



Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative 2008 Annual Report

Goals

The BCI is based on the four goals from the watershed plan:

Goal 1: Individuals, community and special interest groups, institutions, governments and businesses take responsibility for actions that affect the watershed.

Goal 2: Manage flows effectively.

Goal 3: Improve and expand public areas, natural areas, and biodiversity in the watershed.

Goal 4: Achieve and maintain acceptable water quality in the watershed.

The BCI Partners

District of Saanich, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, Capital Regional District, University of Victoria, Friends of Bowker Creek Society, Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association, Camosun Community Association, and members of the public.



The Bowker Creek Celebration included a musical parade beside the creek and above its buried reach in the Spirit Garden.

Background

The Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative (BCI) is a broad coalition of community, government, businesses and institutions working together to protect and enhance the ecological, social and economic health of the Bowker Creek watershed. The BCI was established in March 2004 following the completion and adoption of the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan by the District of Saanich, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, the Capital Regional District (CRD) and community groups.

The BCI is led by a consensus-based steering committee which is chaired by the CRD. The committee's role is to implement actions to achieve the goals of the watershed plan. Two active subcommittees: Outreach, and

Implementation, focus on the key activities of the BCI. A part-time coordinator at the CRD initiates and manages projects, seeks funding and organizes the BCI. This position is funded by the partner municipalities of Saanich (59%), Victoria (23%) and Oak Bay (18%). This is the fifth annual report since the establishment of the BCI and provides an overview of progress to meet the objectives of the watershed plan.

Accomplishments

In 2008 the BCI focused on raising awareness through public events and outreach tools. These efforts were very well received, highlighting the community's interest in improving conditions for Bowker Creek. Other accomplishments included work towards a Detailed Watershed



Implementation Plan, which will form a basis for meeting the Initiative's goals. This Plan (formerly referred to as an 'Integrated Stormwater Management Plan') will provide the detailed guidance required to make changes to watershed policies and plans, and improve site-specific conditions in the channel corridor.

Outreach Events

A "CommuniTea" was held in late March. This successful tea party was the second such event hosted by the BCI Outreach subcommittee, as a lead-up to a larger event in June. The community was invited to the Oaklands Community Centre for tea and snacks and to share memories of the creek. A presentation describing the history of burying the creek, and offering stories about creek daylighting in other areas was very well received. Attendees were invited to help with mosaic stepping stones to mark the lost creek, and the watershed model and various displays were also on hand.

The Bowker Creek Celebration was held on June 14 after months of planning. The community was invited to enjoy live music and other entertainment, make crafts, interact with various displays, and to enjoy a free lunch while listening to various speakers. Holding the event outdoors at the former Richmond Elementary school allowed a close connection to the creek. A musical creekside parade was held, and local politicians enjoyed a push lawnmower race. About 450 people were in attendance, showing their support for the Initiative and learning about watershed issues. Councillors from Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria attended, as did local federal and provincial representatives.

Outreach Tools and Activities

The Bowker Creek Action Pledge was officially launched on June 14, and 80 people signed on to actions that support watershed health. The Bowker Creek Homeowner's Guide was also produced for this event. This Guide gives easy actions that any homeowner can do to help the creek. It will be available at all future public events and is also available on the new BCI webpage (www.bowkercreekinitiative.ca). The new site is frequently updated with news relevant to Bowker Creek and to urban creeks in general.

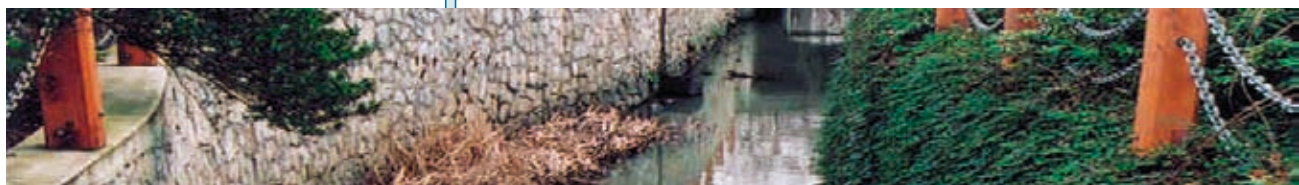
Ongoing outreach activities included the annual Browning Park garbage cleanup, hosted by the Camosun Community Association, and a weed pull organized by the Quadra-Cedar Hill Community Association. Speaking engagements were held with the Oak Bay Probosc Club and Lansdowne Middle school. The watershed model and displays were brought to the Bowker Creek Brushup, UVic's Earthfest, and South Jubilee's neighbourhood party.

Capturing more footage and creating a concept for a video was another ongoing project. This project began in 2007 as a way to capture memories of the creek, and has expanded to capture the entire focus of the Initiative.

Other activities that were part of the lead up to the June 14 event included appearing on CFAX radio call-in shows as guests of Joe Easingwood and Susan Woods, and hosting a party for children to make decorative pennants.



Families enjoyed themselves and learned about urban watersheds at the successful June 14 Bowker Creek Celebration.



