



**REPORT TO CORE AREA LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2009**

SUBJECT BOWKER CREEK URBAN WATERSHED RENEWAL INITIATIVE – 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

PURPOSE

To present the 2008 achievements of the Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative (BCI).

BACKGROUND

Established in 2004, the BCI is a broad coalition of community, local government agencies and institutions working together to protect and enhance the ecological, social and economic health of the Bowker creek watershed. The BCI works through a consensus-based steering committee to coordinate and implement actions required to achieve the goals of the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan, which was approved and adopted by the District of Saanich, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, Capital Regional District (CRD) and community groups in 2003.

This staff report summarizes the *Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative 2008 Annual Report* (available upon request or at <http://www.bowkercreekinitiative.ca/>) which is the fifth annual report on the progress of the initiative. The BCI Annual Report provides highlights on the projects, outreach activities and partnerships that BCI has sponsored or participated in from January through to December 2008.

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2008, the BCI focused on raising awareness through public events and outreach tools, advancing the Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan (DWIP) (formerly referred to as an 'Integrated Stormwater Management Plan'), monitoring restoration projects and water quality and performing a five-year review of the initiative. The main accomplishments, organized by initiative goals, are highlighted in Appendix A.

Progress Review

In November 2008, the BCI steering committee and subcommittee members met to review the progress of the initiative and discuss approaches to fully implement the watershed plan. As part of this five-year review BCI members were surveyed on the effectiveness of various aspects of the initiative. The hiring of a coordinator was ranked as a particularly effective action and outreach activities were also seen as very positive and effective. All the members agreed that the plan vision was achievable over the longer term and discussed ways to work together to more effectively accomplish BCI goals. Members were unanimous that the timely completion of the DWIP was an essential step.

Watershed Plan Implementation Coordinator Position (BCI Coordinator)

The BCI coordinator position is a part-time CRD position funded by the District of Oak Bay, City of Victoria and District of Saanich. All three municipalities have incorporated funding for this position into their 2009 budgets. The CRD supports this integrated watershed initiative by hosting the coordinator position. It is recommended that the CRD continue to support the BCI by continuing to host the BCI coordinator position, contingent upon ongoing municipal funding.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the CRD continue to support the BCI by continuing to host the watershed plan implementation coordinator position, contingent on municipal funding for the position.
2. That the CRD not continue to host the watershed plan implementation coordinator position.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Annual reporting is included in the core area stormwater quality annual budget.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

In 2008, the BCI made significant progress on improving the Bowker creek watershed. Public awareness increased through several events, outreach materials and positive media coverage. The initiative also realized important progress in advancing the DWIP. In 2009, the main focus of the BCI will be to complete the plan to position the initiative and the partner municipalities for funding opportunities related to infrastructure and climate change initiatives, as well as supporting everyday business in the municipalities of Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay

The successes of the BCI are due to the fundraising efforts and support provided by the watershed plan implementation coordinator position and the collaborative efforts of the community and local government representatives of the BCI steering committee. The long-term vision and cooperation of the CRD, District of Saanich, City of Victoria and District of Oak Bay to establish and fund the coordinator position, and to support the BCI Steering committee, is critical to the continued success of this watershed-based initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Core Area Liquid Waste Management committee:

1. continue to support the Bowker Creek Initiative; and
2. recommend to the Board that the Capital Regional District continue to support the Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative by continuing to host the watershed plan implementation coordinator position, contingent on municipal funding of the position.

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COMMENTS

BOWKER CREEK URBAN WATERSHED RENEWAL INITIATIVE SUMMARY OF 2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal 1: Increase Awareness and Responsibility within the Bowker Creek Watershed

- Hosted a “CommuniTea” at the Oaklands community centre that featured a presentation describing the history of burying the creek, creating mosaic stepping stones to mark the lost creek, the interactive watershed model and community displays.
- Organized and hosted a major Bowker creek celebration on June 14 with live music, crafts, interactive displays, a creekside parade and a push-lawnmower race. About 450 people were in attendance, showing their support for BCI and learning about watershed issues. Councillors from Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria attended, as did local federal and provincial government representatives.
- Launched the Bowker Creek Action Pledge which highlights several actions to help protect Bowker Creek. More than 100 people have signed on to actions that support watershed health.
- Launched a new website at: www.bowkercreekinitiative.ca.
- Created the Bowker Creek Homeowner’s Guide which provides information on what homeowners can do to improve the health of the Bowker creek watershed. This guide will be available at all future public events and is also available on the new website.
- Participated in garbage cleanups and a weed pull event hosted by the Camosun Community Association and the Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association, respectively.
- Attended various speaking engagements and community events and made two appearances on CFX radio call-in shows.
- Continued obtaining footage for the Bowker creek video project. The goal of this project is to create a five-part video capturing focus of the BCI and the history of Bowker creek including resident’s memories of the creek in earlier days.

Goal 2: Manage Flows Effectively

- Continued advancing the completion of the DWIP. This plan will form a basis for meeting BCI goals and will provide the detailed guidance for drainage, water quality, environmental values and community use and will include recommendations for changes to watershed policies and to improve site-specific conditions in the channel corridor. These recommendations will help to address urban run-off and flooding issues and will provide a basis for action when funding opportunities arise. Additionally, having detailed guidance will ensure these values are considered when infrastructure is upgraded or when land uses change.
- Finalized the terms of reference for the DWIP.
- Identified information gaps and completed additional studies required to complete the DWIP.

Goal 3: Improve and Expand Public Areas, Natural Areas and Biodiversity in the Watershed

- Continued monitoring and maintenance of two restoration demonstration sites along Bowker creek: the 30m of bioengineered bank alongside the allotment gardens in Oak Bay and the restored creek at St. Patrick's elementary school. The restoration of both sites has been very successful.

Goal 4: Achieve and Maintain Acceptable Water Quality in the Watershed

- Continued monitoring of creek water quality and sediments. The results confirm that Bowker creek continues to have poor water quality typical of urban creeks. A second year of benthic invertebrate data was also collected and will be interpreted in 2009 to get another measure of creek health.
- Completed additional sediment sampling to determine if pesticides could be detected in the stream sediments as part of a baseline for a new pesticide reduction effort in the region. No pesticides were detected.