

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **New Look!**

We have updated the FAQ topic areas to reflect the themes emerging from the community engagement. This is a living document that collates frequently asked questions heard through the Savary Island Community Plan review and update process.

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# Plan Foundation

## Legal Context

### **Q: What is the difference between an Official Community Plan (OCP) and the Savary Island Community Plan?**

A: There is no difference. The Savary Island Community Plan is a review and update of the current Savary Island Official Community Plan.

### **Q: Do Savary residents get to choose whether or not there are land use regulations on the island?**

A: Sort of. While the Regional Board could enact regulations, there is no obligation under the *Local Government Act* (LGA) for a local government to regulate land use.

So far, we have heard that most people on Savary do not want any new regulations.

### **Q: What are the Provincial regulations for building codes, groundwater and septic requirements? How are these monitored and enforced?**

A: Provincial regulations relating to the BC Building Code are administered by BC Housing: Licensing and Consumer Servicing.

Provincial regulations relating to groundwater are administered by BC Ministry of Environment and Parks.

Provincial regulations relating to septic requirements are administered by Vancouver Coastal Health.

Compliance and enforcement is complaint driven and handled by the responsible provincial agency.

### **Q: Is keeping the old Official Community Plan and not implementing a new one a possibility?**

A: *Local Government Act* states that an official community plan (OCP) should be reviewed and updated every 5-10 years. This review and update cycle makes sense in urban areas and municipalities experiencing high rates of growth and development pressure. However, in more remote and rural areas where growth rates are modest, OCPs are generally reviewed and updated every 15-20 years.

The 2006 Savary Island OCP is almost 20 years old and there have been many changes on Savary over the past years. It will be determined through the planning process how much of the existing OCP will be retained and how much will be updated. At a minimum, mapping changes will be required to reflect changes in land use over the

last 20 years. Policy changes may also be required to better reflect the vision, values and aspirations of the Savary Island community today.

**Q: What is the purpose of the legislative language in an official community plan?**

A: The *Local Government Act* sets out the following required content for an official community plan (OCP). An OCP must have statements and map designations for:

- Residential development required to meet anticipated housing needs
- Present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational and public utility land uses
- Present and proposed public facilities, including schools, parks and waste treatment and disposal sites
- Sand & gravel deposits mapping
- Phasing of any major road, sewer and water system
- Restrictions on the use of land that is subject to hazardous conditions or that is environmentally sensitive to development.
- Housing policies for affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing, and
- Targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and policies and actions of the local government proposed to achieve those targets

**Q: What new Provincial legislation needs to be included in the Savary Island Community Plan, and where can residents find this legislation?**

A: Most of the new legislative requirements announced by the Province relate to assessing long term housing needs and planning for how to meet long term housing needs. Most of the requirements do not apply to rural communities, and are intended to address core housing needs. All requirements, including new housing related requirements, are set out under the *Local Government Act*, Part 14, Division 4 available here:

[https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/r15001\\_14#division\\_d0e43604](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/r15001_14#division_d0e43604)

## Regional & Jurisdictional Context

### **Q: Does Tla'amin Nation have a voice in the development of the Savary Island Community Plan?**

A: Yes, qathet Regional District has a formal protocol agreement with Tla'amin Nation that guides collaboration on land use planning. The Tla'amin Nation has had input through all phases of the planning process.

### **Q: Does the Savary Island OCP have any relationship with Savary Island Land Trust (SILT) or the Association of Savary Island Community (ASIC)?**

A: No. There is no formal relationship between qathet Regional District and SILT or ASIC. Members of these organizations participate, along with 13 other members, in the Savary Island Community Plan Advisory Committee, appointed by the qRD Regional Board.

## Community Planning Process

### **Q: How will review & engagement take place on the draft community plan?**

A: The draft community plan will be prepared during Phase 4 of the planning process. In terms of format, the draft plan will look similar to the Texada Island Official Community Plan but the content will be based on what we have heard from the Savary Island community throughout Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the planning process.

In terms of review and engagement, the draft community plan will first be reviewed and refined by the Savary Island Community Plan Advisory Committee. Following the Committee's review, the draft plan will be made publicly available on the Savary Island Community Plan project webpage. Community engagement on the draft Community Plan will include both online and in-person opportunities for you to provide feedback.

### **Q: Will there be townhall style/open format meetings utilized at the draft plan phase and public hearing phase?**

A: Staff are currently exploring options for hosting a Town hall-style meeting on Savary Island in the new year.

