



REQUEST FOR DECISION

To: Regional Planning Committee **For the Meeting of:** September 10, 2026
From: Planning Services **Date Prepared:** July 15, 2026
SUBJECT: Monitoring Progress on Ecosystem Protection in Land Use Planning – Initiative 3.2.4 Update

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Regional Planning Committee forward this Request for Decision and its attachments to Islands Trust Council recommending that Islands Trust Council:
 - Receive the *Species at Risk – State of the Islands* report,
 - Endorse staff use of the *Species at Risk – State of the Islands* report, LIST, and the model natural environment Development Permit Area as operational technical inputs when advising Local Trust Committees and preparing bylaw updates,
 - Endorse staff use of the Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports as a staff operational standard,
 - Request staff to prepare an internal communications policy to improve how the methodology and rationale behind the Land Information Screening Tool are communicated in staff reports, presentations, and related projects,
 - Request staff to expand and refine the Land Information Screening Tool content in the Housing Options Toolkit by adding a more technical summary of the tool’s methodology, rationale, and intended use to complement the current plain-language version posted online as Tool 4 – Land Information Screening Tool.
2. That the Regional Planning Committee request staff to draft a business case with options for retaining ongoing biological expertise.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER COMMENTS:

This Request for Decision reflects substantial progress on Islands Trust Council Strategic Plan initiative 3.2.4 and provides a coherent set of tools to strengthen ecosystem-informed planning. Staff have identified practical implementation measures and a reasonable path for addressing long-term biological expertise. The recommendations are appropriate for Council’s consideration.

1 PURPOSE:

For the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) to consider and refer this Request for Decision to Islands Trust Council, enabling Islands Trust Council to receive and endorse use of the deliverables completed by the Environment and Climate Change Canada-funded Biologist (Feb 2025–Mar 2026).

2 BACKGROUND:

The ECCC funded Biologist delivered a set of products that advanced [Islands Trust Council Strategic Plan key initiative 3.2.4: Monitor progress of protection of ecosystem health in all land use planning decisions](#). Deliverables include:

- Species at Risk – State of the Islands report, summarizing regional and island-specific trends.
- Draft Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports.
- Draft Model Natural Environment Development Permit Area.
- Updates to the Land Information Screening Tool (LIST), including critical ecosystems, environmental layers, and Species at Risk data.
- Updated Official Community Plan (OCP) wording for Denman and Gabriola, refined TAPIS sensitive-ecosystem layers, and provided planner training/support.

RPC previously requested staff convert an earlier LIST Staff Report into a Request for Decision (RFD); this RFD updates that request and includes the May 1, 2026 Staff Report for Islands Trust Council consideration.

2 IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

ORGANIZATIONAL:

The Regional Planning Team will lead operational use of the *Species at Risk – State of the Islands* report, the model environmental DPA, and LIST when advising local trust committees and preparing bylaw updates.

The Current Planning Team will lead further refinement and operational use of the Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports.

FINANCIAL:

Operational rollout costs are minimal. Staff seek endorsement to prepare a business case outlining options for retaining biological expertise, including reinstating technical review funds, repurposing a vacant position, or other staffing or contract solutions.

POLICY:

Endorsing use of the Species at Risk – State of the Islands report, LIST, and the TOR supports Strategic Plan Key Initiative 3.2.4 and strengthens evidence-based planning across OCP/LUB updates.

IMPLEMENTATION/COMMUNICATIONS:

Staff will issue internal guidance on using the *Species at Risk – State of the Islands* report, the model environmental DPA, LIST, and the TOR. RPC concerns about LIST largely relate to how the tool was introduced without adequate communication. The May 1, 2026 staff report outlines communication improvements. If Council approves, staff will prepare an internal communications policy and add a technical memo and presentation to complement the existing plain-language LIST description.

FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS:

Continued engagement with First Nations is required for major projects led by the RPT. RPT will coordinate with the Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor and Islands Trust Conservancy on culturally sensitive data and consultation approaches.

OTHER:

3 RELEVANT POLICY(S):

Islands Trust Council Strategic Plan Key Initiative 3.2.4.

4 ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Species at Risk: State of the Islands
2. Draft Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports
3. Draft Model Natural Environment Development Permit Area
4. LIST Staff Report dated May 1, 2026

RESPONSE OPTIONS

Recommendation:

That the Regional Planning Committee recommends forwarding this Request for Decision and attachments to Islands Trust Council, asking Council to receive the *Species at Risk – State of the Islands* report and endorse staff use of that report, the Land Information Screening Tool, and the model natural environment Development Permit Area as technical inputs for advising Local Trust Committees and updating bylaws. Council is also asked to endorse staff use of the Terms of Reference for Professional Environmental Assessment Reports, request development of an internal communications policy to better explain the Land Information Screening Tool, and request refinement of the Tool's content in the Housing Options Toolkit with a more technical summary to complement the existing plain-language version. Finally, the Committee recommends requesting staff to prepare a business case outlining options for retaining ongoing biological expertise.

Alternatives:

That Islands Trust Council receive the deliverables and request staff to report back on implementation progress as part of regular Strategic Plan reporting.

That Islands Trust Council refer the deliverables to Local Trust Committees for information and future consideration in local planning processes.

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Reviewed By/Date: Rueben Bronee, CAO / July 17, 2026