



Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative 2009 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, North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association, Community Association of Oak Bay and members of the public.



Families were invited to make artful pennants to celebrate living near Bowker Creek.

Background

The Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative (BCI) is a coalition of communities, governments and institutions working together to protect and enhance the ecological, social and economic health of the Bowker Creek watershed. The BCI was established in 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 chaired by the CRD. The committee's role is to implement the

watershed plan. Another subcommittee focuses on outreach activities. 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 sixth annual report since the establishment of the BCI.

Accomplishments

In 2009 the main focus of the BCI was to complete The Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-year action plan to restore the Bowker Creek watershed. Outreach and restoration projects also continued and maintained the Initiative's profile in the community.



Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-year action plan to restore the Bowker Creek watershed

The Bowker Creek Blueprint provides land stewards with the information required to improve the health of Bowker Creek over time. It was completed in final draft form by the end of 2009, and is the culmination of efforts since the BCI was established in 2004. This plan went through many name changes as it was developed, and has become the BCI's version of an Integrated Stormwater Management Plan. The Blueprint offers ways to deal with the flooding, water pollution, and habitat loss that Bowker Creek has suffered. It also provides recommendations for a greenway corridor and pockets of nature within the urban core of Greater Victoria.

The Bowker Creek Blueprint is built on existing policies, plans and information. To develop this plan, the Steering Committee worked with additional community members and consultants to recommend improvements over the short and long term. The 100 year planning horizon chosen by the committee recognizes that change can be slow in the urban environment, and that directed change over time can achieve the desired results. There are also many synergies between the Blueprint's recommendations and the necessary actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

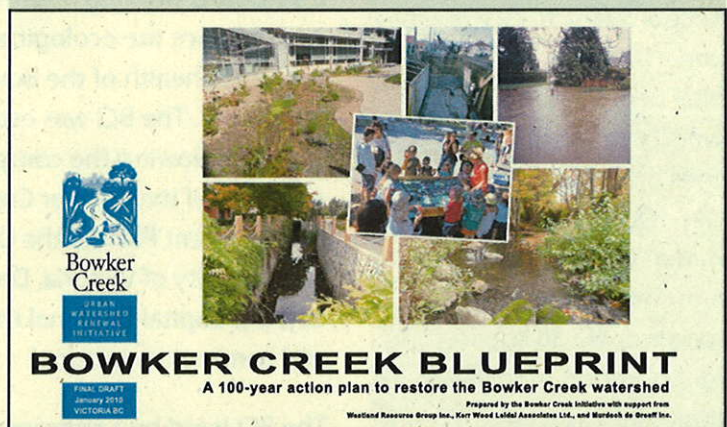
Along with many actions to complete over time, ten key actions were recommended as important first steps for municipalities and other land stewards in the next three to five years.

The Blueprint is a first of its kind. It shows how an urban creek running through multiple jurisdictions can be cared for and restored over the long term. Having the Blueprint in place will ensure that positive changes can happen incrementally, and that major improvements can be achieved as opportunities arise. Thanks to the information and guidance available in the Blueprint, all land stewards can now plan for the best outcomes for Bowker Creek.

The Blueprint is available on the BCI website.

Key short term actions:

1. Review and revise municipal plans to include Bowker Creek goals and actions;
2. Adopt requirements to reduce effective impervious area for new developments;
3. Remove specific invasive species beginning to colonize the watershed;
4. Complete a pilot project to locate and build a demonstration rainwater infiltration/retention structure in each municipality;
5. Support development of an urban forest strategy in Oak Bay to complement those underway in Saanich and Victoria;
6. Develop a strategy to acquire key properties as they come available;
7. Work with Oak Bay High School to design and implement creek restoration on school district property;
8. Participate in the Shelbourne Corridor Action Plan process, to identify current and future opportunities for creek restoration, rainwater infiltration and/or greenway development.
9. Work with creek-side landowners between Pearl and Trent Streets to achieve the long-term vision; and,
10. Continue with restoration at Browning Park.



The Bowker Creek Blueprint was a major milestone for the BCI, and will support stewardship efforts in the years to come.