A public hearing will be held during Phase 5 of the planning process. A public hearing is the formal meeting where community members are provided the opportunity to speak to the Board and share any outstanding concerns relating to the proposed community plan before it is adopted by the Regional Board.

**Q: Are property owners going to be able to vote on the final plan?**

A: No. Under the *Local Government Act*, final adoption of the official community plan is a formal decision voted on by the qathet Regional District Board.

**Q: Have you provided examples of Community Plan Visions from other Gulf Islands with similar concerns and issues as Savary that the Advisory Committee could use as models and guides?**

A: Yes. In the orientation session with the Savary Island Community Plan Advisory Committee, examples were provided, and members were encouraged to look at official community plans from other rural and island communities.

**Q: Does the qRD post on the Savary Island message boards?**

A: No. The qRD does not post on the Savary Island message boards on Facebook.

qRD staff post on the qRD Facebook page, and these posts can be shared by community members on Savary Island message boards.

**Q: What are the timelines and the processes for the community engagement?**

A: The Savary Island Community Plan community engagement launched in Summer 2024 with a call for volunteers to join the Savary Island Community Plan Advisory Committee. Since then, there have been both on-line and in-person, and on-island engagement activities to engage with community members. The Project Timeline identifies the 5 Phases in the planning process, and the different community engagement activities in each phase. Learn more about each Phase, where we've been and where we are going, on the project webpage here:

[www.qathet.ca/savaryocp](http://www.qathet.ca/savaryocp)

**Q: What is the rationale for the Official Community Plan timeline and why is it shorter than Texada Island's OCP?**

A: In the original public engagement plan, staff proposed a one year time frame to review and update the Plan. This timeline has now been revised, and we expect to be providing the public a draft Savary Island Community Plan in spring 2026!

The longer timeline was the result of three significant differences between the Texada Island and the Savary Island planning processes. Firstly, there was no consultant support contracted for the Texada OCP. The work load for the project was completed by qRD Planning staff, a challenging task with only two staff. Secondly, Texada OCP review and update was a few years prior to Covid when online meeting platforms like Zoom and MS Teams really took off. Third, there were shishálh Nation interests on Texada that had to be addressed prior to project completion.

**Q: Are property owners directly mailed about the slope studies and land use regulations?**

A: The qRD has never provided public mail outs for any of the slope hazard studies or coastal flood mapping reports completed in the region.

All slope hazard studies and coastal flood mapping reports have been presented and considered at open meetings of the qRD Regional Board. In addition, all slope hazard studies and coastal flood mapping reports are freely accessible to the public on the qRD website. All slope hazard studies can be found on our “Development Resources” page. Coastal flood mapping reports for the mainland and the islands can be found on our Coastal Risks page.

**Q: Will the qRD offer facilitated workshops to discuss important topics like carrying capacity, transportation, and water?**

A: The qRD hosted three online workshops and small group discussions in February 2025. The purpose of the workshops was to dig deeper into key outcomes from the community survey. The workshops provided property owners and residents an opportunity to discuss key values, key aspirations and solutions to Savary’s challenges, including carrying capacity and overdevelopment, transportation and traffic, and groundwater protection. The “What We Heard” report detailing the workshops and past public engagement is available on the project webpage: [www.qathet.ca/savaryocp](http://www.qathet.ca/savaryocp)

**Q: How will the feedback collected from the community be used to inform the Savary Island Community Plan?**

A: Each phase of engagement in the planning process has a “What We Heard Report” – now available on the project website! These documents provide an overview of the themes heard in each engagement activity, statistics of who was engaged, outcome highlights, and next steps. The reports also include an appendix of the “raw” comments for transparency in the process.

The development of the Plan will reflect the direction from the community engagement outcomes.

**Q: Will the feedback be weighted to reflect the diverse perspectives of the community, including full-time residents, seasonal residents, and First Nations?**

A: Feedback will not be weighted or prioritized based on permanent or seasonal residency. All current landowners, including Tla’amin people that have occupied Savary Island - qəyε qʷən since time immemorial, will have a say in the Plan.

**Q: How does the qRD plan to ensure the accuracy and reliability of survey results?**

A: The qRD has confidence in the survey platform and, based on the results, there is no evidence of survey spamming or attempts to influence results. The community has acted in good faith and provided their insights throughout the Community Engagement phase.