**Bowker
Creek**
URBAN
WATERSHED
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INITIATIVE

Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan

The Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan (DWIP) will provide a basis for addressing all the goals and many of the objectives in the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan. The terms of reference for this plan, formerly referred to as an Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP), were finalized in 2008. As part of this process, information gaps were identified and filled; a process that will continue into the first part of 2009. Creating more detailed, site-specific prescriptions is essential to achieving the Initiative's goals, and the Initiative has been working towards this outcome for five years.

The DWIP will provide the detail required for municipalities to make decisions about managing the creek corridor. It will provide guidance for watershed-wide policy and regulatory action, and it will provide a basis for action when funding opportunities arise. Having detailed guidance for drainage, water quality, environmental values and community use will help these values be considered when infrastructure is upgraded or when land uses change.

Progress Review

In November 2008 the Bowker Creek Initiative Steering Committee and Subcommittee members met to review the progress of the Initiative, and to discuss approaches to fully implement the Watershed Plan. As part of this five-year review, Initiative 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 Initiative goals. Members were unanimous that the timely completion of the DWIP was an essential step.

Restoration and Monitoring

The 2005 restoration demonstration site at St. Patrick's school is in excellent condition, and growth and survival of the native vegetation has been very good. This site continues to serve as an example of what streamside property owners can do to improve conditions

along the streambanks. At Monteith Street, bioengineering done in 2007 to control erosion along a streambank is still structurally sound, though the willow growth is variable.

Water quality is sampled yearly, and provides a baseline against which improvement can be measured. In addition to the regular water quality tests, results are now available from sampling of benthic invertebrates, providing a further baseline that can be used to measure creek health. These insects, worms and other creatures that live in the stream bed are a good indication of year-round water quality, and can also be used to compare Bowker Creek to other areas. The data confirm that habitat and water quality conditions are currently very poor. These baseline data will be particularly useful to measure changes if more stormwater best management practices and/or low impact redevelopment happens in the watershed, and if more property owners make changes to the way they take care of their lawns and gardens.

Additional sampling was also done to determine if pesticides could be detected in the stream sediments, to provide a baseline for a new pesticide reduction effort in the regional district. No pesticides were detected. It is unclear whether these results would change with different types of tests or with different detection limits.



Photo: City of Victoria

In 1964, the section of Bowker Creek near Hillside Mall was put underground. The engineer responsible for this work spoke to the community about the reasons behind it at the March community tea party.

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2008 Funding

In 2008, funding was provided for the BCI through various sources. The municipalities of Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay provided funding for the BCI Coordinator. Project funding is sought mainly from external sources and is also provided by Initiative partners.

Funding Source	Funding (\$)*	Item
Watershed Plan Coordinator		
District of Saanich	36,954	BCI Coordinator
City of Victoria	14,406	BCI Coordinator
District of Oak Bay	11,274	BCI Coordinator
Project Funding		
BC Hydro	1,000	Funding to the North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association for aspects of the June 14 event
District of Saanich	1,000	Funding to the Camosun Community Association for the barbeque on the June 14 event
Capital Regional District	34,917	Outreach events, follow-up to the Master Drainage Plan, Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan initiation, printing, water sampling, and administration
Thrifty Foods	400	Funding to the Camosun Community Association for the barbeque on the June 14 event
TOTAL 2008*	99,951	

*figures in this table do not include the value of municipal staff and volunteer time

What's Next?

In 2009, the BCI will continue to implement activities designed to achieve the goals of the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan. These activities include:

Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan

The Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan will be finalized. All the various data, information and recommendations developed during the five years of the Initiative will be organized into a set of recommendations that integrate ecological, social, engineering and economic considerations. The results of this work will be brought to the public for information and comment.

Restoration and Monitoring

A funding application submitted to TD Friends of the Environment Foundation was successful, and means that the Initiative will be working with the District of Oak Bay to plan and carry out a restoration project for the lot owned by Oak Bay on Monteith Street. This vacant site is currently overrun with blackberry, ivy, morning glory and other weeds, and is not used by the community. These

invasive species will be removed, and native vegetation planted. Working with volunteers, the BCI and Oak Bay will restore the riparian area at the same time as providing a limited number of garden plots. A demonstration native plant garden, information kiosk and a community space may also be part of this work, which will be carried out with interested neighbours, gardeners, and other community members.

Outreach Activities

The Initiative will continue to raise awareness by sharing information with the public and by involving the community. The Monteith restoration project will recruit and inform many neighbours as well as involving classes from area elementary schools. The watershed pledge will be launched online, and the video project will be scripted and funding sought. Public presentations and displays will continue, and will maintain the profile of the Initiative in the Community.

Summary

2008 was a year of successful outreach activities, and preparing for detailed implementation of the watershed plan. Once the Detailed Watershed Implementation Plan is completed, it will position the Initiative 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.

For more information visit: www.bowkercreekinitiative.ca or call the Bowker Creek Initiative Coordinator at 250-360-3302.



This area alongside Bowker Creek will be restored with native species in 2009.