



DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN

AGENDA

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING

April 28, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
Metchosin Municipal Hall

1. **Agenda, Additions, Approval**
2. **Presentations**
3. **Public Participation**
4. **Adoption of Minutes**
 - a) Metchosin Environmental Advisory Select Committee, March 24, 2026 1
5. **Receipt of Minutes**
 - a) Parks & Trails Advisory Select Committee, March 17, 2026 5
6. **Business Arising from the Minutes**
 - a) Biodiversity and Natural Assets Planning – Open House Event
 - b) Mapping sensitive ecosystems
 - c) Roadside Ditching vs. Naturalized Roadside Infiltration 9
7. **Reports**
 - a) Chair’s Verbal Report
 - b) Council Liaison Verbal Report
8. **Correspondence**
9. **Other Business**
 - a) Dark Skies 13
 - b) Shoreline Planning
 - c) MEASC 2026 Annual report submission 17
10. **Adjournment and Next Meeting**

District of Metchosin

Minutes

Environmental Advisory Select Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 7:00 P.M.

Council Chamber

Metchosin Municipal Hall

Present: Councillor Steve Gray, Bill Cave, Garry Fletcher (Chair), Merrilee Hoen (recorder), Andy MacKinnon, Ric Perron, Erin Van de Water

Regrets: Anna Hall

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. Agenda, Additions and Approval:

- Addition to 6b. Zoom meeting with Action for Adaptation representatives for a demonstration of their mapping tool.

Moved and Seconded by Ric Perron and Erin Van de Water

THAT the Committee approve the agenda as amended to include the addition to item 6.b), a Zoom meeting with Action for Adaptation representatives for a demonstration of their mapping tool.

Carried

2. Presentations

- None

3. Public Participation

- None

4. Adoption of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Merrilee Hoen and Andy MacKinnon

THAT the Committee approve the minutes of the Environmental Advisory Select Committee meeting held on January 27, 2026.

Carried

5. Receipt of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Steve Gray and Ric Perron

THAT the Committee receive the Parks & Trails Advisory Select Committee Minutes from meetings held on January 28, 2026, and February 17, 2026, for information.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

a) Biodiversity and Natural Assets Planning

- Council has approved the recommendation made by the Committee of the Whole to forward the Biodiversity and Natural Assets Draft Plan to staff for review and for MEASC to hold an Open House for public education and input.

- Committee members will plan for open house event.

b) Mapping Sensitive Ecosystems

- Committee Members outlined their concerns regarding the Official Community Plan (OCP) Map 4 which does not include sufficient detail to identify all the sensitive ecosystems in Metchosin.
- Zoom meeting with Kelly Chapman and Dionne Bunsha, Action for Adaptation:
 - Next month they plan to launch a beta version of the Biodiversity Atlas online for the public to view and download.
 - They have mapped many layers for an area of the south coast including Metchosin.
 - These layers represent data from a number of sources gathered over the years.
 - MEASC is particularly interested in the layers which represent sensitive ecosystems in our area.

Committee Discussion:

- The data currently captured in the map layers is predominately terrestrial.
- Addition of marine data sources to be shared with Action for Adaption representatives.
- Data derived from aerial photographs:
 - While it is preferred that it be verified by ground truthing, the magnitude of the area means that some of the layers represent a reasonable approximation of the situation but may lack fine detail.
- Action for Adaptation is interested in working with Metchosin to help refine local data.
- Discussion to continue at next meeting.

7. Reports

a) Chair's Verbal Report

- None

b) Council Liaison Verbal Report

- Recent Council meeting highlights including:
 - Status of the tax exemption for non-profit organizations;
 - Upcoming Budget Open House;
 - Fire Hall project; and
 - PTASC Parks and Trails Master Plan update.

8. Correspondence:

The Committee received Nicole Shukin's correspondence concerning Ecosystem Services and Uplands.

Committee Discussion:

- Further education is needed regarding the meaning and significance of ecosystem services.
- This may be included in the information presented in the Biodiversity and Natural Assets Draft Plan Open House.

9. Other Business

a) Roadside Ditching vs. Naturalized Roadside Infiltration

- Little ditching has occurred in Metchosin over the last 3 years.
- Public Works is recommending the resumption of ditching because some roads and culverts may suffer water damage due to ditch overflow.
- Some members of the public are opposed to any ditching.
- MEASC plans to make recommendations about how to apply different treatments to ditches depending upon their location, the adjacent road conditions and the type of vegetation present.
- The ideal would be to keep the ditches narrow and retain as much vegetation as possible to minimize erosion and maximize the infiltration of water into the ground.
- Research factors to be considered in a ditching plan.

10. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date

Moved and Seconded by Ric Perron and Erin Van de Water
THAT the Committee adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Carried

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN

Minutes

Parks and Trails Advisory Select Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.
Council Chambers
Metchosin Municipal Hall

Present: David Shanks (Chair), Jay Shukin (Council Liaison, Recorder), Emma Horgan, Ron Aubrey, Chris Thibodeau, Caroline Donohue, Ian Baxter

Regrets: Kathy Atherton,

The Meeting was called to order at 4:30pm.

1. Agenda, Additions, Approval

- Introduction of new members.
- Agenda approved by consensus.
- Brief discussion about documents that the new members should have.

2. Presentations

- No presentations.

3. Public Participation

- No public participation.

4. Adoption of Minutes

- Parks & Trails Advisory Select Committee, February 17, 2026. Approved, with the correct spelling of “Cliff”.

5. Receipt of Minutes

- No other minutes to receive.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

a) Parks & Trails Master Plan Update

- Most recent draft of the Plan circulated to new members and comments requested by April 2, 2026.
- Goal is to provide Council with a new draft by mid-April.

7. Reports

a) Parks & Trails Coordinator Verbal Report

- Trail signage update:
 - Affordable quote (~\$30/sign); and
 - Can overlay old signs, where the paint is faded.

Committee Discussion:

- Material availability, aluminum and a composite material;
 - Priority replacement and graphic standard;
 - Committee and staff roles and responsibilities regarding sign replacement to be discussed with CAO.
- No reports of park/trail damage after mid-March windstorm.

Committee Discussion:

- New drainage work done by Colwood on Latoria Creek:
 - Concerns about future flow impact on downstream neighbours and Latoria Creek Community Bridge as development continues;
 - CAO has been informed of the work and has connected with Colwood; and
 - PTASC to continue monitoring.

b) Council Liaison Verbal Report

- Update on the newly hired Fire Chief (Dan Verdun) and District budget process.

Committee Discussion:

- Buffer Land:
 - Ian Baxter provided an update from the March 21 Broom Removal event organized by Friends of the Buffer Land; and
 - Buffer Land to be added as ongoing agenda.

c) Chair Verbal Report

- Review of past Committee actions;
- Possibility of Committee OneDrive to be discussed with staff; and
- Meeting time change to 6:00 p.m.

8. Correspondence

- No Correspondence received.

9. Other Business

a) Royal Roads University (RRU) Student Nick DeCarlo, Thesis Topic for Input, Metchosin Buffer Lands Potential Research Questions

- Ian Baxter provided background on the research proposal including the following two options:
 1. “Patterns of Invasive Species and Native Plant Composition Near Trails”
 2. “Buffer Land Asset & Ecosystem Service Hotspot Identification & Risk Assessment”

Committee Discussion:

- Value of Option 2:
 - Ian will request more information about the research plan for the next meeting for further discussion.

10. Adjournment and Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held on April 29, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Roadside Ditching vs. Naturalized Roadside Infiltration

Balancing environmental goals (infiltration, habitat, natural hydrology) with the engineering goals (protecting roads, culverts, and downstream safety) is a classic issue in the Pacific Northwest. The solution rarely ends up being “ditch everywhere” or “ditch nowhere.”

Most modern practice combines both approaches using hydrology, risk assessment, and green infrastructure. Below is a practical way communities reconcile the two perspectives.

Understand the Two Approaches

1. Traditional Roadside Ditches

Purpose: Quickly move water away from the road.

Advantages

- Protect road base from saturation
- Directs runoff to culverts and channels
- Handles large storm events
- Reduces risk of washouts and road failures

Risks / drawbacks

- Speeds runoff → can increase downstream flooding
- Erosion and sediment transport
- Reduced groundwater recharge
- Habitat disruption

Engineering departments historically favor this because road failure can be expensive and dangerous.

2. Naturalized Roadside (Infiltration / “No Ditch”)

Purpose: Let water soak into soil through vegetation and shallow swales.

Advantages

- Groundwater recharge
- Reduces peak runoff
- Filters pollutants
- Better habitat and aesthetics

Risks

- Can overload soils during extreme rain
- Poor infiltration soils (clay) can cause water to pond
- Roads can weaken if base stays wet
- Culverts may still receive uncontrolled flows

Environmental advocates often support this because it restores natural hydrology.

What Modern Stormwater Design Actually Does

Most current best practice in places like British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon is hybrid “green + engineered” drainage.

Typical strategy:

1. Infiltrate water where possible
 - Vegetated swales
 - Shallow ditches
 - Rain gardens
 - Permeable shoulders
2. Provide controlled drainage where necessary
 - Culverts
 - Armored ditches
 - Overflow channels
3. Design for extreme storms
 - Overflow paths
 - Emergency drainage

The key concept is “distributed drainage with safe conveyance.”