The results of the community feedback, including raw qualitative data, is available online on the project website under “What We Have Learned”:

[www.qathet.ca/savaryocp](http://www.qathet.ca/savaryocp)

Staff does make note of repeated or identical comments (it’s easy to spot, and they are often back-to-back), but they are few and far between.

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## **Our Future - Plan Vision**

### **Plan Objectives & Policies**

**Q: How do you develop policy? What does it entail?**

A: Developing policy means identifying actions that will support achieving the community’s vision and goals. It starts with reviewing background information, previous planning documents (like the 2006 Savary Island OCP), and other technical documents (like the slope hazard study and groundwater study). From there, we review what is still relevant, what needs updating, and what new ideas should be considered. We test these ideas with the community by asking residents what they think needs to happen on the island moving forward. Based on that feedback, we will be develop policies.

When developing policy, planners use a range of policies, from voluntary (educational) to incentivized (encourage certain behaviours).

An Official Community Plan provides the policy framework to guide land use and development decision making of the regional district, other government agencies, businesses and land owners.

In simple terms, policies are the “how” in the steps we will take over the next several years to move toward the community’s shared vision and goals. As planners, we aim to write policies in a way that is clear, concise, practical, and easy for everyone to understand and use.

## Land Use and Development

**Note from staff:** Based on the public feedback received to date (Nov 2025), there is little support for developing “Development Permit Areas” or regulatory tools (zoning or building bylaws) to manage land use, building setbacks, or development on Savary Island. This is common practice in our region, as only about 5% of the electoral area land base is affected by a zoning bylaw.

**Q: Is the qRD considering a Land Use Regulation after the community plan and review and update is finalized and adopted? Will the new Savary Island Community Plan impose stricter building regulations, permitting processes or a zoning bylaw?**

A: **No.** Based on community feedback received to-date, there is not sufficient support for implementing land use regulations to control building or development after the Savary Island Community Plan is updated.

The qRD has not adopted a building bylaw to implement the BC Building Code, and does not operate a building inspection or permitting service for building in any of its four electoral areas (Electoral Areas A, B, C, or D). The qRD Regional Board has no plan to implement building regulations on Savary Island.

**Q: If the qRD does not implement land use regulations, what rules are in place to control land use and development on Savary Island?**

A: There are provincial and federal regulations that apply on Savary Island. For example: BC Building Code, Drinking Water Protection Regulation, Sewerage System Regulation, and *Heritage Conservation Act*.

Further information can be found in the Savary Island Community Plan Background Report, the qRD Regional District Land Use webpages, and provincial and federal websites.

**Q: How will the Savary Island Community Plan address concerns about potential overdevelopment, and the preservation of Savary Island's rural character?**

A: We will be exploring non-regulatory policy solutions in the Plan to address concerns with overdevelopment and protecting the rural character of Savary Island.

**Q: Will there be a consideration for access to land-locked properties?**

A: Questions of access to properties should be directed to the Ministry of Transportation and Transit. Unfortunately, this is outside the scope of local government authority, and outside the scope of an official community plan.

## Infrastructure & Services

### **Q: What plans are in place to address the potential impact of increased sewage on the island?**

A: On-site septic servicing is outside the scope of the regional district's authority. Under provincial regulations, on-site septic systems must be installed by a Registered On-Site Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP) and septic filings submitted to Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). The Plan will include policy to encourage compliance with the provincial Sewerage System Regulation.

### **Q: Can solutions be made for parking in Lund?**

A: Parking in Lund is outside the scope of the Savary Island Community Plan review and update process.

### **Q: Can the qRD fund well maintenance?**

A: No. Well maintenance is the responsibility of property owners.

### **Q. If desired by the community, how will services such as public washrooms and garbage pickup be managed and maintained?**

A. If we learn through the engagement process that a majority of community members have an interest in a new service such as public washrooms, the draft community plan can identify the community's interest and include policy for the qRD to explore or investigate the feasibility of delivering the service in the future.

This approach allows flexibility without committing the qRD or the community to establishing a new service before fully understanding all capital costs, ongoing maintenance costs and tax implications of delivering the new service.

### **Q: What are the garbage disposal options for Savary Island residents?**

A: The qRD is responsible for long-term planning and management of solid waste for the entire regional district. Electoral Areas, including Savary Island (in Electoral Area A) do not have public garbage or recycling collection service. Residents can bring garbage to the Resource Recovery Centre. "Working Towards Zero Waste" is the philosophy held by qathet Regional District that informs its initiatives and programs.

