processes by:

- Discouraging uses that disrupt natural features and processes and encouraging owners of shoreline properties to retain, wherever possible, natural vegetation and natural features on areas sloping towards the foreshore.
- Supporting the prohibition of filling, deposit, excavation, or removal of foreshore and seabed materials, excepting maintenance of navigational channels and existing wharfage areas.
- Land use regulations should provide for upland waterfront developments to be setback sufficiently to allow for natural erosion and accretion processes, without endangering structures.
- Where land use regulations provide for private docks, the use of communal docks is to be encouraged where feasible and breakwaters are to be prohibited.

Shoreline values noted outside the Thetis Local Trust Area

For this report, staff also completed a short literature review of documents and communications materials produced by various other governments, agencies, and organizations involved in shoreline protection. A number of common themes emerged regarding the values held about shoreline protection, emphasizing the importance of the following:

- Species habitat
- Food chain for larger fish and whales
- Natural coastal processes
- Water Quality
- Ensuring continued public use
- Recreation
- Property Values
- Aesthetics
- Services and resources provided by marine areas
- Disaster Resilience

The vast majority of these values are common to those addressed in the Islands Trust Policy Statement and Thetis Island OCP, except for the focus on recreation which is generally absent from the Islands Trust and Thetis Island policies except for perhaps a recognition of marinas and docks. It is the advice of staff that the LTC present on August 8 the values contained in the Islands Trust Policy Statement and the Official Community Plan as the values driving future work on Priority #3: Shoreline Protection.

A more robust Communications Plan on specific messaging and communication approaches could be prepared in Autumn 2013 following dialogue with the community in August.

FURTHER EDUCATIONAL/NON-REGULATORY APPROACHES

Should the LTC wish to pursue further educational approaches to shoreline stewardship, there is a wide spectrum of activities from which to choose. Many of these activities were noted in the Golder Associates report presented to the LTC on June 5. A number of these methods have

also been previously pursued by other agencies and local governments and could be readily modified for Thetis Island (or all Islands Trust islands more generally). These methods include:

- an educational brochure mailed to all waterfront property owners
- a 'softer shorelines' checklist
- speakers series on shoreline issues
- interactive mapping on MapIT
- an online decision making tool
- one-on-one site visits
- educational videos
- consultation with contractors and developers on best practices
- establishing a Shoreline Stewards working group, made up of volunteer residents

Please note that all further education activities will require funding, as Shoreline Protection is not currently funded in the Thetis 2013/2014 Work Program budget.

Piloting the Greenshores Credit Rating System

At its April 17 meeting, the Thetis LTC expressed interest in exploring future work on Greenshores initiatives, including possibly participating in a pilot of the draft Greenshores credit rating system. This pilot program is contingent on continued funding; the current funding agreement will need to be renegotiated by August 31, 2013.

The Local Planning Committee expects to review the pilot credit ratings document and provide recommendations in November 2013. The Greenshores Pilot would likely begin in Spring/Summer 2014 following consultation with industry stakeholders, tentatively slated to take place in Winter 2014.

The Islands Trust Grants Administrator has noted that a formal resolution committing the LTC in principle to the next phase of the Greenshores program would give direction for the funding renegotiation and to the Local Planning Committee. Additionally, if any prioritized education and outreach activities were identified by August 12, 2013, they could be considered as part of the funding agreement renegotiation.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The LTC has made plans for a shoreline stewardship information evening, taking place on August 8, 2013. At its last business meeting, the LTC stated that it intended to take time during this event to communicate its goals and values for shoreline protection, and begin a dialogue with community members on ways to move forward with protecting shoreline ecosystems, starting from a "common ground" based on shared values.

After research into this topic to inform this staff report, staff recommends that the LTC use the Islands Trust policies and Thetis OCP policies as the starting point. These policies value protection of the natural environment above other values such as recreation which are emphasized in other jurisdictions. Furthermore, both the Policy Statement and OCP were developed through consultation with the public and represent the values of constituents, to the extent that the citizens of the Gulf Islands and Thetis Island in particular participated in the creation of these guiding documents.

The common themes can be summarized as:

- Quality marine habitats
- Preservation of marine biodiversity
- Marine water quality
- Maintaining natural coastal and intertidal processes
- Quality riparian areas
- Foreshore features
- Allowing for the natural processes of salt marshes, kelp, eelgrass beds, and coastal grasslands

To further this dialogue with the community, the August 8 event is a good opportunity to ask waterfront property owners how they would like to move forward on shoreline stewardship education, providing feedback on the various methods noted earlier in this report. It would be prudent to acknowledge that not all methods will be possible, particularly in the short-term, but this feedback may help inform the LTC's next steps for Work Priority #3: Shoreline Protection. Feedback could be obtained quantitatively through a short survey or "dot-mocracy" board at the event, or qualitatively through a post-speaker discussion or informal conversations.

It is useful to note that should the LTC desire funding for education and outreach activities and specific activities could be identified to staff by August 12, 2013, they could be considered as part of the Greenshores funding agreement renegotiation.

It has also been noted earlier in this report that the Local Planning Committee and the Grants Administrator would appreciate direction from the Thetis LTC regarding their commitment to the Greenshores pilot program. The following are points to consider before committing in principle to the Greenshores credit rating pilot program:

- scheduling of the pilot program within the current work program
- required commitment of Trustees to recruiting participants into the pilot
- potential commitment of staff time to oversee the project
- potential commitment of LTC to implement incentives offered through the pilot program

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Thetis Island Local Trust Committee:

- That the Thetis Island Local Trust Committee identify its key shoreline messages to present at the Stewarding Our Shores event;
- That the Thetis Island Local Trust Committee commit in principle to standing as a pilot Local Trust Area for the Greenshores draft credit rating system subject to further information about the timeline and planning staff time commitment;
- That the Thetis Island Local Trust Committee direct staff on preferred methods of information gathering to solicit community input on August 8 regarding future activities on the topic of shoreline stewardship.

Prepared and Submitted by:

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July 15, 2013

Date

Concurred in by:

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July 16, 2013

Date