Site Conditions Decide the Right Approach

The right solution depends heavily on local factors.

Important variables engineers evaluate:

Soil type

- Sandy / glacial soils → good infiltration
- Clay → infiltration may fail

Slope

- Steep slopes require drainage channels to prevent erosion

Rain intensity

- Pacific Northwest “atmospheric rivers” can overwhelm infiltration systems

Road importance

- Major roads require higher safety margins than low-traffic rural roads

Culvert locations

- Culverts must receive predictable flow or they may clog or fail

The Most Practical Compromise

In many communities the compromise looks like:

1. Use naturalized drainage for most road length
 - Shallow vegetated swales
 - Infiltration zones
2. Use engineered drainage at critical points
 - Near culverts
 - Steep grades
 - Known flood zones
 - Near intersections

This creates controlled flow only where needed.

Think of it as:

“Natural drainage most of the way, engineered drainage where failure risk exists.”

How Communities Actually Resolve the Debate

A productive way to bring environmental and engineering perspectives together is a data-driven pilot approach.

Steps:

1. Hydrologic study
 - Model rainfall and runoff

- Identify high-risk segments
- 2. Soil infiltration testing
 - Percolation tests
 - Groundwater depth
- 3. Road risk mapping
 - Sections prone to washouts
 - Culvert loading points
- 4. Pilot sections
 - Test naturalized swales on some road segments
 - Monitor performance
- 5. Adaptive management
 - Adjust design if failures occur

This replaces ideology with measured outcomes.

What Many Progressive Jurisdictions Do

Common policy in western North America:

- Avoid deep ditches where infiltration is feasible
- Install vegetated swales instead
- Maintain defined drainage paths near culverts
- Design overflow for extreme storms

This is sometimes called “low impact development (LID)” or “green stormwater infrastructure.”

KEY INSIGHTS

The best systems combine infiltration + controlled drainage.

Instead of asking: “Should we stop ditching?”

Ask: “Where should we infiltrate water, and where must we safely convey it?”

SOURCE: CHAT GPT April 2026

Follow up questions: Dredging practices to minimize muddy water? Dredging material hazards and permits? Trimming vegetation vs dredging?

District of Metchosin Dark Sky Community Designation Proposal

Introduction:

Metchosin is a rural and rural-suburban municipality which is part of the Capital Regional District (CRD) on Vancouver Island. Other members of the CRD include the Cities of Victoria, Colwood and Langford which are highly urbanized. Metchosin, where farming is still a significant factor in the local economy, is perhaps the most rural member. Parks and undeveloped land still provide a haven for wildlife and a respite for humans from the ills of urbanization. It has a unique character much appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

This unique character is under threat. Increasing amounts of outdoor lighting are affecting wildlife populations and are also detrimental to human health. Ironically, studies have shown that security, often touted as the reason for excessive lighting, is not improved by outdoor lighting. There is also some indication that excessive light even reduces security by providing glare and shadows that assist the nefarious in their activities. Blue LED lighting, which is cheap and becoming common, reduces the production of melatonin in both humans and wildlife. As melatonin is a profound regulator of sleep and circadian rhythms, the biological impact of its loss can be severe. Excess outdoor lighting causes sky glow which reduces the ability to see the night sky. For millennia the night sky has been a focus of cultural values for all peoples. Humans place their stories and history into the night sky in the form of the constellations. It is a practice which binds us all together since we all share the same night sky. Metchosin still provides a reasonably dark night so that people can still tell their children the stories of the night. But we are losing it fast.

Metchosin has an opportunity to reverse this trend. Most people are well-intentioned but often not well-informed. Education rather than regulation can be a more effective tool for change. And establishing a goal for the community could well provide a rallying point for Metchosin residents and help with developing a unique identity. An external certification can provide access to educational materials, and would provide an objective measure of the community's efforts to reduce light pollution and also confer significant bragging rights...

Certifications Available:

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) offers three levels of certification:

- **Dark-Sky Preserve:** Sites with very dark skies with minimal sky glow, and that are generally far from urban centres and therefore somewhat less accessible to astronomers and the public. These usually do contain public campgrounds.
- **Nocturnal Preserve:** Some dark sites are remote with few resources for active outreach programs, and are designated more for the protection of the night for flora and fauna than for public amenities.
- **Urban Star Park:** These are sites within, or close to, urban areas that are not considered "dark", but provide good access to the public.