The qRD also operates a residential recycling depot in Lund.

**Q: How will the Savary Island Community Plan consider immediate community needs such as public toilets, garbage/recycling facilities, barge ramp upgrades, and road upgrades?**

A: If there is clear direction from the community in the engagement process, the new Plan could provide direction to the staff and Board for capital planning and budgeting to implement these types of services.

Roads are outside the scope of local government authority. Roads and road right of ways are under the jurisdiction of the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Transit. The qRD can continue to advocate for better maintenance of the roads on the Savary through the Plan policies.

**Q: What is the qRD's emergency evacuation plan for Savary Island?**

A: The qRD has developed community evacuation guides to help you prepare your own household emergency plan. The Savary Island Community Evacuation Guide is available online:

[www.qathet.ca/services/emergency-services/regional-firesmart-program/](http://www.qathet.ca/services/emergency-services/regional-firesmart-program/)

The Savary Island Community Plan will include policy to support the Regional District Regional Emergency Program.

## Transportation

**Q: What plans are in place to address the potential impact of increased traffic on Savary?**

A: Roads and traffic are outside the scope of the Regional District's authority. All roads on Savary are under the authority of the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Transit. The Plan can include advocacy language to collaborate with other agencies to address potential impacts of increased traffic on Savary.

## Environmental Protection

In October, the qRD hosted two webinars to review the findings of the Assessment of Groundwater Resources on Savary Island - Qayε qw̄ən and the study in more detail with the community. On October 30, the qRD hosted a webinar to review the findings of the slope hazard study in more detail with the community. The webinars and presentation slides are available online at: [www.qathet.ca/savaryocp](http://www.qathet.ca/savaryocp)

**Q: Do you have any metrics for what Savary's groundwater "carrying capacity" is and how close we are to it?**

A: The Assessment of Groundwater Resources on Savary Island - Qayε qʷən speaks to the carrying capacity of Savary Island's groundwater aquifer and makes a range of recommendations for protecting the aquifer. The report states that Savary Islanders use up to 7% of the aquifers annual recharge, and that "per household" water demand is in the low range (100-400 liters per day).

"Carrying capacity" depends on the resource use and intensity. The development of small cabins with low water use could support a higher population on the island over the longer term, while larger cabins with higher water use could deplete the resource more quickly.

On October 28, the qRD hosted a webinar to review the findings of the groundwater study in more detail with the community. The webinar and presentation slides are available online at [www.qathet.ca/savaryocp](http://www.qathet.ca/savaryocp).

**Q: How will the Savary Community Plan address our concerns about water use?**

A: The Savary Island Community Plan will address concerns about water use by advocating for regular maintenance of water supply systems and wells to ensure compliance with provincial legislation and regulations. Education around smart water use could include signage, social media posts, and workshops. The Plan could also promote well owners participate in the province's well inventory and GWELLS registration.

**Q: Can garden fertilizer influence the water quality of my well?**

A: Yes, garden fertilizer and other agricultural activities can influence the quality of water in the aquifer. In addition, the Assessment of Groundwater Resources on Savary Island - Qayε qʷən states that groundwater quality is influenced by waste water and septic.

While all levels of contaminates in wells sampled were found to be within drinking guidelines, septic maintenance (regular pump outs) and well maintenance (including proximity to hazardous contaminates like fuel) are the top contributors to water quality that can be manage locally.

**Q: Why are there still references to the 2003 Thurber Engineering report?**

A: The Thurber Report was used to guide the development of slope hazard policies in the 2006 Savary Island Official Community Plan. The 2003 Thurber Report has been replaced by the 2023 Savary Island Slope Hazard Study completed by Tetra Tech Canada.

**Q: Is there a plan to redo the 2023 Savary Island Slope Hazard Study by Tetra Tech; or to address the concerns about the credibility of the study?**

A: Tetra Tech Canada is a reputable engineering firm in good standing with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of British Columbia. Engineers and Geoscientists BC regulates and governs these professions under the authority of the *Professional Governance Act*.

The qRD Regional Board and staff do not question the validity of the study. There will be references to natural hazard areas in the draft Savary Island Community Plan, and staff will continue to use the mapping provided by the Study to identify potential hazard areas in order to meet our obligations under the *Local Government Act*, and provide advice to property owners.