Outreach Events and Activities

Outreach activities continued with the help of dedicated volunteers from the BCI's outreach and steering committees. An important outreach event was a tour for Saanich, Oak Bay and Victoria municipal councillors, held in May. This tour showed the member municipalities what the Bowker Creek Initiative had been busy with, and let them know about the development of the Bowker Creek Blueprint. It also provided an excellent opportunity for inter-municipal dialogue. The tour was followed by a forum for municipal councillors in late November, to introduce the final draft of the Bowker Creek Blueprint.

Other events that involved the community included:

- Two garbage cleanups at Browning Park, hosted by the Camosun Community Association;
- Catchment basin fish painting in the Oaklands neighbourhood;
- The annual rubber ducky race, hosted by Oak Bay High School in May;
- A September Stewardship Blitz. Invasive species were removed along the creek at Monteith Street in Oak Bay and beside the Cedar Hill Recreation Centre in Saanich. Families painted pennants to celebrate the creek at the Spirit Garden in Victoria. The Blitz was hosted by the BCI with the Quadra-Cedar Hill Neighbourhood Association and the North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association;
- A second pennant-making workshop in November; and,
- Invasive plant removal at St Patrick's School site.

The Bowker Creek Initiative continued to give watershed tours and presentations, and to bring display materials to events like the Bowker Creek Brush-up – an annual art event along Bowker Creek. Volunteers also created a song about Bowker Creek, to be sung at events and used in an eventual video production. The online version of the

Bowker Creek stewardship pledge was launched, and is available on the BCI's website.

Oak Bay High School began a planning process for a new school in 2009. The Bowker Creek Initiative joined the redevelopment steering committee, and also presented at a community visioning day. Bowker Creek runs through the school grounds, and a change to the school footprint offers opportunities for a major restoration project.

Restoration and Monitoring

At Monteith Street in Oak Bay, invasive species were removed on municipal property near the creek. Detailed plans were developed to turn this weedy, overgrown site into an area that supports native plants and a small number of community garden plots. At Browning Park in Saanich, a park renewal plan was approved and greenway trail construction started. Once complete, these efforts will improve the riparian buffer along Bowker Creek. In Victoria, a rain garden was developed on Trent Street near Bowker Creek. This rain garden will serve as a template for further rainwater management in the watershed. Lastly, The District of Saanich began efforts to control invasive yellow willow along the creek. Previous restoration projects continued to be monitored, and water quality data was collected by the CRD as in previous years.



Municipal councillors toured Bowker Creek in May, to learn about recent projects and the development of the Bowker Creek Blueprint.

Photo: Soren Henrich

2009 Funding

In 2009, funding was provided for the BCI through various sources. The municipalities of Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay provided funding for the BCI Coordinator. In 2009, funding acquired through grants from previous years was used to complete the Blueprint.

| Funding Source | Funding (\$)* | Item |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Coordinator Funding | | |
| District of Saanich | \$37,847 | BCI Coordinator |
| City of Victoria | \$14,754 | BCI Coordinator |
| District of Oak Bay | \$11,546 | BCI Coordinator |
| Project Funding | | |
| TD Friends of the Environment | \$5,000 | Monteith restoration site |
| Capital Regional District | \$26,279 | Blueprint, outreach and administrative costs |
| TOTAL 2009* | \$95,426 | |

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



In 2009 a greenway trail was partially completed through Browning Park and an adjacent right-of-way, and created opportunities to improve the riparian buffer along the creek.

What's Next?

In 2010 the BCI will work to finalize and begin implementation of the Bowker Creek Blueprint. Activities include a public open house in January to solicit community input, and a forum in February to introduce the Blueprint to various municipal staff and community leaders. Once public input is incorporated the Blueprint will be issued in its final form and brought before municipal councils for endorsement. Work on the recommended "Top Ten" actions will continue. In 2010 this will include collaboration with School District 61 during planning and construction of the new Oak Bay High School, participating in the Shelbourne Corridor planning process, and improving the riparian buffer in Browning Park.

The BCI will continue to work with the District of Oak Bay and volunteers, neighbours and local schools to finish the restoration project on Monteith Street. The Initiative will also work with the Royal Jubilee Hospital on their campus master plans, and continue outreach efforts through public presentations and participation in community events.

Summary

2009 was a year of preparing the innovative Bowker Creek Blueprint, and of successful outreach and restoration activities. The Bowker Creek Initiative maintained a high profile in the community, and laid the ground work to begin a new phase of implementing the Bowker Creek Blueprint over the short and long term.

For more information visit:

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