- DarkSky International (DSI, formerly the International Dark Sky Association) offers the following designations:
 - **Dark Sky Sanctuary.** Public or private land that has an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment.
 - **Dark Sky Reserve.** Public or private land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment.
 - **Dark Sky Park.** Land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment.
 - **Dark Sky Community.** A town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of a quality outdoor lighting ordinance, dark sky education, and citizen support of dark skies.
 - **Urban Night Sky Place.** A municipal park, open space, observing site, or other similar property near or surrounded by large urban environs, and whose planning and design actively promote an authentic nighttime experience in the midst of significant artificial light.

Metchosin most likely would qualify as a RASC Urban Star Park, a DSI Dark Sky Community and/or a DSI Urban Night Sky Place. The Town of Bon Accord, Alberta is a DSI Dark Sky Community and Oak Bay has a RASC Urban Star Park at Cattle Point. Both municipalities would likely be willing to share their experiences.

After a thorough review of the above options the best fit for Metchosin is for designation as a DSI Dark Sky Community.

Requirements:

Requirements for Dark Sky Community designation are as follows:

- **Municipal Outdoor Lighting.** Municipal lights must comply with Canadian Guidelines for Outdoor Lighting (CGOL) or equivalent. Metchosin's existing Dark Sky Policy is based on CGOL so this requirement may already be met or significantly met.
- **Accessibility.** The core area must be accessible by the public after the end of twilight. Metchosin's core is already accessible,
- **Quality of the Night Environment.** CGOL requirements as above must be met. In addition, light measurements must be taken and reported, usually on an annual basis.
- **Public Outreach.** Public outreach is required for visitors and residents. It can consist of raising awareness of the connection of dark skies to night ecology and raising awareness of stargazing or other night-time activities. This can take several forms including information pamphlets, public presentations and planned activities.
- **Advocacy.** There is an expectation that the certified community would engage in advocating reduction in light pollution with surrounding communities.

Cost to Metchosin

Metchosin has already undertaken a significant effort to reduce light pollution via its Dark Sky policy. Compliance with the current CGOL and any additional requirements such as the RASC-CGOL qualification may need to be reviewed. The program permits upgrades to meet compliance to be spread out over a period of up to ten years to allow better integration with ongoing maintenance programs. Some signage will need to be erected to identify Metchosin as a Dark Sky Community and direct visitors to the core area. Outreach materials are available from DSI and perhaps RASC including pamphlets, posters and videos. Locally oriented materials can be developed by volunteers. Monitoring of light conditions and sky quality can also be done by volunteers. Volunteers can also assist with the preparation of any reporting requirements. Presentations and events can be held in conjunction with the Victoria Centre of the RASC, Pearson College's Astronomy Activity Group and Metchosin volunteers. A one time application fee of \$US250.00 is required to begin the process. It can be taken from the existing budget item designated for compliance with our existing Dark Sky policy.

Staff Commitment:

There should be no significant demand on staff time as volunteers are expected to prepare the application with input from DarkSky International.

Timeline:

Once the application fee is paid the process is anticipated to take approximately two years before designation is granted. DarkSky International works closely with the applicant in developing the application. This includes consulting by telephone and zoom calls as well as reviewing parts of the application as it is written. It also gives us access to DarkSky's other resources such as educational materials.

Recommendations:

- The District of Metchosin should apply for DSI Dark Sky Community Designation.
- Council should direct the application to be prepared by member(s) of the Healthy Communities Select Advisory Committee working with DarkSky International for submission back to Council for approval.
- Staff should be directed to pay the one-time application fee as soon as possible.

T.B.(Ted) White

MEASC – District of Metchosin 2025 Annual Report

Metchosin’s Environmental Advisory Select Committee (MEASC) considers environmental matters and reports its findings and opinions to Council. MEASC held eight meetings in 2025 and hosted an information booth on Metchosin Community Day.

During 2025, MEASC advanced work on a local Biodiversity and Natural Assets Plan consulting with Council, staff, Council’s Advisory Select Committees and local environmental groups.

MEASC recommendations to Council in 2025 included matters related to:

- Improving protection of wetlands and riparian areas
- Seeking to control rather than eradicate invasive Himalayan Blackberry
- Encouraging Public Works staff representation with the Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP)
- Liaison with the West Coast Marine Response Corporation on oil spill response
- Local input on the Provincial spraying program for Spongy Moth
- Mapping sensitive ecosystems in accordance with Metchosin’s Official Community Plan
- Protecting Significant Trees
- One subdivision referral with specific recommendations designed to minimize the proposed development’s environmental impact
- Climate action plan reporting
- Continued municipal support for the federal Oil Tanker Moratorium Act
- Invasive American Bullfrog management
- Roadside trails alongside road paving projects
- Retaining forest canopies on tax exempt properties

The Committee investigated and promoted opportunities for UVic students to engage with and support local environmental initiatives. MEASC also reviewed for comment the PTASC draft Parks and Trails Master Plan.