

**REPORT TO SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL COMMUNITY COMMISSION
MEETING OF THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025**

SUBJECT SSI Invasives Chipping Program Funding Request

ISSUE SUMMARY

To consider an ongoing funding request from Transition Salt Spring to support the invasives chipping program.

BACKGROUND

The 2024 Invasives Chipping Program was administered by Transition Salt Spring (TSS) and the Native Plant Stewardship Group with funding from a CRD Grant in Aid (GIA), and donations from the SSI Garden Club and the SSI Conservancy. A representative of the chipping program submitted a final report (Appendix A) and attended the SSI Local Community Commission (LCC) meeting on November 21, 2024, to present the report.

For the past 14 years the invasive chipping program has been run annually by volunteers. The intent of the program is to provide alternatives to burning invasive plants, reduce the fire risk, attempt to eradicate invasives from the island and build community awareness about the fire risks and dangers of invasive plants. Funding in past years was provided through Fire Smart and various donations. Volunteer burn out and Fire Smart funding being no longer available resulted in TSS taking the lead on the program in 2024.

In alignment with TSS focus on reducing fire risk and increasing public awareness TSS secured funding for the program in 2024 and implemented a new plan to collect fees for drop-offs. With 135 vehicles dropping off invasives over a two-day period the program netted \$1,832 which helped to offset the expenses, labour and promotions by TSS.

Despite the success of the program TSS and the Native Plant Stewardship Group have indicated that they can no longer take the lead on this program and have requested that the CRD or another non-profit group take on the initiative.

Around the inception of the program the parks crew used to allow the public to drop off invasives for chipping at the same time as they were doing their own chipping. Unfortunately, the number of materials being dropped off quickly grew and the staff capacity to manage the chipping as well as dumping of the chips was limited. It was also difficult to police what was being dropped off. Funding and staff time requisitioned for community parks services should not be used to support private property owners with their debris. Should the CRD wish to take over the operation and management of the invasive chipping program a new service would need to be established, or an existing service would need to be amended requiring Electoral Area Director consent.

The SSI Liquid Waste Disposal Service 3.705 was established to provide, operate, collect, treat and dispose of septage and sewage sludge and co-compost septage and sewer sludge with wood waste for the local service area on SSI. This service does not currently allow for third party funding to support an invasive chipping program.

GIAs are one-time grants to fund special projects and activities, awarded to community non-profit organizations who deliver projects benefiting electoral areas. GIAs are intended for special one-time projects, not ongoing operational funding, although applications for recurring projects can be made. GIA funding can be used for multiple years but requires a decision each year to allocate new funding.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff direct requests for funding to support an invasive chipping program to apply for the next Grant in Aid intake.

Alternative 2

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that the report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

\$68,986 has been budgeted for GIA contributions in 2025.

TSS received a \$2,500 GIA in 2024 to support the program with additional funding received from donations and user fees. A detailed budget has been attached (Appendix B).

2024 Invasive Chipping Program Budget	
Revenues:	
- Donations	\$3,500
- User Fees	<u>\$2,872</u>
Expenses	<u>\$4,540</u>
NET	\$1,832

The 2024 program was supported by a large amount of volunteer time and paid coordinator support from TSS. For the program to be successful in future years funding for a coordinator would need to be included in the project budget.

CONCLUSION

For the past 14 years the invasive chipping program has been run annually by volunteers to provide alternatives to burning invasive plants, reduce the fire risk, attempt to eradicate invasives from the island and build community awareness. TSS took the lead on the program in 2024 as the initiative was in line with TSS focus on reducing fire risk and increasing public awareness.

TSS has indicated that they cannot continue to support the program and have asked the CRD, or another non-profit organization take over the initiative beginning in 2026. The CRD through its GIA Service could allocate funding to support a coordinator and operating expenses for the program to continue in 2025 and review annual applications to support funding in future years.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff direct requests for funding to support an invasive chipping program to apply for the next Grant in Aid intake.

Submitted by:	Dan Ovington, BBA Senior Manager, Salt Spring Island Administration
Concurrence	Stephen Henderson, BSc, MBA, Senior Manager of Real Estate, Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area and Saltspring Island Local Community Commission

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A – 2024 Invasive Chipping Program Final Report
Appendix B – 2024 Invasive Chipping Program Project Budget