Questions relating to the credibility or methodology of the study, please direct to the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of British Columbia.

**Q: How many properties are impacted by the potential hazard?**

A: Approximately 800 properties are affected by the natural hazard potential identified in the 2023 Savary Island Slope Hazard Study.

**Q: Is it legal for people to make changes to the foreshore to protect their property, like installing stone filled gabions? Who has jurisdiction on the beach?**

A: The foreshore, nearshore and backshore of the coast line are regulated by different provincial and federal jurisdictions. If you plan on doing any works in the foreshore area, contact Front Counter BC to obtain a permit: call 604-485-0700 or visit 7077 Duncan St, in Powell River.

The qathet Regional District participates in Green Shores for Homes, a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps waterfront homeowners restore natural shorelines and enjoy the many recreational, scenic, environmental, and shoreline protection benefits they bring. More information can be found on our webpage:

[www.qathet.ca/land-use/development-resources/](http://www.qathet.ca/land-use/development-resources/)

**Q: If my property is identified on a map as having the potential for a natural hazard area, can I get a variance to build or develop?**

A: A variance, under the *Local Government Act*, can only be granted if there was a land use bylaw regulating land use, like a variance to a zoning bylaw regulation. If you are planning to build or develop on a property and it has been identified as having a natural hazard potential, we would advise you to hire a qualified professional to complete a site-level assessment to inform your decisions on building or developing your property.

The site-level assessment is yours -- it is not submitted to the qRD, planning staff, insurance companies, BC Assessment, or real estate agents. This recommendation from qRD Planning staff applies to all properties in the qathet Regional District affected by the potential for a hazard (coastal, slope, flood).

**Q: If I obtain a site level assessment, am I obligated to follow the recommendations?**

A: If you retained a qualified professional to complete a site level assessment on your property, you would have to satisfy your own due diligence regarding those recommendations.

Scenario 1: You have a cabin on a bluff identified as “natural hazard potential”, and you plan to continue using it the same way (no development, no change). There is no need to have a site level assessment, unless you are curious about how that natural hazard potential could impact the use and enjoyment of your land.

Scenario 2: You own a low-bank waterfront property and want to hire a Certified Builder to build a new cabin. Your builder may required a site level assessment to identify safe building sites, protect your investment, and safely occupy your property.

In both Scenarios, the onus falls to the property owner to satisfy their own due diligence, whether a property is identified as a natural hazard potential or not.

**Q: Would the potential for a natural hazard area impact the value of my property?**

A: Property values are determined by the BC Assessment Authority annually and are based on market sales. There has been no observed impact on property values resulting from local governments identifying natural hazard potential in other regions of BC. Questions relating to property assessments should be directed to the BC Assessment Authority.

**Q: Would the potential for a natural hazard area impact my property insurance?**

A: Questions relating to property insurance should be directed to your own insurer.

**Q: If there are no development permits or land use regulations, how can I protect my property and buildings from natural hazards like erosion or wave inundation?**

A: It is advised that you to hire a qualified professional to complete a site-level assessment to inform your decisions prior to developing your property. A site-level assessment is yours -- it is not submitted to the qRD, planning staff, insurance companies, BC Assessment, or real estate agents.

This recommendation from qRD Planning staff applies to all properties in the qathet Regional District affected by the potential for a hazard (coastal, slope, flood).

More information on developing on properties with the potential for natural hazards can be found online on the “Development Resources” webpage:

[www.qathet.ca/land-use/development-resources/](http://www.qathet.ca/land-use/development-resources/)

**Q: Why are we required to consider sea level rising as far in the future as 2100?**

A: The Province of BC commissions a study in 2011 that recommended planning for one meter sea level rise by 2100. In 2018, the Province of BC updated the “Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines” to incorporate the recommendation to plan for one meter of sea level rise by the year 2100. Local governments in BC are required to consider the provincial “Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines” in their planning.

The information referenced can be found in the BC Ministry of Environment Sea Level Rise Adaptation Primer and the qRD Coastal Flood Mapping Report Phase 2.

**Q: What plans are in place to address fire hazards on the island?**

A: In 2009 the qRD commissioned the Savary Island Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The plan evaluates considerations for wildland-urban interface management on Savary Island. The Wildfire Protection Plan will help inform policy in the Savary Island Community Plan. We will also include the Regional District Regional Emergency Program, and the Savary Island Volunteer Fire Department in policy development in the Community Plan.